

# The Roark Report

## *Requiescat in Pace*

*Alyce Yarick, Bert Goodrich and Bill*

Three years ago, Alyce Yarick's husband, Ed, died, and on December 4, 1991, Alyce passed away. Born Alyce Stagg on April 18, 1921, she wrote for *Muscle Power*, *Your Physique*, and *Strength & Health*. Ed had owned a gym in Oakland, California since 1939, and after he married Alyce, they remained together in the gym business, though they changed locations, until 1978.

Alyce, as Alyce Yarick, began writing a women's column for the *Reg Park Journal* in January 1954, and a women's column for *Iron Man* that same month; the former column ran until September 1955, the latter until March 1958. In 1946 Alyce was reported to have squatted 100 reps with 100 pounds, a report which caused much skepticism, but seven years later, on April 11, 1953 (about a month before her son Bart was conceived), at one of the famous Yarick strength shows, she surprised the audience and silenced the critics by placing her heels on a two-by-four, placing a barbell of 105 pounds on her upper back and, as husband Ed counted, knocking out 105 repetitions!

*Iron Man*, in a September, 1954 story, showed Alyce demonstrating the exercises she used during her pregnancy; the story includes seven photos of her using some hefty weights. Alyce (and Pudgy Stockton) had been warned that lifting weights could thwart pregnancy, but Pudgy and Alyce paid no heed; each had healthy offspring. (Alyce's son Bart was born February 1, 1954.)

According to Bart, Alyce ceased lifting weights in the mid-1960s, but she would walk for exercise, in later years accompanied by her pet dogs, along the canal banks of Modesto, California. She was suspicious of some of the performances of more recent barbells, and she did not believe that the current crop of female bodybuilders could have attained the degree of muscularity often seen on the dais these days without the help of chemicals. This made her sad. When Alyce Yarick died, we lost a great "natural" strength athlete and pioneer.



Bert Goodrich was born on December 26, 1906, and he died December 6, 1991. Bert is best known in bodybuilding history as the first man to win the title, Mr. America. The stimulus for his entry into bodybuilding competition can be traced to Al Urban, who on Saturday, evening, April 22, 1939, was present at a bent press competition which was staged by

Sieg Klein. Urban, a noted photographer of bodies, noticed how well-developed Bert Goodrich was, and urged him to enter the Bronx Young Men's Hebrew Association Best Built Man contest, which was to take place the following evening.

Bert agreed, but when the contest was about to begin, Al noticed that Bert was not prepared. Bert explained that he had changed his mind and would not be competing, but Al again talked Bert into competing, borrowed some posing trunks for him and in the dressing room quickly showed him some poses. [Ed. note: We got word a few days ago that Al Urban died; details will appear in next IGH.] The Y.M.H.A. contest drew 55 competitors. Bert won Class C, which was 5'11" and taller, and he won the overall title. Quite a night for a man who had originally only intended to put on a display of handbalancing. So, in 1939, Bert was the best built man in New York City. He now had seven weeks to train for the Mr. America contest...

On Saturday, June 10, 1939, in Amsterdam, New York, Bert was ready, having decided after the New York show to "increase the extent of his exercising so that he would attain the maximum state of physical perfection possible..." During his standard three minute posing routine (one minute each for front, back, and optional poses), Bert showed enough muscle and proportion to impress the judges and win the title, Mr. America. Bob Hoffman, in a report on the show, referred to Bert as, "easily the class of this division," meaning the 5'11" category. In the years that followed, Bert demonstrated that he was classly in many aspects of life.

Bert was a movie stuntman, and it was his body doing the jumping, swinging on "jungle vines", falling, crashing and suffering, when the audience collectively assumed that the star of whichever movie they were watching was in fact performing all those acrobatics. Through the years, Bert was a stuntman for Joe Bonomo (himself a famous stuntman earlier in his career), Buster Crabbe, Charles Starret, Victor McLaglen, Ken Maynard, John Wayne, Red Grange, George Brent, Jack Mulhall, and many others.

During 1938, Bert was a senior at Arizona State Teacher's College, and during some of that year he lifted weights in the Los Angeles gym of David Willoughby. Bert wrote a letter-to-the-editor in *Strength & Health* magazine in February 1940 informing us that he was appearing at the Chicago Theater with Dick Powell and doing five shows per day (performing the act he had perfected: handbalancing with a partner). *Your Physique*, in November, 1946, profiled Goodrich at his health studio at 6624 Hollywood Boulevard, Hollywood, California. He had built the gym business and later owned six more gyms, which he sold in 1956 to American Health & Silhouette.

Bert's gym experience, plus his three years as head of the Naval Air Station in San Diego's gym during World War II, helped get him the position of Director of Physical Training for the North American Aviation Company in Canoga Park, California. Earlier, in 1948, Bert and Vic Tanny had joined talents to begin the Mr. and Miss USA Physique and Beauty contest. He also helped Mae West gather musclemen for her nightclub shows; and he arranged for Steve Reeves and Richard Dubois to be cast for the film *Athena*, for MGM.

Bert is survived by his wife Norma, his daughter Lucinda, his son Bert Jr. and two grandchildren.

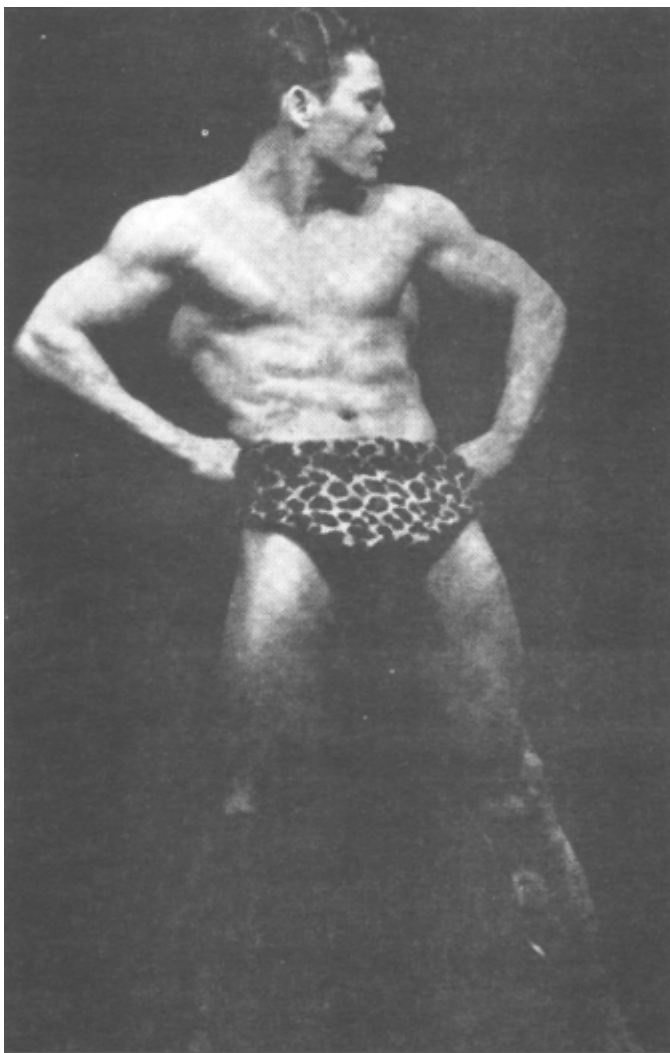


Photo by Al Urban

**[Editor's note: In March, 1992, we learned that Bill Reynolds, a longtime writer and editor for Joe Weider's magazines and the current editor of *Flex*, had been found dead in his apartment, less than a week after he covered the Arnold Classic in Dayton, Ohio. Bill has been a friend**

**for many years and he helped us in many ways with *Iron Game History*. He usually called or wrote after receiving his copy, and he gave us a boost by mentioning the journal in *Flex* and by sending us \$100 of his own money and becoming a Patron. A somewhat melancholy man, Bill was only 46, and even though he didn't take care of himself as well as he might've, we were shocked and saddened to learn that his prolific life had ended. Joe Roark shared some of Bill's letters with us, and we thought that by sharing them with you, Bill's essential nature and some of his contributions to the game would be better understood.]**

June 8, 1984

Dear Joe,

Thanks for your letter and the information on Tom Platz's articles. Incidentally, the book we have just finished will be called *Pro-Style Bodybuilding* by Tom Platz, with Bill Reynolds. It will be published by Sterling, which published both of Bob Kennedy's books. I think they said it would be out next February. Takes quite a bit of time to get them out in book form, versus a magazine (that still take us three months, though). Counting all of the *M&F* anthologies, which I personally edited, I now have 28 books out. The 29th will be *Flex Appeal by Rachel* with Rachel McLish in two or three weeks.

Getting back to my pen names, I've come up with four more. I used the name Gordon Coleman on at least an interview of Arnold Schwarzenegger in one of Bob Kennedy's annuals. Gordy Coleman was a first baseman for the Cincinnati Reds back in the early 1960s, and he was my favorite player. I used Juha Kekkonen on one or two articles with Andreas Cahling in them. Kekkonen had been the prime minister of Finland for 30 years, and Juha Vatainen had been European Champion in the 10,000 meter run one year, so I blended those two names together to form one with a Scandanavian flavor.

Then there was Sergei Shtangov, which I used on a Laura Combes arm training article in *Iron Man*. The Shtangov is kind of interesting, because the word "shtangov" means barbell in Russian. So, Shtangov would mean "Mr. Barbell." However, I doubt that more than a handful of people could pick up on the joke there, only the ones really fluent in Russian. And, I've used Arturo Valenzuela on one or two (or at least on photos — and will on an article on George Pessell — Mr. LA, that I'm getting together). The is the first Hispanic first name I could come up with that sounded good with the Valenzuela.

July 8, 1985

Dear Joe,

For the record, I was born on September 3, 1945, which means that I'm hitting the big 4-0 in less than two months. I was born at the Bremerton, Washington Naval Hospital one day after the armistice was signed with the Japanese in Tokyo Bay.

You can see that you'll get faked out a lot when it comes to cataloguing some of the bylines. One of these days when I don't have anything better to do, I'll haul out all of my old mags and give you a complete list!

July 16, 1985

Dear Joe,

Just have time for a quick answer to your questions of July 11. My first day on the job here was April, 1978, although I had written a couple of articles for Joe earlier (I think one was a profile of Kal Szkalak and the other a flash report of the 1976 Mr. America competition). Then for the next couple of years he wanted me to work for him, but I was committed to finish my Ph.D. at U.C. Berkeley, so I didn't come to work for him until about two years after he started courting me.

I don't know much about Joe's old mags from the 1950s except that he said they all folded when his distributor went south with his money. Also they still have a lot of the paintings that were used for covers of the men's adventure magazine(s) hanging on the walls here.

I saw Leo Robert up in Montreal at the women's Olympia last year (also Tony Lanza and Ed Theriault). Leo looked positively great and said he was in good shape. You could see the abs still really deep through his shirt when he pressed down on the cloth. Didn't ask him about his sister, however.

February 17, 1986

Dear Joe,

I'll be in Columbus. Just ask around for me. Right now it looks like I'll be busy at the first of the year—Arnold's show, the California Pro Grand Prix a couple weeks later, the European Championships in Warsaw, Poland at the end of April, then the Women's Pro World Championships.

Read your newsletter with some amusement as to arm measurements. I used to make my pilgrimage down to the old Gold's Gym each summer during the early 1970s and Arnold had by far the largest arm I ever saw, although Robby Robinson at his best undoubtedly had a proportionately larger

arm measurement. Oliva's arms always impressed me when they were hanging at his sides or held straight overhead or straight out to the sides, but when he flexed them they were much less impressive. Frank Zane's arms were what I'd call deceptively good. They were never that large (probably in the 17-inch range), but in certain positions, such as arms overhead and slightly bent, I've never seen a more impressive arm than his. And the proportions, shape, etc. were terrific. To conclude, I think personally that the worst arm development I've ever seen on a top guy was Franco Columbu's. Even when he won the Olympia a second time in 1981, (and did at least 50% of his routine with flexed arm poses), he still had a long gap between the elbow and the start of his biceps, and the peak was nothing very impressive. And even though I've seen him bench close to 500 in a *bodybuilding* workout (weighing, I'd think, about 185-190), his triceps weren't even that impressive. Only his forearms reached what I'd call "average" development for a superstar. Anyway, it's impossible to publish this type of stuff, because everyone is so sensitive about what you say about them. But it's still fun to talk about it, and that's to this day the kind of thing that most interests me in the sport—guys like John Balik and me (we used to compete against each other) sitting around and discussing very dispassionately the relative merits of every guy in an Olympia or World Championships or Nationals.

June 12, 1987

Dear Joe,

Thanks for sending me your June-July issue. I enjoyed reading it. I actually thought I had put out exactly 100 issues of *M&F*, but won't quibble with the 95 figure.

You're quite right that I had grown more than casually disenchanted with the direction *M&F* had been taking, because I'm a hardcore bodybuilder through and through. So at the beginning of March Joe offered me a chance to edit *Flex* as soon as he was sure Rick Wayne had given up on it. In the meantime, he offered me my then current salary to write 5-6 articles per month for *M&F*.

Ricky had left at the beginning of March (with Mae Mollica) to resume publication of his *Caribbean Star* weekly newspaper in St. Lucia, but he had left the door open to come back in three months if the newspaper wasn't working out. Well it was, and at the beginning of June when I returned from the Pro World Championships in Germany, I began putting together my first issue of *Flex*, October. I'll be listed from there on out as Editor-In-Chief, and as you might imagine, I'm planning to make beaucoup changes.

To this day, I feel that the best muscle magazine of all time was the old *Muscle Builder & Power* from the middle 1970s. I'm after that sort of feel, except that I intend to use a large number of people—amateurs and pros both—rather than the