



Dear IGH:

Al and I first met George Eiferman in 1950 while visiting York, PA. We were staying at the quarters of Stan Stanczyk. During that week there was a large party with all the guys up there, including John Grimek, Steve Stanko, Bob Hoffman, Joe Pitman, John Terpak, George Eiferman and many others. I don't recall them all at the moment, being some 50 odd years ago. We did not keep in constant touch with George, however, until 1970.

All seven of us—Al, myself, our three sons and daughter, and a teenage boy we were raising—moved to Las Vegas from Florida. We went into a business partnership with George in a large gym. I ran the ladies department and George and Al ran the men's area. George had a large home which we rented until buying our own home. It was at George's home (he kept a room there), that I first met Arnold Schwarzenegger. He had not been in the states that long, so had not started in the movies as yet. One funny/odd quirk that George had was to put all his vitamins in his mouth at once, chew them up and swallow them. I do not know how he could do that.

Because we were new to Las Vegas, George was very free with his time and showed us all the amazing sites outside the city proper. He was also able to get us many "comps" to the big hotel shows and so we got to see acts like Siegfried and Roy, Elvis, Sonny and Cher, Ike and Tina Turner, the Folies Bergere, the Righteous Brothers, Sammy Davis Jr., and Wayne Newton. George was a very giving person and had the biggest bearhug on earth. For several months each year George would go out on the road, with his trumpet in tow, and talk to school assemblies about exercise, better eating habits, and staying straight. Also, up to the time of her passing, Mae West would call George up at the gym and the next day he'd be taking a trip to Los Angeles!

A few years later George started another gym in Vista, California. Al also worked with him in that gym for awhile. All through the 1980s and 1990s we kept in

contact here in Las Vegas, up to the time of his passing. There was no one quite like George. It was an experience and a pleasure knowing him and being his friend for so many, many years.

Vera Christensen
Las Vegas, Nevada



Dear IGH:

There is only one complaint I have about the annual AOBS get-togethers and that is that there just isn't time to get to talk with everyone. This year I only got to say "Hi" to Jan in the corridor. In addition to saying that I'm sorry I didn't get to visit with you, Terry. I wanted to let you know that two days after returning from Saddle Brook, I received a letter from Chuck Sipes' sister-in-law with the sad news that Chuck's only sibling, an older brother (Bill Jr.), had passed away at age 73 after a short illness. She did not specify what illness he had but their father (Bill Sr.) is still alive at age 98 and their mother lived into her 90's. So much for the gene impact on longevity. You both looked well (from a distance) and I really enjoyed the video of you displaying the contributions Vic made to your library. His passing was certainly a wake up call on our mortality.

Norm Komich
Beverly MA

Ed Note: Jan says I look better at a distance.



Dear IGH:

Hope you received the Topham book and found it interesting, and as I said in the letter I always love receiving each issue of your fine magazine.

Anyway, the reason for this email is to point out my opinion on Inch's ability to lift his famous dumbbell. In a letter by Larry Davis on page 33 of the recent issue of *IGH*, it states that I believe Inch lifted the bell overhead with one arm. Well, this is certainly not my opinion now, and I think I was always pretty reserved about it as I wasn't there to witness it, and as there were never any pictures of this feat except from the film mentioned

below, and of course this isn't even the bell!

Here's a section from an article "Strongmen on Film" I wrote for *Iron Grip*, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 2003.

Inch by Inch

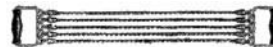
I.D. 1182.20; www.britishpathe.com: 23 January 1939; Length of film: 2 min. 26 sec.; B & W

Thomas Inch presents his famous "Unliftable" challenge dumbbell. Well, this is what he states in the film, but anyone who has seen the 172lb original knows this is not that dumbbell. Please see picture, and notice the protruding caps/collars on the ends of the globes of the dumbbell in his right hand, which of course the real dumbbell does not have. After Inch has talked about who hasn't lifted this dumbbell out of the many who have tried he then gets his stooges to try, if you can call their laughable attempts trying! I doubt that these bells (because he even bent down and lifted another one when he had the Inch bell above his head) weighed more than 100lb and 70lb, instead of the 172lb and 104lb that they were stated as. Personally I thought it was sad to see such a sham, because after all is said and done Inch was a strong man, but not this strong, and definitely not at the 57 years of age he was here. The age of 57 is stated in the May 1939 *Strength and Health* magazine article "The Unliftable Dumbbell" written by Inch himself. So after Trevor Evans the 18 stone strongman and Wally May the trainer to the famous British boxer Len Harvey both fail to lift it (but I'd have to ask did they even really try?), Bill Evans of *The Star* newspaper then taps the globes with a hammer to show it is metal! After this charade, it is now set for Inch to do the business, which of course he does easily because frankly the weights are not what he states. I would say that this disappointing film illustrates to many of us that Inch never cleaned the proper 172lb bell. This is not to say that he never cleaned one of his lighter bells, and perhaps he could even deadlift the 172 pounder. But there is a big difference between cleaning a ponderous weight like the Inch bell and deadlifting it.

**David Horne
Stafford, England**

Ed Note: David Horne and Elizabeth Talbot of Great Britain have completed an exhaustive history of Thomas Topham and are selling copies of their privately published book—*Strength Prov'd: Thomas Topham, Strongman of Islington*—for \$20.00 (US). The 30-page book contains a wealth of information about Topham and the places where he lived (Horne and Talbot have unearthed a considerable amount of new material). We are impressed with the book and the amount of research that it represents. To order

copies, please write: David Horne, 27 Ingestre Road, Stafford, ST17 4DJ, England. His email is: iron-grip@ntlworld.com.



Dear IGH:

That was a masterful job on the issue of *Iron Game History* that honored Vic Boff. I thoroughly enjoyed it! Al Thomas was a good choice to write the main article. That was also an interesting article on Pat O'Shea, too. I hope everything is going well with you. Stay well & stay strong.

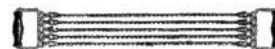
**Jim Sanders
Garner, NC**



Dear IGH:

I just finished reading your latest issue for the second time. The article by John Fair was fantastic. I can't imagine the amount of research he put into that. I was very saddened to hear that Vern Weaver had died. I was not aware of this. Actually, I thought I saw him back in 1999 at the York Strongman meet, but obviously not. I always felt that he was one fellow who could have gone much further than his Mr. A victory in 1963. He came close a couple of times at the NABBA Mr. Universe contest but just fell a little short. Keep up the great work. I look forward to each issue.

**George Bangert
Spring Grove, PA**



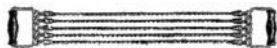
Dear IGH:

Sal Francino sent me a copy of the most recent issue of *IGH*, which I thoroughly enjoyed. The high quality of production and editing is obvious, as is your love for the subject. The discussion relating to the Apollon Bar/Wheels reminded me of an article on Apollon I read in one of Joe Weider's magazines about fifty years ago. It described Apollon's act, which closed with his "escape" from a prison cell by bending back the iron bars and stepping through. Before one show, someone tampered with the bars, forcing Apollon to exert everything he had to bend them, fatally injuring himself in the process. I don't know if that is true or not. Have you run

any articles on Apollon himself and the actual circumstances of his death? The old strongmen had to be showmen or they didn't eat, and it appeared that Apollon knew how to please an audience.

Barry Wiley
Sunnyvale, CA

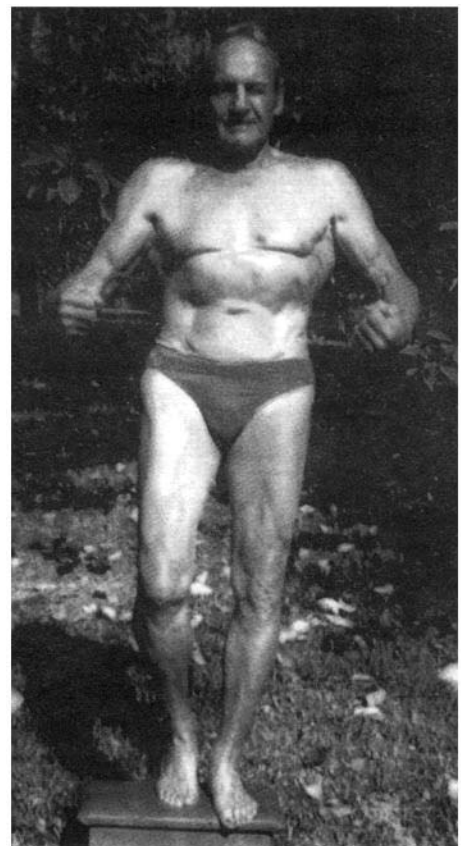
Ed Note: Edmond Desbonnet included a long biographical sketch of Apollon in his landmark history of the Iron Game, *Les Rois de la Force* (The Kings of Strength, published in 1911.). In Vol. 4, No. 5 & 6 of *IGH* we printed the entire Apollon chapter which David Chapman had translated. According to Desbonnet, he and Leon See witnessed the bar-bending episode in Lille, France. See described it "the most tremendous feat of strength of his [Apollon's] career." To read the full report, check out pages 43-45 of that issue of *IGH*. Apollon died years later.



Dear IGH:

You may be interested in using the enclosed in *Iron Game History* Only a very few bodybuilders have

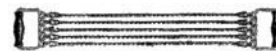
As you can see in these photos taken at 19, 32 and 85 years of age, Gene Jantzen has retained remarkable shape and muscularity throughout his long and healthy life. Gene is also a talented artist and one of our most treasured items is a statue he presented us several years ago for inclusion in our collection. To order copies of Gene's training course, *Ultimate Exercise*, please send \$5.00 to Gene Jantzen, P.O. Box 172, Carlyle, IL 62231.



photographic records of what exercise can do if practiced all of one's life. These pictures should be of some encouragement to the young. I'm 87 now and I'm still working out and holding age at bay, even though I have several health problems.

The exercise course enclosed is a great warmup for any athlete and a complete workout for the average guy and especially for seniors if done from a bed or couch as described. I sell it for a mere \$5.00 (shipping and handling included).

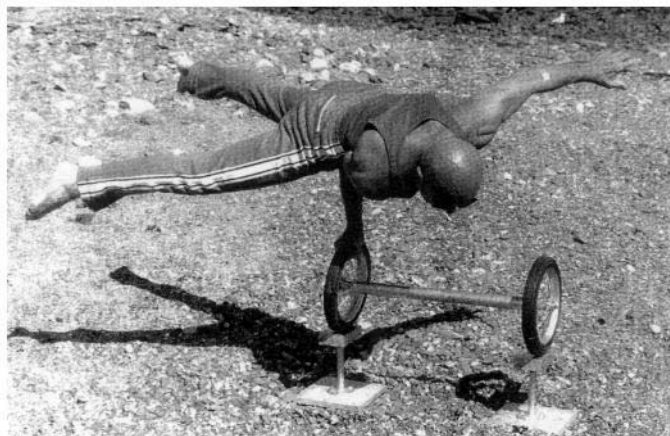
Gene Jantzen
Carlyle, IL



Dear IGH:

Please renew my subscription. Please also note in the April 2003 issue on Eliseev that there are at least two errors on page 35. Eliseev's height of 170 cm. is not 5'9" but, actually, rather 5'6.9"; in another spot the height of 172 cm. is translated as 5'6" when it is actually 5'7.7".

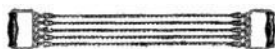
As for the forearm measurement of 40.5 cm.



(15.9"), I suspect that this is actually his biceps size. I'm skeptical of a 15.9" forearm on a 5'7", 185 pounder.

Dale Harder
Castro Valley, CA

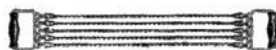
Ed Note: So are we. Good catch.



Dear IGH:

Sorry to hear about Vic—what a great guy. He did a great job of getting all the men together. I will miss him. Last time he called me was in October. We talked about 20 minutes. I turned 86 last July 1. He said he had the same thing I have, prostate problems, but it doesn't bother me. July 1st made 71 years that I have been working out—acrobat, weight lifter, swimming and diving, roller skater, ice skater, yoga, etc. I retired at 80. Now I just keep in shape at the YMCA in Sanford, Maine. Wish you both the best of health.

Al "Tarzan" Bertrand
Sanford, ME



Dear IGH:

Greetings! As I said on my telephone message, left on your answering machine Thursday evening, I thank you very, very much for the issue of *IGH*. You certainly sent the right issue to me; "Some Lesser Known Strongmen of the Fifties and Sixties" by Steve Neece was like a time journey to the past. Marjanian, Ahrens, Jimmy Hamilton...I saw those fellows and other great lifters such as Dave Ashman and Dave Sheppard on almost a daily basis. (2-3 hour workouts, 6 days per



Al "Tarzan" Bertram, one of the greatest handbalancers our game has produced, continued to give public exhibitions of his strength and flexibility until the age of 78. He is 70 in the photo on the left and 78 in the shot above, taken at his last public performance.

week guaranteed chronic overtraining via snatches, clean and jerks, presses, rows, power cleans, squats, high pulls, jerks off the rack, deadlifts, etc., etc....) This was the late fifties to the summer of 1963, the year I left for Australia. Richard Kee was a phantom. The guys talked about him, but few had actually seen him. But enough of this, I gotta get on the bike before the sun goes down, hammer those miles!

But I do want to say, Terry, you are a marvelous writer—dramatic, engaging, compelling, a beautiful style. After reading your fine piece on Harold Weiss I dug out my old well-read, time-worn, dusty *Inside Powerlifting*. Back in 1979 I dove right into the DL, BP training sections, not paying much attention to Chapter 1. But, Chapter 1, Terry, is quite simply a beautiful piece of writing, a monograph that could stand on its own as an exemplary literary work, of its genre. (Paragraphs 1 and 2 hit home hard.) *Iron Game History* is indeed a magnificent project, Terry and Jan. Ours is a noble heritage. Stay fit, stay healthy, keep blasting the iron, you two.

Richard Abbott
Santa Paula, CA



Dear IGH,

Your Volume 7 Number 4 Journal was particularly enjoyable but it was sad to learn of the passing of Vic Boff, a fellow so fondly, and understandably, remembered as your article(s) so nicely pointed out.

I visited York twice when I was 16, then 17 years old and it was during Easter Week, 1948, when John Grimek and I (just me!) had a two hour workout—

just the two of us in the York gym! What a great day for me! And then you'd never guess who walked in unexpectedly: none other than Henry Milo Steinborn and Primo Carnera! Bob Hoffman was not in York for that memorable event. Milo and Primo were very jovial that day and it was such a pleasure to meet them. My hand got lost somehow when I shook hands with Primo. And you could tell Grimek and Steinborn were great pals.

The fastest, if not the greatest lift I ever witnessed (just before heading overseas) was made by Stan Stancyck in Detroit for the 1949 Nationals (combined with the Mr. America when Jack Dellinger just edged out Melvin Wells and John Grimek gave a spectacular posing show. Stan Stancyck, after clowning on stage simulating drinking a bottle of that pink liquid known as Bob Hoffman's newly discovered suntan lotion (an excellent product by the way), came out and snatched 292 lbs in a "flash of speed" and without a knee touch (Remember his confession at the '48 Olympic Games?)

At Ed Yarick's famous gym in Oakland (Ed and Alyce were such great people!) I also just by chance had a workout with just John Davis in the gym and nobody else. It was in the Spring of 1953. I had John laughing and learned what a jovial guy he was. He was in a great mood and made some humorous but innocent remarks at Doug Hepburn's expense and then began laughing about Norb Schemansky: that Norbert could somehow "never" lift a weight on stage that he hadn't already lifted in the gym. John said, "I just can't understand this kind of thing because the most I snatched was 270 three reps before setting a world record with a snatch of 330 lbs.!"

Soon after that, I lifted for Yarick's Gym at 198 lbs. in my first Pacific Coast Championship taking a third, Dan Uhalde and Tommy Kono easily taking the first two places, etc; John Davis was a little tired but he and Jim Bradford both did somewhere around 390 lbs. in the clean and jerk.

It certainly has been a pleasure to know people like Ray Van Cleef, Bob Hise, and of course Olympic lifters like Frank Spellman, Tommy Kono (talk about a winning record!) and so many others. I also had a one-on-one conversation with Bob Hoffman watching tears streaming down his face as he spoke about Steve Stanko in the hospital suffering with venous disease and the threat of pulmonary emboli.

One night during my medical internship (from 1958 to 1959), after I had delivered my first baby and been up all night, I headed up to "Muscle Beach" by the

pier in Santa Monica. Isaac Berger was there. I weighed 198 and he weighed 131 lbs. We both cleaned and jerked 330! (the truth is I didn't hold the jerk with a very good lock-out, but Isaac Berger did so perfectly and it was so impressive to watch!) Lifting great Armand Tanny was there, too, and so was his pretty girlfriend, who weighed I guess about 120 pounds with a great figure. She cleaned 135 pounds on the Olympic set "so gracefully" it has remained in my mind. What a day it was!

Of all the lifting greats I've met there's one that has stood out for a reason that must have to do with "the spirit living on." I first met this lifter at Yarick's Gym in the Fall of 1952. David Sheppard. He givingly went out of his way to help me with technique and he amazed me as he lifted "like a gymnast," any style. He was somehow able to control his effort every step along the way. I lost track of Dave some time in the late seventies but it was great fun to have dinner with him. He loved the ladies, that was obvious, and I had the impression he enjoyed "opera," and knew a great deal about it. Vic Tanny told me personally in 1953 that Dave could be absolutely the greatest "if he could just settle down and concentrate a little more."

Ted Nolan Thompson, M.D.
Russellville, AR

Ed Note: We'd like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Dr. Thompson for an extremely generous gift that he recently made to our efforts here at *Iron Game History*.

Because we accept no advertising and sell no products, putting out *IGH* is an expensive proposition. Over the years, however, we've had several "patron subscribers" who've donated more than the regular \$100.00 Patron's fee to help the journal survive. In fact, one gentleman, who has asked to remain anonymous, has made several such large contributions. We'd like to thank Dr. Thompson and our many other Patron and Fellowship subscribers who help us keep *IGH* alive. We're deeply grateful for your support.

