



Dear IGH:

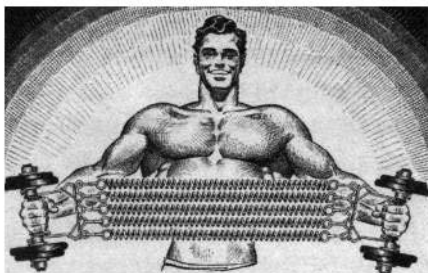
I am so sorry to have to send this news but thought it would be better than hearing it over the phone or on email. It is a banger of a shock so I hope you are sitting down.

On October 26th Patrick had an acute heart attack while working out at the gym. CPR was started immediately but oxygenated blood flow to the brain was very minimal, thus causing severe brain trauma. Patrick was in ICU until he journeyed to the end of the trail on October 30th. He briefly regained consciousness on the 28th to say a farewell to us, we believe, but after that it was a downward spiral. At least his suffering was brief and he had the attack at the place we call his second home.

He thought very highly of the both of you. The article that you wrote on him—which I have right in front of me—was such a grand tribute to a man who touched so many lives and was an inspiration to us all. It will be quite some time before I really believe he won't walk in the door tomorrow. We led a great life. Raise your glass up high and shout "*Slainte!*" (Cheers). May the wind be always at your back.

Susie O'Shea
Corvallis, OR

This letter touched us, and we suspect it will touch most of you, too, especially those who had the good luck to know Pat O'Shea. Pat had much good fortune in his life, not the least of which was his long and fruitful partnership with Susie—his fellow physical educator, fitness enthusiast and loving wife. Our article on him appeared in IGH Volume 7 No. 4 the April/May 2003 issue.



Dear IGH:

John Fair's *IGH* June/July 2003 article entitled "Mr. America: Idealism or Racism" was indeed interesting as well as quite a revelation in certain aspects. I, personally, think that Peary Rader's *Iron Man* magazine was the best publication in the physical culture field but I did not know about the Rader connections to the mid-1950s A.A.U. rule changes. Perhaps that's because in 1955 I briefly severed contact with the Iron Game and perhaps it was also that *Iron Man* was not available in every neighborhood. Sometimes one had to search for it. Anyway, after my having re-read John Fair's fine article many times, please permit me to share my thoughts.

Via my mental time machine I was quickly able to travel back to 1959 when I was regularly training with Arthur Harris in the Bronx Union YMCA. Those were the days when everyone was natural. The chemical monsters had not yet come. Symmetry, proportion and muscularity were admired in bodybuilding. Not just the huge size of a King Kong.

Nobody ever trained harder than Arthur Harris. Those of us who had the opportunity to train with him (me, Marvin Eder, Leroy Colbert, Elmo Santiago, all of the guys in the Bronx Union) can attest to that. He was one of the most muscular men ever. Inspired by Grimek, he was a good poser. In terms of athletic ability, in his pre-bodybuilding years he had been a skilled boxer who had sparred with champions like Beau Jack, Sandy Sadler, Ike Williams, and Johnny Saxon at the Salem Crescent Boxing Club in Harlem. His boxing career was cut short because of an accident. Then he found bodybuilding. He competed for the Mr. America title several times. Each time he was obviously the most muscular competitor. Artie would do a gut-busting set of 950 pound leg presses or 400 pound lat machine pulldowns or wide grip chins with 200 pounds or behind the neck presses with 200 pounds at a bodyweight of about 190. Drenched in sweat, he'd take a sip from his mysterious thermos and with a little smile he'd burst into a chorus of *Volare* or some other musical hit of 1958. He revealed to me in 2002 that the thermos contained only chilled water.

The 1950s were a paradoxical decade. The Fifties gave us some great music. There were marvelous groups like The Platters. There was Roy Hamilton, Dinah Washington, and Al Hibbler. Yet there were also things that were not right. About 1952 or so Arthur Harris, wearing his military uniform, had just taken his seat

on a bus somewhere in the south. Arthur, who was from New York City, had decided to sit up front behind the driver while his Army companions chose seats in the rear of the bus. The young New York City serviceman was not accustomed to what was about to transpire.

Arthur was looking to his left out the window when the bus driver, looking at Arthur in the rear view mirror of the not-moving bus, loudly declared, "Boy, you go sit in back with your friends." Arthur continued looking out the window and did not move. The bus driver, even louder, exclaimed, "Boy, did you hear me? I said go sit in back!" Arthur said nothing and did not move. The bus driver then made a grave mistake. He got up, turned and with both hands grabbed United States serviceman Arthur Harris by the lapels and lifted in an effort to force him to stand up. Poor misguided bus driver. Arthur exploded into action. When everything was over the bus driver's jaw was broken, he was sprawled in a heap on the floor and Arthur had again taken his seat looking out the window. Six months in military confinement would be Arthur's punishment. This account came from one of Arthur's military companions that day on the bus.

Young, soft spoken and articulate, Arthur Harris would be victimized by injustice on several other occasions during his life. In 1959, before he traveled to Georgia to compete in the Mr. America contest, Arthur did a posing exhibition in the Bronx Union YMCA after a weightlifting competition had finally terminated. I was there. So was Marvin Elder and his bride. I remember how thrilled I was when legendary Bob Hoffman entered the Bronx Union Y and I was the one to direct him to the gym where the weightlifting was to take place. And I remembered how perplexed I was when, after the lifting, Hoffman walked out when it was announced that Arthur Harris was about to do his posing routine for us. I didn't understand why he left. Didn't we learn about becoming big and strong in his magazine? Didn't I ask my mother a few years earlier to send money away for the York Seven-in-One Home Training Outfit? Didn't I borrow the training advice in *Strength & Health*? Why would he walk out and look so disinterested just before one of the most muscular men ever was about to pose? Yes, I was perplexed. I didn't know what to make of it. I was a naive kid. Maybe I still am to some extent. Only now I'm no longer a kid.

In the 1959 Mr. America Arthur Harris was obviously the most muscular competitor. It was the opinion of most people, including the selected winner,

that Arthur Harris should have been proclaimed Mr. America. Yet he was placed 8th. EIGHTH. Although most people were unaware of some new, arcane rules which, had they been in effect some earlier years, might have disqualified some previous winners, the reason why Arthur Harris would never win was obvious. Even when he was the best he could not win.

One can not help but wonder why haughty A.A.U officials of that time, who had apparently never been bodybuilding champions or even worthy competitors and who manifested no discernable muscularity, with an interest only in weightlifting, should have had anything at all to do with judging physique contests. In *Strength & Health* and *Iron Man* young men were encouraged to strive but when they tried some were humiliated. That period of history eventually disappeared but too late for Arthur Harris, George Paine, and countless young bodybuilders of various ethnic groups.

In 1959 my training with Arthur Harris undoubtedly contributed to getting me in the best condition of my life, up to that time. So even after my own frustrating experience earlier that year at a Mr. New York State contest with a well known trio of A.A.U. officials (one of whom refused to give me athletic points declaring that I "could not have won" the New York High School shot put championship when I, in fact, had done exactly that), I decided to enter the 1950 Mr. America along with Arthur. I submitted my entry. My only goal was to do the best I could. However, after another unnecessarily hostile and humiliating experience at Elechester, in Queens, N.Y., I decided that there was no sensible reason to put myself through any more degrading nonsense. I did not go to the contest and I quit United States bodybuilding competition forever. Enough was enough.

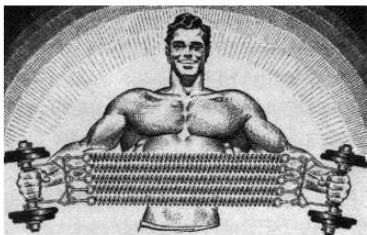
The British NABBA Mr. Universe contest in 1965 proved to have the most fairly judged bodybuilding competition I have ever seen or competed in. Each contestant was treated with respect by judges and audience alike. There was no prerequisite that each competitor had to also be a weightlifter. Apparently the NABBA people sensibly realized that these were two different activities requiring different training. Mr. Universe was what it said it was: a physique contest. My admiration for Oscar Heidenstam is boundless.

Childhood, adolescence, impressionable years. One looks for acceptance and hopes to avoid painful rejection. We seek heroes and want to be like them. We sometimes find out later in life that these "heroes" are only fragile, fault-laden human beings like ourselves.

Strength & Health magazine inspired many of us kids to become like John Grimek or Jules Bacon or Steven Stanko or Frank Light or Santo Leone or Steve Reeves or Kimon Voyages or Joe Lauriano or Alan Stephan or Val Pasqua or Elias Rodriguez. We were going to become Mr. America, which was the greatest thing anyone *could* become.

Melvin Wells is gone. Arthur Harris left us on May 17, 2003. Most of the A.A.U. officials of that time have also departed. What was it all about? We who lived through that era are now very aware of how temporary everything is. At one of our AOBS reunions in New York City's Downtown Athletic Club in the late 1980s I was having a conversation with the great John Grimek. John realized that I didn't have a bodybuilding title and he suggested I enter a masters competition. I replied "John, I no longer have the *need* to get on stage and pose to have people judge me." John looked at me and said, "good for you." He realized that I had finally grown up.

Dr. Ken Rosa
The Bronx, NY



Dear IGH:

Ian Batchelor was my favorite uncle when I was growing up and I am trying to locate any and all information I can to ensure that I can keep his memory alive for the younger folk in my family. My mother's maiden name was Alice Johansen and she had a sister "Bea" who married Ian. They had one daughter, "Janice."

Ian and Bea lived in Gardenia, California and my family lived in Salinas, CA. Ian and Bea used to come visit us now and then and he would entertain us all. He occasionally went deer hunting with my dad but he was too big to ride our horse. He *loved* to drink beer and lots of it. Bea seemed to try to keep up with him but it cost her in the end. I visited them sometime in the late Sixties and my time with Ian was nothing less than wonderful. His stories of his bartender days were most entertaining. When my mother passed away in 1992, I got to keep an old scrapbook that contained a few newspaper articles about Ian. I have the *Mighty Joe Young*

video where he was one of the ten strong men that had the tug-of-war with Joe. And, I have a few photos from 1957 that I took using my old Brownie Hawkeye camera when he visited our family when my father passed away. I would have been 13. I also came across your April 1995 article posted on the web from *Iron Game History*, entitled "Mac and Jan." The story brought mostly smiles but I was upset to learn how Janice (his only daughter) may have taken advantage of him in his final years. Other than that, my archives are pretty empty. When I speak of Ian I do not want to sound like an old geezer making up unbelievable stories. But Ian, bless his heart, seemed unbelievable.

James J. Foster
Via email

I was very happy to get your email and to learn that good old Mac is well-remembered by some of his relatives. You're right, by the way, to consider him special, as he was a truly remarkable man. Most historians of strength would consider him to have been history's greatest arm-wrestler as he apparently took on all comers for approximately 25 years and was never beaten during that time. He would play right or left-handed, with a thumblock grip (the normal grip used in arm or wrist-wrestling) or an openhand grip—depending on the challenger's preference.

I visited him quite a few times over the later part of his life, with the first visit coming in 1965 when he was about 58 years old and I was 27. I went to his bar that day with Bert Elliot, one of his good friends from the strength world. Mac was then retired from arm wrestling, having quit at 50 and lost a bit of weight, but he was still a big man—weighing about 280. I was in my lifting prime then, and weighed about 330, and I was proud when he compared our hands and showed me that they were almost exactly alike in size and shape. I always considered him a special friend, and I was saddened by the circumstances of his last years. But he had a hell of a life when he was in his glory days and he gave a great deal of happiness to a great number of people.

—T. Todd

We want to wish one of our favorite strongmen—"The Great" Joe Rollino—a happy 100th birthday. Joe, who knew and worked with Warren Lincoln Travis and many of the other early twentieth-century greats, celebrated his birthday on the 18th of March with a party organized by Mike D'Angelo and other pals.