



Dear IGH,

Your recent articles on Paul Anderson were arrogant and disrespectful. And because they were also laced with errors — from the egregious to the hilarious — they are especially embarrassing to their authors as well as to *Iron Game History*, purportedly, “a publication in which accuracy would be the byword.” I welcome anyone to compare these articles to my book on Paul Anderson.

Instead of publishing these anti-Anderson rants, why didn't you have the integrity to focus on Paul's greatness? Or to acknowledge that, minimally, *Paul Anderson: The Mightiest Minister* provided a meticulously documented account of Anderson's amateur lifting career, plus an honest statement on two of his most celebrated unofficial lifts — devoid of hyperbole and replete with significant new evidence on them? Is it because John Fair and Joe Roark, for all their posturing and puffery, have contributed virtually nothing of substance related to understanding Paul Anderson's lifts? Fair, whose multiple misstatements reveal his slipshod scholarship, is too preoccupied with minutia, if not muckraking, to contribute much of worth. yet he certainly takes a long time to say very little. And Roark, for all his vaunted accuracy, got lost early in his journey toward truth, supposedly examining the safe in Vidalia, even though it's in Toccoa, and he never does regain his bearings. In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

My book notes that, “Generally speaking, the world's most accomplished, respected lifters and Iron Game experts take the side of supporting Paul Anderson's lifts, and the few critics are generally people with much lesser credentials.” While it might not have been their intent, Terry Todd, John Fair and Joe Roark certainly corroborated my observation.

Randall J. Strossen, Ph.D.
IronMind Enterprises, Inc.
Nevada City, CA

Editor's note: When we made the decision to publish the research of Joe Roark and John Fair we realized that it

would make some people unhappy, and that Randy Strossen — who wrote the Anderson biography reviewed by Fair — would be particularly displeased. We regret these hard feelings because we consider Strossen to be one of the leading figures in today's iron game. Although we would like to see him cover the issue of drugs in a more comprehensive manner in Milo, the magazine is nonetheless consistently outstanding and fills many of the gaps left by the demise of Strength & Health and the change in focus of Iron Man. Even so, the question remains: if we are aware of painstaking research done by men who are known for their love of accuracy and who have no anti-Anderson political agenda — research that comes to the same essential conclusions about one of the most publicized feats of strength in history — is it not appropriate for us to publish that research in the interest of fairness? If insufficiently documented and possibly fraudulent records are allowed to stand it places those who have trained to break those records at a very unfair disadvantage, as the following letter makes clear.



Dear IGH:

One of the basic questions that a man asks is, “Do I measure up?” or “How do I compare?” People do this in a variety of ways: war, money, business, or athletic endeavors, to name but a few. Answering that question is the motivation for many, if not most of man's achievements. Throughout history, layer grows upon layer in a life story with surprising quickness, that either deifies or demonizes a person and in either way will exaggerate the person's life out of all proportion. I run into local lore quite regularly concerning myself, which would do justice to any ancient hero, both ways. Those of us in our respective fields pay very close attention to what is actually going on and has gone on there. It is very important to differentiate between what is myth and what is truth when measuring oneself against those in the past. It is not fair for a man to be required to measure flesh and blood against myth and legend.

It has been asked, “If a tree falls deep in the forest, and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?” Perhaps, but there is no significance unless someone bears witness. In the same way, concerning one's own endeavors, unless witness is borne, much if not all of the

significance of them is lost.

I have remained drug free and mostly supplement free throughout my strength career so that I can honestly compare, on a level playing field, my strength and feats with those of the giants of the past. I have thus placed myself at a considerable disadvantage in the “here and now” in my quest for this, I believe, greater significance.

In this regard, I salute *Iron Game History* for its courageous stand in speaking the truth as best as it can be known regarding the claims of Paul Anderson. I thank John Fair, Joe Roark, and you, Terry, for taking the time to research, and having the guts to reveal, facts which fill us all with a certain measure of sadness. What has actually, historically been accomplished in the backlift, or any other lift for that matter, is extremely important to people like me. In the case of the backlift especially, this represents the most weight lifted by a human being, and I believe that this is as historically significant as any other human achievement, except perhaps loving your neighbor.

Greg Ernst
Nova Scotia, Canada

Editor’s note: Greg Ernst has made the heaviest authenticated backlift in history (5340 pounds). Truth be told, the person we had most in mind when we decided to publish the results of the research done by Joe Roark and John Fair was Greg Ernst. Greg had spent almost twenty years specializing in the backlift when he made his historic lift, and it was done in front of thousands of people — two of whom were the two of us.



Dear IGH:

The story on Paul & his backlift; let him have his glory. He was no steroid-growth hormone-junkie. No support rubber suits. A nice guy and a credit to our game unlike the chemical freaks today! That’s why I dropped out of the game. Not enough guys like Paul. I met him several times-boy-what an appetite! What natural strength!

I did five reps in the quarter squat, with no wraps

or juice, with 1250 lbs. On regular squat racks, two guys hanging onto the bar. I weighed 200 lbs.

John Leitget
Brooklyn, NY



Dear IGH,

I finally worked my way through the current *Iron Game History* and wanted to tell you that John Fair’s article on Anderson is excellent. It is an excellent critique. I will be using the criteria he sets forth, in fact, as I wrap up the Arthur Jones project. The timing could not have been better.

John Szimanski
Piedmont Fractional Plates
Via email.



Dear IGH,

I wanted to congratulate Jan Todd and Michael Murphy on the great job you did on Ottley Coulter. I was amazed by the material you covered in the piece and all of it meticulously documented. I was particularly interested in the details on Prada, of whom I had only the slightest knowledge.

The one thing that jumped out at me was the very precarious existence that circus performers lived. It is absolutely wonderful to have this sort of thing available for scholars. I wish I’d known all this before the Sandow book was published because I think there are important parallels in the careers of both athletes. I am already looking forward to Part II with great anticipation.

It’s also nice to see the contrast between Ottley and Paul Anderson. Coulter was so clearly trustworthy and modest in his assertions while Anderson and his supporters are so loud and gassy in theirs. Terry’s introductory essay was a brilliant piece of diplomacy; no one wants to deny Anderson’s gifts. but he was in many ways his own worst enemy.

I just returned from two wonderful weeks in France. When I finally got to Paris, I found a rather large stack of books, including several very rare works by Marcel Rouet on women's fitness as well as a 1909 history of French physical education by Georges Demeny that I had never seen before. I think my greatest find, however, was *Le Palmarès de la Culture Physique Française (French Physical Culture's Roll of Honor)*. This is a richly illustrated book of essays by prominent sportsmen and a list of every Desbonnet school in France with photos and a brief commentary on all of them. It was limited to a hundred copies, so I'm very lucky to have found it!

Keep up the great work you're doing in *IGH*.

David Chapman
Seattle, Washington



Dear *IGH*:

The June 2001, Paul Anderson issue of *IGH*, was for me one of the most interesting, exciting issues so far. To me it brought back memories of 1957, 1958 when Paul Anderson's prodigious strength was the talk of most people in the Iron Game including those of us whose interests were in bodybuilding. I remember when Anderson made the unfortunate error of attempting to transfer his awesome lifting power into professional boxing. Arthur Harris, one of the most muscular men in the world at the time, and I were training buddies in New York's Bronx Union YMCA. Arthur had been a talented boxer. He and I were working out and the subject of Paul Anderson's boxing efforts came up. Harris thought Anderson was making a big mistake. Arthur said that "even if he has any success eventually he'll have to fight Sonny Liston." We both looked at each other knowing very well what that would mean. Paul's boxing career came to an abrupt end when he was stopped in the second round by a fellow he outweighed by about one hundred pounds. That was probably fortunate for Paul.

Fantastic issue! I enjoyed it very much.

Dr. Ken "Leo" Rosa
The Bronx, NY

Dear *IGH*:

Just a note about Paul Anderson. Your coverage was very balanced and honest and I don't think you will have had any criticism from Europe. Over the years there have been many cynical and critical comments about such claims [as Paul's backlift] and for the "strongest man that ever lived" kind of publicity. It took me quite a long time to get to grips with the problem as I hunted through magazines, trying without success to find reports written at the time of Paul's claimed backlift. He was, rightly, so much admired for his genuine lifting and being such a good Christian that it makes it very difficult for people to be critical. It was absolutely right and very brave to set the record straight. It was also appropriate that Americans did this; had others done it there would have been much more controversy. This way it is seen that your magazine is even-handed in recording historical happenings and correcting a long-standing inaccuracy to which a blind eye has been turned.

I also admire and enjoy the coverage elsewhere of Paul Anderson by his many supporters and we should not let this solitary incident diminish our respect for their contributions, or cloud our love for this great lifter.

David P. Webster
Irvine, Scotland



Dear *IGH*:

I was very pleased with the Steve Reeves issue. When speaking with you on the phone some time ago, I mentioned how odd it seemed for Steve to more or less drop out of show business when he could have done better pictures or gotten into television. That's where the money is. Look at his old buddy Jack LaLanne.

Some forty years ago my dad was kind enough to give me enough money to buy the Varsity Club from Jim Murray. As an impressionable teenager I remember everything Jim Murray told me. John Fair, who did a piece in the Reeves *IGH*, had the quotes of Jim Murray exact in his book *Muscle town*. This is a testimony to Jim's honesty and Mr. Fair's reporting ability.

John McCarthy
Waretown, NJ

Dear IGH:

I want to congratulate you on the issue of *Iron Game History* featuring the late Steve Reeves. It sounds as though you were held to the grindstone until the very end. I know exactly how that feels. I also want to thank you for noting my book *Worlds to Conquer: An Authorized Biography of Steve Reeves* in the journal. Again, a job well done.

I received a copy of *IGH* from Vic Boff only a few days ago. As you know Vic is a great guy and is an incredible asset to the iron game. He is by all means a true pioneer within the sport and we are very fortunate to have someone today with such a colorful history and background.

I was not aware that this tribute issue had been written until Vic had asked me if I had received a copy, as I had not. We have spoken over the phone now for a number of years during my project and Vic has turned out to be a sincere friend and an incredible aid.

Chris LeClaire
So. Chatham, MA

**Dear IGH:**

Once again you have done a wonderful job in paying tribute to one of the Iron Game's icons. Congratulations on the superb Steve Reeves tribute in *IGH*.

Enclosed is my renewal of *IGH* at the Patron level. Please continue it "In Memory of Chuck Sipes." His family is doing well. His oldest daughter, Daphne, was married this past summer. His next oldest daughter, Kathy, has two children, one in his teens and the other out of high school; and his youngest daughter, Trish, has two preschoolers. Mary, his wife, has moved to be close to Trish so that she can help out with the children. All are still in California. I have made a personal vow to share all my knowledge of their grandfather with the four grandchildren. Chuck's father, Bill, is well over 90 and lives near Chuck's brother's family in Oregon. Chuck's mother passed away two years ago. His parents had a long and fulfilled life with the exception of Chuck's demise.

On another subject, do you remember the video I sent you of those movies I took at the first two Olympias? Well, I recently discovered Dave Draper's website and so I offered him a copy of them like I sent you. His wife, Laree, handles the correspondence and was very excited about getting a copy as she had never seen Dave in his "Prime." (I think he looks as good today!) Well, before I sent them a copy, I wanted to get a more professional conversion from the movie to video when Laree contacted me and explained that the TV cable channel E! was doing a bio on Dave and she felt they could use the footage. So I sent one of my "home conversions" and Laree and Dave were just thrilled with it and they sent a copy to E! They were so excited they contacted me and had an expensive premium conversion done. The irony of this is that E! is in Los Angeles and they had previously utilized a company to convert some other home movies on another show awhile back; this company was unique in its abilities in that I guess it's the only one in the US of A that can do such a quality conversion. Well, where do you think they're located? A twenty-minute drive from my house! That's as ironic as Chuck's daughter moving within a fifteen-minute drive of my house! Talk about a small world. Anyway, when I get my copy of the master, you will be the first to get a copy. I have certainly gotten some mileage out of those movies, as they were how I first met Chuck in 1968. Also, have you seen Dave's book *Brother Iron, Sister Steel*? It's a classic.

Norm Komich
Beverly, MA

Editor's note: Norm, we appreciate your kindness, and the upgraded tape. We have read Dave's book and found it very interesting and well written.

**Dear IGH:**

Enclosed is a money order for another year of *IGH*. As usual, I found the latest issue interesting. Too much space, I thought, was devoted to Paul's backlift. Since it wasn't done under strict circumstances, I think it should be left as an Iron Game tale.

The same could be said about the nitpicking

about the depth of his squat. In the Broad St. Gym in York I saw Paul do 12 squats with 660. As far as I was concerned they were full squats. In the same training session he also cleaned 415 and pressed it three times. He and I were the only ones in the gym at that time.

It's no secret that not everyone has the same flexibility. Some can squat till their butt is a few inches from the floor. I saw a photo of Tom Platz doing an eight hundred pound squat. Very deep, thirty-plus thighs and all.

Piteo Margas
Via email

Editor's note: It should always be remembered that what you "see" and what you read is not always true. Tom Platz' squats in the 800 pound range that have been shown in photos in muscle magazines were taken with six plates (three on each side) that looked like standard 45 pound plates but were not. The dummy plates were widely used in photo sessions in Gold's Gym and other popular training facilities in the Los Angeles area, and they weighed almost nothing. The use of these plates reduces an apparent weight on the bar of approximately eight hundred pounds to an actual weight of just a bit over five hundred pounds.



Dear IGH:

Ken Rosa suggested that I write a few words of my own recollections of John Grimek.

I met John at Sig Klein's Bent Press contest the first weekend in May of 1941. I was an eager, enthusiastic 16-year old. (Ha-ha. I am an enthusiastic 77-year old now.) Anyway, he was so approachable and pleasant and I had a chat with him.

Four weeks later the Senior Nationals were held in Philadelphia. I was there for the two day session. Had the chance to see Stanko, Davis and Abele lifting. After the lifting I went backstage where the Mr. A contestants were preparing for the posing. I went to where Grimek was and spoke to him. He did not tell the pesky kid to go away, don't bother me. He was courteous and pleasant; as a matter of fact I helped him apply a bit of

oil on his body. I did not see him after he went out to pose. (I did watch the whole contest though.) I have such great memories of the whole affair that have lasted these 60 odd years.

I did not see Grimek again until I moved to York in late 1944 lock, stock and barrel. I went to work for Bob Hoffman and then I would see John five times a week, three of those times in the gym. They were interesting years. Visitors came from all over the USA and from quite a few foreign countries. Very memorable. John was a tremendous person physically, a unique example of outstanding development. And equally, or more so, a human being of warmth, kindness, and friendliness.

Since I was a seaman for over forty years, I did not see John very much [in later years] but I would call him periodically for gab sessions, which I enjoyed and I believe he did too. I miss my friend of so many years. Perhaps we will get to work out in the BIG GYM in the sky, someday.

Pete Marozas
Watertown, CT



Dear IGH:

This letter is long overdue. While I am somewhat saddened by John Grimek's death, he had a long life, admired by many.

I cannot recall an issue of *IGH* that was not done well; I have enjoyed it from the beginning. Some of my favorite articles have been about Apollon, Paul Anderson, Roy Hilligenn, Bob Peoples, Jim Lorimer, and all the ones by John Fair.

I know I have placed more than my share of phone calls to your office inquiring about when the next issue will be out. That is because I look forward to them so much. Thinking about future subjects for articles I came up with ones about various great gyms of the past — Ed Yarick's, Leo Stern's, Bill Pearl's, George Turner's, etc. Also [profiles of the] Greats of the Game like Bill Pearl, Clancy Ross, Norbert Schemansky, and Tommy Kono.

There is just so much subject matter to deal with that it presents a great challenge. I'm glad to see that

your list of patrons and fellows has grown to assist you in your quest.

The article about *Physical Fitness Magazine* in Vol. 5 #3 was also good and it would be good to do one like that from time to time. An article on Jack LaLanne and his contributions would also be real good. I will close now; I look forward to meeting you again. The last time was December 1982 at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville.

Good things to you both.

Howard S. Havener
Manassas, VA

Editor's note: We remember. It was at a strength coaching symposium organized by Bill Dunn at the University of Virginia. You may know that Bill died recently. He had a hard time during the later years of his life.



Dear IGH:

Just a few words to tell you how I appreciate your website. I am Prof. Edmond Desbonnet's grandson, and I read with pleasure the nice translation of my friend David Chapman on Apollon. I intend to put my own collection on line, maybe next year. I need to find time for that! Best regards and congratulations

Richard Desbonnet
Paris, France
Via email



Dear IGH,

It's probably overdue — I apologize — but enclosed is the second \$100 towards my patron subscription,

It was your Vol. 6, No. 3 May-June, 2000 headline that disheartened me. More than that I was genuinely 'upset.' Immediately it crossed my mind, "What the hell, was the poisoned!?" What, Steve Reeves 1925-2000 gone; all gone? It took an airplane crash to kill the

great Rocky Marciano — another sad day indeed.

I first met Steve Reeves the summer of 1945 at Ed Yarick's gym, Oakland, CA. He was 20, I was 15. He was born a 'mountain man and equestrian' in Montana, lost his real Dad before age two, came West with his Mother and late in the Great Depression was noticed by Ed Yarick about 1939. As I recall Steve bicycled (delivered papers) and had very strong limbs. Ed Yarick became Steve's "father." Steve often would ask me just to hear the answer, "Ted, who is the nicest man who ever lived?" I'd reply, "Ed Yarick, the Swede." Steve would smile and say, "right." Steve then would ask, "who is the second nicest guy who ever lived?" I'd answer, "George Eiferman." Steve would smile and say, "right." Some questions are real easy to answer.

When Steve lost his wife and agent in the early nineties he was a lonely man. His long-time pal from Norway (royal family tie-in), Sven Rider came up from Antigua and I took them both sailing on my ketch. Steve's agent-wife was originally Sven's fiancée. Since she spoke five languages and was involved with show biz in Europe she was the logical person to manage Steve's fifteen movies. Between the fourteen "Hercules" movies they lived in Switzerland and Steve said he only began training *three weeks* before a movie! He'd tell me with a most serious look, "Hey, when I train, I really train!" All Steve Reeves had to do was "look at his biceps and it would grow!" He had "designer genes." God gave him the same "steroids" he gave Eugen Sandow. Having the "potential-au naturelle" to train twelve to fifteen hours/weekly instead of eight or nine like most of us, Steve may have [been able to] become the 'world's strongest man.' I'd ask him [why he didn't try]. He'd reply, "why?" He simply refused to "over do it!" (As we know, oral and injectable anabolic plans make it possible to train thirty or more hours weekly as skeletal muscle 'recovery' is quickened, but then one has no time for anything else).

Steve was particular. I tried to line him up with a gal. It didn't work out. Debra just happened by. Next thing I knew Debra and her 12 year old were Steve's family! Steve's last sail on my ketch was with Debra. She 'filled the bill.' Steve had some rough years, but his "sense of humor" was terrific. That got him through a lot. Damn he'd make me laugh.

Ted Nolan Thompson, M.D.
Laguna Beach, California 92651