

My First Half-Century in the Iron Game

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Our memory is not perfect; sometimes we give ourselves credit for ideas that in fact we learned from somebody else. Which is not a lie but is, instead an example of a failed memory. In an attempt to avoid that, I have been keeping detailed records of everything that I considered to be significant for more than fifty-five years; and, recently, these records became very useful to me, when I decided to attempt the writing of an autobiography. Throughout the last twenty-odd years several people tried to get me to write an autobiography, but I always refused; refused on the grounds that I do not believe it is now possible to publish the truth in today's politically correct' environment.

About twenty years ago, just having read one of my articles in IRON MAN, Bill Pearl called me and said ... "My God, Arthur, you can't say things like that in print; you have insulted everybody just short of the Pope and Jesus Christ himself."

To which statement I replied ... "Not to worry, Bill, I will get around to both of them in later articles."

I have known Bill Pearl since 1960, when he played a part in a feature film that I produced and directed. I had planned to use Leroy Colbert in that part, and he agreed to do so, but then Joe Weider stuck his nose into the situation and managed to convince Colbert not to play the part. So then I turned to John Grimek for advice about just who I should use, and he suggested Bill Pearl. And Bill agreed to play the part.

Bill cooperated fully during the production of that film, and I had no complaints on that score; but I quickly learned that it was impossible to hold a meaningful conversation with him on the subject of exercise; in his own mind he was the 'expert' and he refused to even consider any suggestions from the likes of me. Having learned that, I afterwards kept my mouth shut on the subject of exercise, knowing that any additional comments from me would be an exercise in futility at best.

Years later, after I did become openly involved in the field of exercise and started publishing articles in IRON MAN, Bill wrote me a postcard that said ... "My training methods may be out motted but ..."

So then I called him on the phone, and told him ... "Bill, your spelling leaves a great deal to be desired: the word should have been 'outmoded' and that is one word, not two words, and the 'moded' part of it does not even have one letter T in it, never mind two."

Whereupon, he told me ... "You are not my father, and you are not my uncle; and I don't need any help from the likes of you, or from anybody else either."

So I then said ... "Well, you need help from somebody; but I doubt seriously if you will accept it."

In a recent article in IRON MAN the statement was made that Bill was in the best shape of his life during the Mr. Universe contest in London in 1971, and that his upper arms measured 21 inches. Well I saw that contest, and while I did not get a chance to measure Bill's arms, it was obvious that they were far smaller than Sergio Oliva's arms, which were 20 and 1/8 inches; having measured Bill's arms accurately in 1960, when they were far larger than they were in 1971, I do not believe that they were even 18 inches in circumference. In 1960 his largest arm measured 18 5/8 inches.

Just why anybody would be tempted to lie about their measurements is something that I have never been able to understand; but they frequently do and doing so leads to nothing apart from a lot of heartache for others who are then encouraged to try to produce similar results, who are then discouraged when they fail to produce such impossible results.

About twelve years ago, Mike Mentzer visited me in Florida and was convinced that his upper arms were 20 inches 'cold,' but when I measured them with his full cooperation they turned out to be just slightly above 18 inches. Which is a Hell of a big arm if it is muscular; but a 20 inch arm is not just big, it is, in fact, almost unbelievably big, simply huge, nothing less than shocking when you see it.

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I also measured Arnold's arms when he was claiming that they were 22.5 inches, and they turned out to be slightly above 19 inches. Which is really big, but far short of what he claimed. Now we have at least some men claiming to have 25 inch arms; but I will believe that claim only after I have measured them myself. And, if such claims are true, then why should they refuse to be measured? If they will visit me in Florida, and let me measure their arms, and agree to not object when I publish their true measurements, I will pay for their trip if they turn out to have even a 22 inch arm, never mind a 25 inch arm.

We all make mistakes, and God knows I have made at least my fair share of mistakes, but publishing lies serves no worthwhile purpose while doing a great deal of damage. My forthcoming autobiography, if it is ever published, is primarily an account of my mistakes; is not an attempt on my part to prove how smart I am, instead comes a lot closer to proving just how stupid I have been throughout most of my life. But me being stupid does not make other people smart; might, however, provide them an opportunity to learn from my mistakes without having to make similar mistakes themselves.

Quite a long list of people will be outraged if and when my autobiography is published, because it is nothing short of being frank; and many people do not want to hear the truth, particularly if it concerns them. So, if it is ever published, you can count on it, there will be a massive outcry of rage from many of the people named therein. So be it, they have published their bullshit stories, now let them read the truth; none of which will help them because such people are beyond help, but might be of value to a lot of other people who are interested in the truth.

If I have learned anything of value during my already long life, it is this: meaningful communication with other people is difficult at best, and is usually impossible when the other party views themselves as an 'expert' in their field. Meaningful communication via the published word is particularly difficult; primarily because there is no feed-back from your intended audience, and if they fail to understand a particular point that you are trying to establish then you do not have a chance to try to explain your point in a manner that they might understand, cannot keep giving them more examples until they do understand.

None of the things that I have ever published on the subject of exercise is actually complicated or difficult to understand; should, in my opinion, be obvious to a goat. But, instead, is usually obvious to almost nobody, and will, of course, always be disputed by the self-proclaimed 'expert.' Since it clearly puts the lie to their opinions, makes them look like the fools that they actually are, or the liars that they are, or both. For my part, I have certainly demonstrated my own foolishness repeatedly, but at least I have never been a liar. And, when my earlier mistakes, foolishness if you will, came to my attention, I always rushed into print in an attempt to clearly spell out my own earlier mistakes. Which is far more than Joe Weider or a long list of other people can claim.

And, in any case, that is the best way to learn anything, by observing your own mistakes; in practice, damned little turns out the way we expect it to, most of the things we try fail to produce the desired results, and that at least makes us aware of something that does not work, or should. And some of our mistakes leading to failure do provide solutions to our problems, or can if we permit them to.

At least one other thing that I had to learn the hard way, apparently the only way I was ever able to learn anything, is that what works for me may not work for you; because people are different, and thus have different requirements. Something that might be perfect for me could be devastating for you, or vice versa. For years I told other people to train in exactly the way I trained for producing best results, and that way worked for me; then, when it failed to produce similar results for other people, I blamed that failure on them, accused them of not trying hard enough, or did not believe that they had really been training the way they said they had.

But now I know better: while my advice did work very well for some people, it did not work at all for some other people. During the last eight years, we have finally been able to determine just what some of these individual differences in people really are, and now we are beginning to learn just how to deal with these differences. This relatively new knowledge was made possible by the fact that we eventually did have equipment that was capable of measuring these

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differences; while, previously, we could not measure them, because prior to the introduction of equipment that was capable of meaningfully measuring these factors there was no tool capable of measuring them. But now we do have such tools; and they have taught us a few very surprising things, have clearly explained several things that we had previously noticed but could not understand.

Starting about twenty years go, a lot was published on the subject of differences in muscular fiber types; but I refused to publish anything on that subject until about eight years ago; did not publish anything about differences in fiber types because I did not even have any opinions on the subject, and damned sure did not have any knowledge on that subject. And nobody else had any such knowledge either; which did not stop them from publishing their opinions, generally stupid opinions as things turned out later. Basing their opinions upon attempts to test people while using Cybex equipment, machines that are utterly worthless and grossly misleading, these people published a great deal of outright bullshit; and are still publishing even more bullshit; did not know what they were talking about twenty years ago and still do not know what they are talking about, and probably never will know; or, at least, will probably never admit their previous mistakes even if they eventually do become aware of the real facts.

A lot of these mistaken people are at least sincere, actually believe the bullshit that they are publishing, but being sincere does not mean that you are right. There is no question about the fact that weight-training can be good for you, that point at least has been clearly demonstrated; but kindly take note of what I just said, 'can be good for you,' and it does not follow that it always will be good for you. So now we must learn what is good for us, and what is not; what is productive, and what is counterproductive; but we cannot learn that by listening to the advice of other people, regardless of how successful they appear to have been. And you cannot learn that by listening to me either; because I do not know just what your requirements and your limitations are, am aware only of the existence of such requirements and limitations and know that they vary from one person to another.

You will thus be forced to determine your own requirements and limitations for yourself, and all I can even hope to do is to try to point you in the right direction. Some of these requirements and limitations are results of differences in your muscular fiber types: a predominantly fast-twitch subject cannot tolerate either frequent or high-repetition exercise, will rapidly lose strength instead of becoming stronger if trained in that manner. But, unfortunately, most people have no available means for determining their fiber types; do not have access to equipment capable of determining their fiber types. Nor can even we measure these factors in all of your muscles; but we can, at least, measure them in the lumbar spine (lower back), the cervical spine (neck), and the knee, which are the most critical areas in the body for most people. And having done so, we then know what to do about any problems in those areas; what to do, and what to avoid.

More than twenty-two years ago, in January of 1972, I published an article in a national journal in which I stated my intention to design, build and market machines that would be capable of meaningful measuring human functional ability; then went on to say that doing so would require about six months of work on our part and an investment of about \$200,000.00. But, in fact, I did not believe either of those estimates; instead, I believed we could do so in about three weeks, and with an investment of only about \$10,000.00.

How wrong can you be? I bit off a lot more than I could immediately chew; and the first such machine was not produced until fourteen years later, following an investment of more than \$40,000,000.00. When we started, I believed I knew the solutions to the problems that I was aware of, but I was wrong and my solutions simply did not work; moreover, it turned out that I was not even aware of many of the actual problems, problems that we did not even notice until years later, years of continuous research.

Prior to the article in January 1972, I had published several articles in which I clearly spelled out several of the problems and dangers involved in tests conducted with Cybex equipment, and believed I could solve those problems; and, eventually, we did solve them, but it took a Hell of a lot longer than I initially expected, and about four-thousand times as much money as I expected.