

# My First Half-Century in the Iron Game

# 40

Somebody once said . . . “If you have a problem that you cannot solve, seek out the most highly recognized expert in that field and carefully listen to his suggested solution, and then do exactly the opposite. If he suggests “up,” try “down.” And while this will not always solve your problem it will, at least, save you some time; will save the time that you might have wasted trying his suggestions, which will almost invariably be wrong.”

For those of you who are old enough to remember what this country was like fifty years ago, or even thirty years ago, the above suggestion probably will not appear outrageous; because you have had a chance to compare current society to our earlier society, have seen the results produced by paying attention to the suggestions of supposed “experts.” If any of you can think of even one actual improvement that has resulted from such expert advice I would greatly appreciate it if you would bring it to my attention, because I have somehow managed to overlook it.

But you must, of course, judge things in context; you cannot meaningfully evaluate anything until you clearly understand the relationship between claimed benefits and their actual costs. Don’t tell me how good something is, tell me how much it cost and then I may be able to determine whether it is good or bad.

There should no longer be any doubt in regard to the potential benefits of exercise, but it does not follow that such benefits are actually being produced by very many people. And when the actual total costs are factored into the situation, the results look even worse. Tens of thousands of schools in this country have physical education programs of one kind or another, but the actual benefits produced by these programs is probably **SOMETHING LESS THAN ZERO**; that is, for every student that is actually helped, there are several who are hurt and hundreds who are simply wasting their time. Why? Because such programs are designed by “experts,” are conducted by “experts,” and are evaluated by “experts.” There probably are a few exceptions to this general rule, but so far I have been unable to find one.

What little I know on the subject of exercise I learned the hard way, by trial and error; I have learned only one thing from any of the supposed experts, have learned that none of them know anything of value.

And while it is certainly true that at least some people have produced what appear to be outstanding results from exercise, it does not follow that the methods used to produce these results were actually right; it is at least possible that equally good, or even better, results could have been produced if the methods had been changed. Again: things must be viewed in context.

A very large part of the problem with “experts” is, I believe, a result of tunnel vision: such people generally believe that they must devote themselves entirely to their own field of interest, must not waste time on any other subject. But, in fact, such an attitude usually produces a result that is exactly opposite of the intended result, literally assures that such people will not even be aware of many things that could help them in their chosen field.

To the degree that I have been successful in the field of exercise, I give any credit that is due to the fact that I have not limited my interests and activities to this one field. I have been a pilot for fifty-six years, and I have fourteen medical doctors in my more or less immediate family (my father, mother, sister, brother, daughter, uncles, cousins, etc.) and yet I have very little respect for most pilots and doctors; because I have learned that both pilots and doctors, with very rare exceptions, are much too narrow in their outlooks. They have devoted too much time to one area of study while ignoring many other things that could have helped them in their chosen field of work.

As somebody once said . . . “Specialization is for insects.”

My experience as a pilot taught me about such things as torque, impact forces, friction, equal and opposite forces, structural strength in relation to functional strength, and many other things that have direct applications in the field of exercise. Working with a wide variety of exotic animals over a period of many years taught me a great deal about just what is, and what is not, possible in a physical sense; knowledge that is also of great value in the field of exercise.

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Reading hundreds of technical books and tens of thousands of supposedly scientific studies made me clearly aware of the overall confusion, controversy, superstition, mythology and outright bullshit that is widely existent in this field; and, for that matter, in almost any field you can name.

The current attitude in this country on the subject of AIDS is nothing short of outright insanity: in an attempt to be “politically correct” (which is itself simply another example of insanity) AIDS is being treated as a social problem rather than as the outright plague that it actually is. Must we wait until everybody in the country is infected before we start to deal with AIDS in a sane manner? And just who will pay the trillions of dollars that will be required for medical care for AIDS patients when there is nobody left that is capable of working?

Fidel Castro is certainly not one of my heroes, but he was at least smart enough to know what to do with Cuban AIDS patients: first he found out who they were, and then he locked them up so that they could not continue to spread the plague. In this country at the moment, the government would very much like to prevent you from owning a gun, while simultaneously doing everything possible to assure the “rights” of people with AIDS. We must, they say, respect their right to privacy. Well, what about the rights of the people they will infect if left running loose in this society?

“Oh,” you say, “but it is not their fault.” Sure, perhaps not, but it damned sure is their responsibility. But, then, in today’s society, nobody seems to care much if anything about “responsibility.” Nothing is ever anybody’s “fault,” somebody else is always guilty of having caused all of your problems, while you are an innocent “victim.”

Well, if you insist upon being a “victim,” and millions of people obviously do, then listen to the opinions of politicians, lawyers, government bureaucrats, academic experts, scientists and a long list of others who are interested only in getting their hands on your money, or believe that you are so stupid that you cannot get by without their close supervision . . . BIG DADDY knows best.

The educational system in this country has now degenerated to a point where graduating Ph.D.s and M.D.s are functionally illiterate for the most part, cannot spell, write a complete sentence, punctuate, conjugate a verb, understand simple math, and who believe that “physics” refers to something to loosen your bowels.

An M.D. from Seattle, Dr. Stanley Bigos, has become an international celebrity in certain academic and scientific circles as a result of the so-called Boeing Study: first he did what he called “testing the strength” of the lower-back muscles of thousands of Boeing Corporation employees, and then he tracked these people for a few years in an attempt to determine whether or not there was a relationship between lower-back strength and lower-back problems. His final conclusion was that no such relationship existed, but that, if anything, stronger backs were more likely to have lower-back problems. REALLY?

Which conclusion is, of course, somewhere between utter stupidity and insanity. Nevertheless, we now have thousands of physical therapists running around telling anybody that will listen that lower-back strength is “bad,” causes problems rather than preventing them.

Less than a year ago, sitting across the table from him in a hotel in San Diego, California, at a medical meeting, I asked Dr. Bigos just what tool he used for testing back strength; I asked him . . . “Did you use a typewriter? Or a coffee pot? Or a refrigerator?”

Then, when he asked me what I meant, I told him . . . “Well, Dr. Bigos, at the time you performed this supposedly scientific research, there was no tool in existence that was capable of measuring lower-back strength; so I was naturally curious about just how you did it, since it was impossible to do at that time.”

So then he stuttered and stammered and finally said that he did not try to measure lower-back strength. Really!

Now, this same “expert” has been appointed as the Chairman of a committee of supposed other experts who are going to evaluate everything that has anything to do with the treatment of lower-back problems. Talk about the blind leading the stupid!

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But, not to worry, Hillary is still in the White House, still leading Slick Willie around by you know what, and she obviously has all the answers in regard to medical problems; had it not been for the stupid, evil Republicans, she would already have straightened out the whole medical mess. And if you believe that, then I want to sell you a bridge in Brooklyn as an investment. Trust me, I'm from the government, I'm here to help you. Sure.

So, if you can't trust or believe anybody else, then why should you believe me? You should not believe me, but it might not hurt to at least listen to what I have to say; having done so, then think about it, and then put it to the test. Then, if it works, keep it up, and if it does not work then try something else. In the field of exercise nobody can tell you just what is best for you, but some of us can at least point out a few things to avoid: things like plyometrics, explosive movements, marathon workouts and a long list of other stupidities.

And if Weider says it, then run, don't walk, to the nearest exit.