

Pumping iron to the top

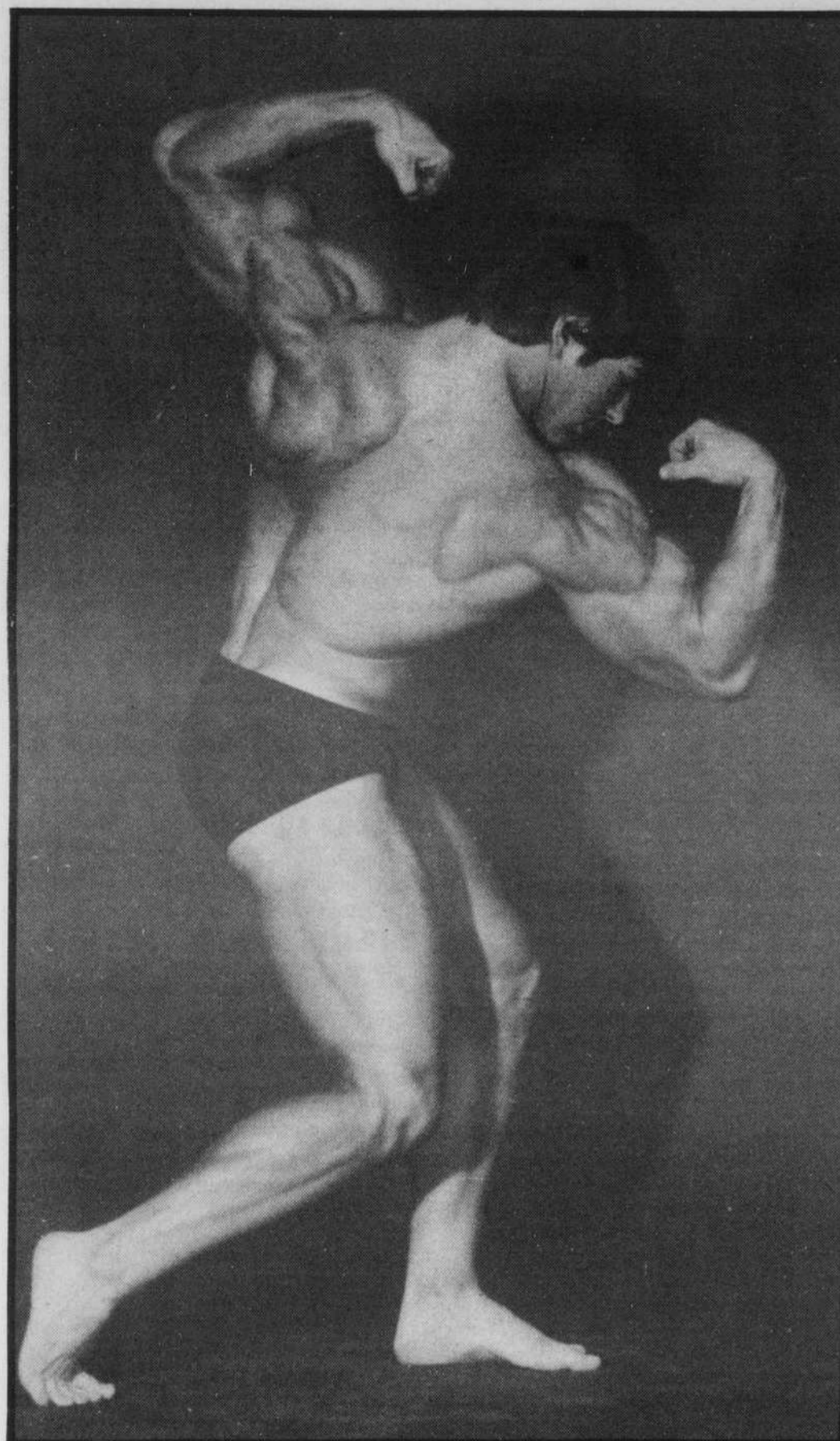


Photo courtesy of George Pessell

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talking to Pessell for a few minutes explodes the tiresome tale of the bodybuilder with muscles where his brain should be.

"Muscle bound, brainless wonders," Pessell says, mimicking the worn labels. "I don't think that's fair. It's like stereotyping football players."

To a degree, those labels belong to the past. Factors aiding the growing acceptance of bodybuilding include the popularity of the "Incredible Hulk" TV show with Lou Ferrigno in the lead role; the charismatic Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is to bodybuilding what Ali is to box-

ing; and the increasing number of women bodybuilders.

"I think it's great," says Pessell of his female counterparts. "The public has had a little trouble accepting it, just like male bodybuilding back in the '50s. I think it makes them look a lot better, too."

The health movement of the past few years hasn't hurt the sport's image, either, Pessell says.

"Oh, yeah. Just look at all the people coming into the gyms now. It's the health habit. People are using weight training to help keep physically fit. And it works. I can tell you that."

Is George Pessell another one of those 98-pound wimps who got tired

of having sand kicked in his face? Well, yes and no. When he began dabbling in weight training, he weighed about 98 pounds. But that was just after sixth grade, and he only was 4-feet, 7-inches tall.

"I starting weight lifting and playing a little basketball and found that weight lifting was something I excelled in. I was always far and above everyone else in terms of natural strength."

Bodybuilding, however, was not Pessell's first love. When he was 15, he entered his first powerlifting contest, in which contestants grab an outrageously heavy barbell and try to yank it to knee level.

Pessell has deadlifted 550 pounds.

It wasn't until he was a sophomore at the University that Pessell added bodybuilding to his repertoire.

"Powerlifting gave me the foundation, the muscular mass," Pessell says. "Bodybuilding was something I just decided to try. I ended up liking it. I still do both."

"It's something to do," he deadpans. "It keeps me off the streets."

Pessell doesn't plan to enter any competitions in the next few months, so his current Autzen Stadium workouts focus on increasing bulk rather than "defining and sharpening" the musculature he already has.

But if a competition was coming up in, say, six to eight weeks, Pessell would change his routine. The most important change would be his diet. Lots of protein, preferably chicken and fish. Cut down on breads. No junk food.

"You're losing subcutaneous fat and letting vascularity come through. The effect is to get your skin paper thin. You work out a little harder, get a little more intense. And that's how you get the definition to come through, the muscle quality."

"That's what the judges are looking for nowadays. There have been certain trends in judging. Before it

Weeks after competing in the Mr. Collegiate America contest (far left), Pessell has some more relaxing moments entering his last month at the University.

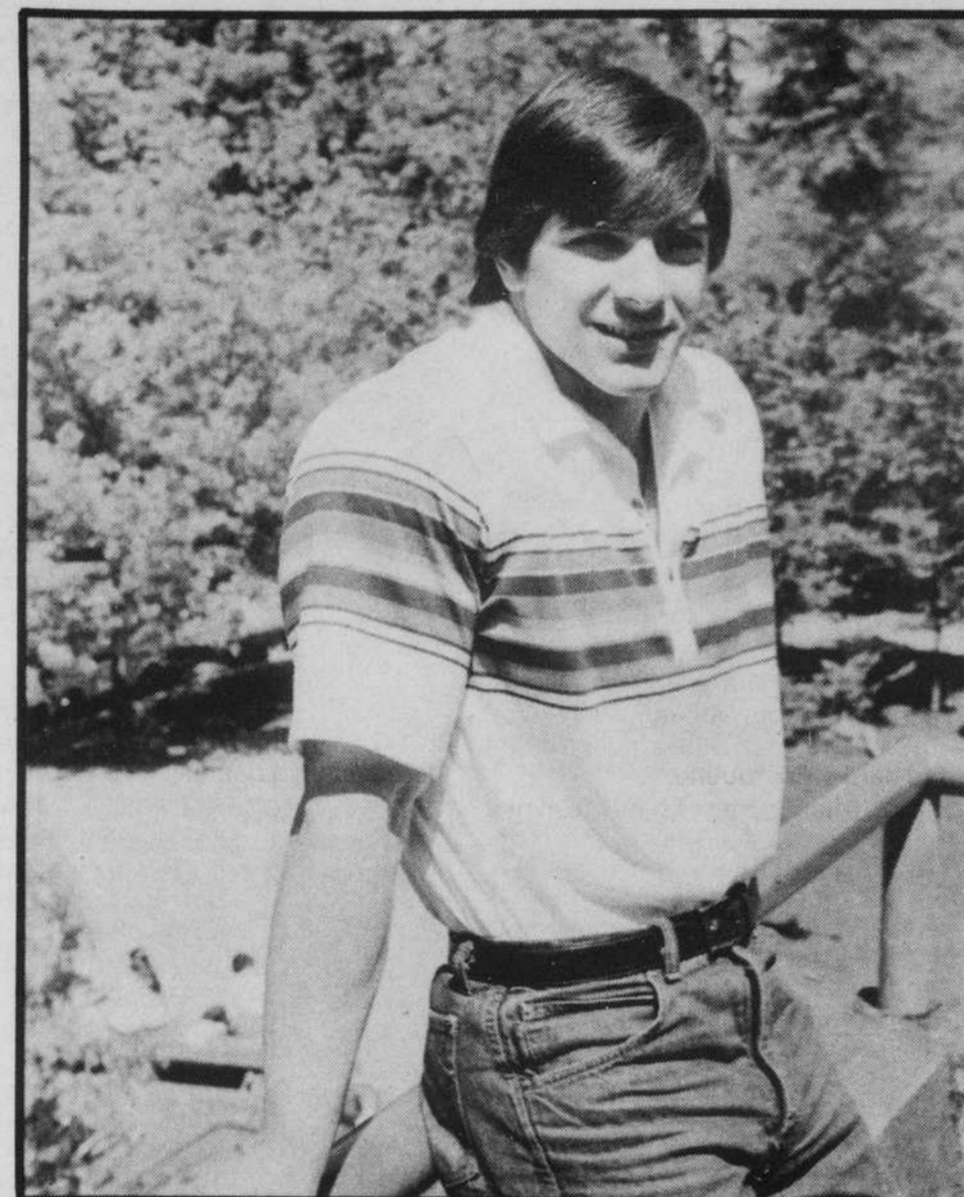
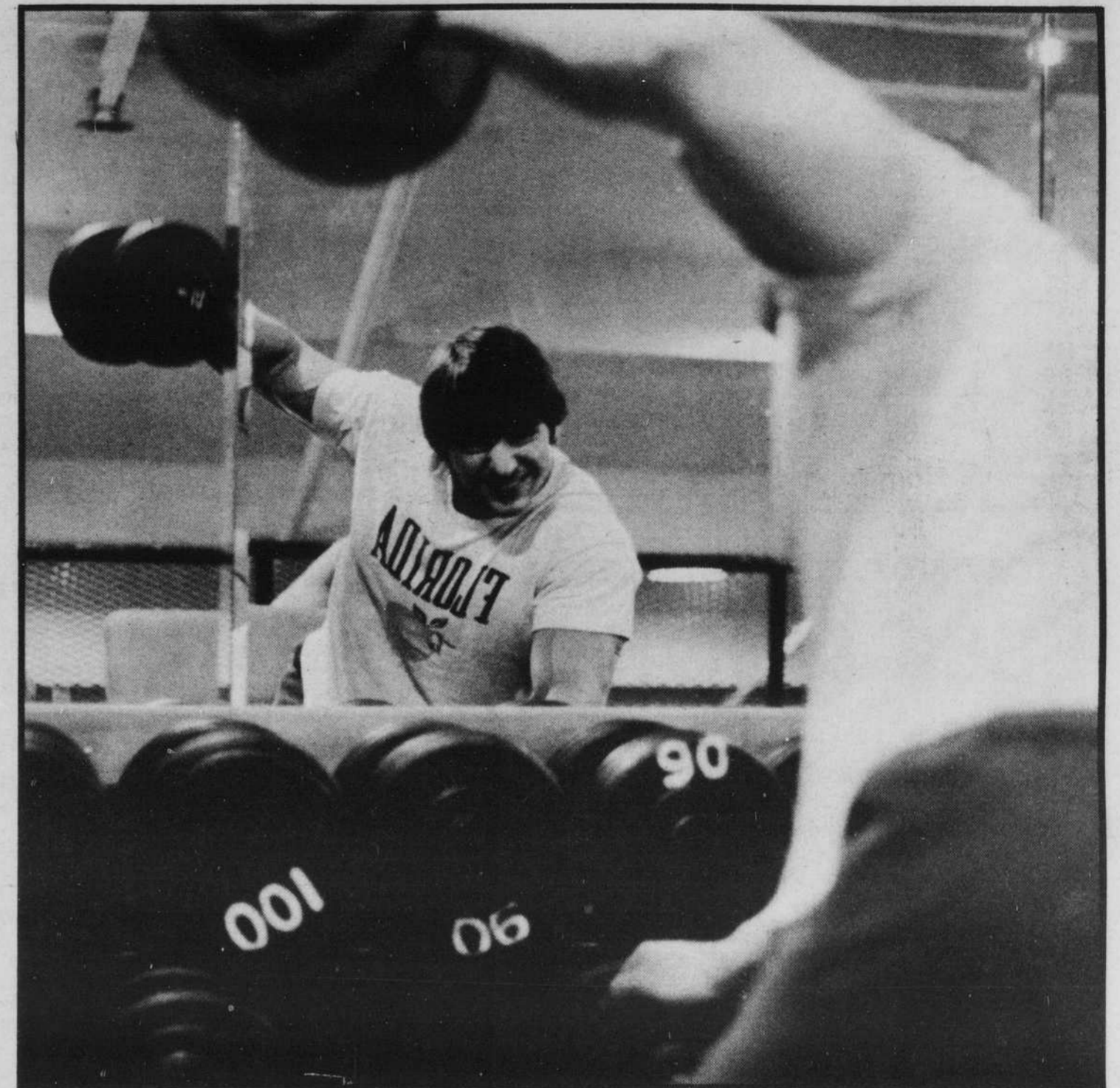


Photo by Jody Murray



Pessell works on a fly routine in the Autzen Stadium weight room.

Photo by Jody Murray

Pessell took third in the light-heavyweight class at the Mr. Collegiate America contest.

"It was a very well-run contest. It had national judges, which was nice because there's no politics involved — bias about what state or gym you're from."

"The heavyweights were incredible. The one who took second was Mr. America's workout partner. The winner was 21 and already owned his own gym. He was 5-10, 225 pounds. He was a house."

Pessell had just as much fun winning the Mr. Oregon title.

"I was up against two competitors who had each beaten me twice before. I thought I had been ripped off the other times, so I came back and ripped the shit out of them. It was great."

"Some people consider body building an art form, some a sport. I consider it a sport."

With his competitive nature, Pessell thinks he could go pretty far with what he's already got. "If I entered the Mr. America now, I could probably place in the top 20." Mr. America is the country's most prestigious amateur title.

"I'd like to become Mr. America or win a national contest. That's maybe three years away, as I see it."

In Pessell's case, three years equals tons of weight pushed, shoved and strained to add that extra inch of muscle. But he says life in the weight room has its benefits.

"It's my social life, more or less, nowadays. Guys there have the same interests. We'll break our backs for each other. It's good comradery."

"It relieves a lot of pressure. If you get down from a final or something, you can take it out on the weights."

By Jody Murray

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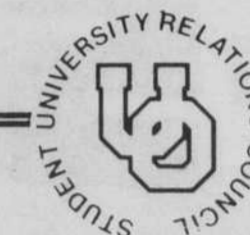


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Duck Week Today

Wednesday, May 13

All Day Street Faire.

11 a.m.-7 p.m. Art Exhibit, 167 EMU.

Noon-2 p.m. Lunchtime Entertainment, "Jazz Ducks."

2:30 p.m. John Belushi Jello Eating Contest, EMU East Lawn. Prizes!

4:30-6:30 p.m. Evening Entertainment, "Heavy Metal Jazz Sex-tet."

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