

# STRONG WIND VERSUS WEAK TREE - MY TRUE STORY -

Richard Hubert

*Editors' note: Recently, while looking through some of our photo files, we found and opened an envelope that contained a somewhat longer version of the following article, which was written in the early 1950s. The envelope also included two letters and half a dozen photographs by the well-known photographer Gebbé, several of which accompany the article. We consider the article to be one of the more unique artifacts in our collection, and we are proud to be part of the process that has allowed it to finally be published. The article has been very sparingly edited, as have parts of the letter which precedes the article.*

July 24, 1953

Peary Rader  
Iron Man Publishing Company  
Alliance, Nebraska

Dear Sir:

I've tried to do everything that you instructed me to do. I do hope I answered all of the questions you asked and wrote the story you wanted. You are an educated man, and you know how to make it shorter, but it would make me very happy if you could use all of it, word for word because it is the naked truth.

I believe that my story will help somebody because it will help some people see what some other people are forced to go through. I believe that many good people, and some bad ones, too, will see the truth in what I've written and then try to make things better. If enough people read this, it will help them to be friendlier and to promote inter-racial understanding.

Men cannot have too many friends.

Sincerely,  
Richard Hubert

I was born on a rented share-cropping cotton farm 22½ years ago outside Swainsboro, Georgia, being one of ten children my mother and father had. While living on this farm I kept physically fit because there was an exceptional amount of hard work that was compulsory for us to do. Being in debt and staying in debt, we had to work or we didn't eat. When I was eight years of age I could pick, sometimes, as much as 160 pounds of cotton in nine hours—in a day's work. By the time I was nine I could plow good. Doing this hard work didn't give us huge, bulky, strong, weight-lifting muscles but it did give us a lot of endurance and stamina and also a little strength.

Early in the morning the men would get up and cut wood, feed all the animals and help milk the cows. The girls would do the cooking, clean up the house, and sometimes help milk the cows. Early after breakfast we would go and do our daily work. Such work as plowing, chopping cotton, working in the corn fields, picking cotton, and sawing wood.

My mother and father were not educated people. But, to me and my sisters and brothers they were the two sweetest people on earth. My father was a little man about 5 feet 4½" and 140 pounds but he was very strong. My mother was about the same height but she weighed no more than 115 pounds. We remembered them most because of some of the things they said to friends during depression days, which didn't end in our county until about 1940. The friends and neighbors would tell my mother and father that only the older and larger ones in our family who did the hardest work should eat what little meat we had. Our father and mother would thank them and say, "all of our children will eat what we eat." Then my father would heat some water in a great big pot, go up to our hog pen some five hundred feet away from the house, kill one of the hogs, put him on his shoulders unassisted, and bring him all the way back to the house. Then we'd eat meat for awhile, but there were many days when the whole family went without food.

We sometimes would have to carry a wagon load of watermelons into town and sell the big ones as cheap as three for twenty-five cents to get money to buy

other supplies. After the cotton-picking months were over we would have picked anywhere from fourteen to twenty-six bales of cotton on the land we share-cropped, and one year we made forty-four bales because the weather was good and because we were living on some of the very best land. Then came the school days.

By that time our all-Negro schools would have already started for some of the students, but many of the rest of us who had to pick all that cotton couldn't attend school when it first opened. All the schools were segregated in the south at that time, like they are now. In fact, most of the White and Negro schools are not even close together. My younger brothers and sisters and I went to the country school that taught no higher than the seventh grade, but my older sister and brothers would walk some eight miles into the city to attend the Negro high school. We didn't have a school bus. At all of these schools I must say that what little muscles, strength, endurance, and toughness I had really came in handy. Even though I was skinny and underweight, I always could fight. I had to fight. There were fights I sometime had to win while knowing that I was the underdog. Sometimes my life depended on winning those fights. Even when our nice Negro teachers would stop us and punish us in school for fighting we would get into fights either going or coming from school with other kids who made fun of us. We were always angry.

When I was ten years old we moved into the city [Swainsboro] with the help of some good friends and relatives, and my father got a job at the saw-mill. My next older sister and brothers who had not already married had to quit school like some of the others had done before to help out the family by getting themselves a job. Living in the city was a little better in some ways than living on the farm except that I got into four times as many fights in the city as I did in the country. Due to the fact that I was getting older it was here that I really began to notice something which is as bad—and probably much worse—than anything else anyone can mention. This bad, evil thing is race prejudice.

To describe race prejudice, I will name some very bad things: leprosy, black plague, cancer, pneumonia, cholera, anthrax, dengue fever, rabies, tuberculosis, infantile paralysis, etc. Many people may not want to admit this but race prejudice belongs at the top of this list. Everybody including myself knows that this great country, even with its faults, is still the greatest in the whole world. But this country is filled up with race prejudice. I would be lying if I should say that this evil did not affect me. There were days when I got into as many

as five fist fights in one day. Not one week, but in one day. On my way to our all-Negro school I'd have my first fight—with some White kids. At the school I would get into fight Number Two with some Colored kids, then at lunch-time some more Colored kids and I would fight my third fight. When school turned out in the afternoon I would get into fight Number Four with some White kids on my way home. And when I got home my mother would send me to the store to get some food, and on my way I would get into fight Number Five with some more White kids. This getting into five fights a day did not happen every day, but I fought so often that it sometimes seemed like five fights every day. Everybody was always so angry—particularly us Colored kids.

I couldn't afford to start any of these fights because I was new in the city and didn't know my way around. Some of the Colored kids would make a habit of running from some of the White kids while going to school. But each morning while they ran they would be getting madder and madder. Finally, whenever they got to the schoolhouse they'd be so worked up that they had to let off some of their steam among their own color. Sometimes the fights would start from nothing, just from being angry and having no one else to hit. But this isn't the only reason why some Negroes fight each other. Some fight each other because they are crazy or misguided. I remember one morning when I got to school one of my Colored friends said to me, "I heard you got into a big fight a couple days ago." I told him that some White boys who played football in an open field near our house had kicked the ball into our house through our window. What made it so bad was that this boy walked straight into the house without knocking and walked by my mother on her sickbed and into the back room to get the ball. That made us feel as though we didn't exist. My father and the larger ones were working. On his way out of our house I noticed that the White boy was twice my size and I knew I wouldn't have a chance with him in a fight. But when he got outside I called him names and told him that he had no right to walk into our house that way. So he dared me to come outside. He told me what he was going to do if he ever caught me outside, and sure enough one day while I was returning home from school he caught me. At school, I told my friend, "I gave him a good whipping." My friend said, "You mean to say you whipped him?" "Yes, yes" I would say knowing all the time that it was the big White boy who whipped the daylights out of me. He beat me so badly until I ran away leaping. I lied to my Colored friend because I knew he was going to tell everyone he saw and



Richard Hubert sent this striking snapshot of himself with his younger sister, Parrie, in a letter to Peary Rader in December of 1953 inquiring about his article. Although Hubert doesn't say so, it was probably taken on the roof of his apartment building on Moore Street in Brooklyn. He told Rader that he'd gained four pounds since the photo shoot with *Gebbé* and was hoping to have his weight in the 220 to 225 pound range soon.

I wanted my family to look big and important—not look like they didn't exist.

The terrible thing about our situation was that we did not have to get out of our own home to be treated bad. No matter where we were we were in a bad place. The place they had us in is something like a very deep hole filled with snakes, and we were like a bug trying to crawl out. But each time we'd try to crawl out we would slip and fall back. And the snakes in our hole would bite and snap at us and chase us around and around in a circle so we would run and holler and scream while some of the others would build a fire around us to keep the snakes away. The fire would make it even hotter down in the hole, and the smoke would almost blind us. Some would holler, "the smoke is getting into my eyes, put out the fire! I don't care if the snakes do bite me or swallow me please put out that fire!" To the White people that hole was where we belonged. They were afraid that if White and Negro children went to the same schools and churches together and segregation was abolished it would lead to inter-marriage. That is the one thing they don't want to happen because the off-spring from such a marriage is always a Negro. Yes—a mulatto, a quadroon, an octoroon, or even a Kingsblood Royal is still a Negro, especially down there. When two

White people of different countries marry, their baby is described as part Irish and something else or half Jewish and something else and etc. But let a Negro marry anyone from any country and his baby will be called not part Negro and something else but just a plain Negro. White people say that God did not intend for the races to be mixed. Geese are made for geese. Ducks for ducks. They use the good Bible to try to prove their point about Negroes not being their brothers.

But there are many cases down South of White men having secret affairs with Negro women and then joining a posse to lynch a Negro for having an affair with a White woman. Notice who dies in the electric chair for rape. Every time a Negro is convicted of the rape of a White woman he dies in the chair. But when a White man does the same to a Colored woman and even admits it he usually doesn't go to trial and, if he does, they never fry him. Even during wartime—when Colored men are fighting for Whites as well as Coloreds—they won't give a White man the chair. If a southern White man is criticized about his treatment of Negroes he sometimes says that Negroes are uneducated and the White people are forced to control them. But most of the White people want the Negroes to be uneducated so they can always profit from it. If the Negroes were educated they

wouldn't work for cheap wages. They would leave and go someplace else and work for higher wages. This all kept us confused until whenever we'd meet an honest-to-goodness nice White man he would be hard to recognize because we would think that it was some kind of a trick. There were some who grub-staked me when I didn't have anything to eat and they had me loving them like I did my own mother and father. But then the bad ones would insult me and chase me so that it was hard not to dislike the ones I had finally made friends with. We used to say that if a strong wind surrounds a weak tree the tree must bend or be pulled out by the roots.

For our main enjoyments we would go every Saturday to a segregated movie with White people downstairs and Colored in the balcony where they had no restroom. Every Sunday we would go to an all-Negro church. At church the preacher would preach to all of us and we would also sing some of the same songs we sang while living in the country. Such songs as "All God's Children got Shoes," even though some of them didn't—like the Crawford children. I asked my mother about that one day and she said the song was right. She said that not only the Crawford children but even African children of all types will have shoes to wear when they die because God puts their shoes aside for them. She said that the children who live in hell on earth are God's children after they die and that they'll get their shoes when they get to heaven.

Besides church activities, we would sometimes give a Saturday night fish fry at our house. At those fish fries the most interesting conversation was about race prejudice. One night I heard Brother O'Neill say, "I do believe this country would be better off if they would let the White women run it and let the White men stay home and cook." The rest of us looked at each other and laughed. Brother Calvert said, "What do you mean, O'Neill?" and we all came in close to hear better. Brother O'Neill said that he believed White women had a more merciful feeling and a better heart than their men-folk. Then Brother Smith interrupted and said, "this is a man's world and White women are little people like us when it comes to being president, governor, and many other high positions." O'Neill then said, "Well, let's pray that if one is ever elected president or governor she will try and remember that Negroes are small people too and need her help." After that many of the fellows laughed but Brother O'Neill didn't laugh.

I once asked my mother, "What is a Negro?" She said, "That is what you are, son. We all are

Negroes." "But mother," I said, "the way people talk someone would think that the word Negro had another meaning to it." "Get the dictionary and look it up" said my mother. I did, and the meaning that the dictionary gave was almost horrible. By this I mean the dictionary gave this nice word, "NEGRO" almost the same meaning as it did the word "nigger," which is one of the worst kind of insults. I then asked my mother to explain to me what color a white man was. She told me that white people didn't have any color in their skin and that was why they were white. "But Mother," I said, "White people have color in their skin." My mother then looked straight at me and told me that if I ever said that to a White man I would be "missing in action."

We stayed in Swainsboro for two years. During those two years four people in my family died, and the last two were my father and mother. My mother was just forty-seven years old when she died and my father was forty-nine. I will go on record by saying that they would both be alive today if Swainsboro had hospitals like they have everywhere up here—hospitals that would give anyone what is needed even if the patient was a Negro and didn't have any money. When the sick people in my family down in Swainsboro needed medicine we would have to go without food in order to buy the medicine. And sometimes the sick would go without medicine so we could buy food.

After our parents died some of my brothers and sisters and I moved some 250 miles to another city named Brunswick, Georgia, to live with our oldest brother, who had gone there to work. Because of World War II there was a ship-yard where many ships were built and launched. There was also a pulp and paper company as well as two or three other factories. People would come hundreds of miles to this city just to work. The city was also a seaport and so a man could fish for his food if he ever became unemployed. Not only was there an all-Negro movie theatre there but we also had a segregated swimming pool. After living in Brunswick for a short while we were forced to split the family up because we couldn't find another place to live. The house my older brother rented was only for a few months, so some other people could go on vacation. When they returned we had to get out, so some of the family went to other cities and states in the South to live with relatives, but most of them went up North.

I was left down in Brunswick with two very good friends we had made while living there. Although I was only twelve years old I put my age up to fifteen so

I could get myself a job. Another friend of mine found me a job at the Western Union telegraph company as a porter, and I worked on this job before school and after school on Saturday and Sunday for 40¢ an hour. While living this way I learned to cook for myself, wash and iron my clothes, and live like a man. At the school I didn't tell any of the teachers or school kids about my parents being dead and me taking care of myself, because I was afraid I'd be put in a home. It was during that time that I came to be known as a "coward," but it was only because I couldn't afford to fight anyone who picked fights with me. For two good years I ran away from fellows that I knew I could whip in a fist- fight.

On my fourteenth birthday I quit my job at the Western Union because the other workers took advantage of me. But I do believe my working there did some good. The manager told me that I was the best janitor they'd ever had there, and he gave me a chance to do more. This happened because sometimes there would be a shortage of White messenger boys and they started to send me to deliver the telegrams. No Negro had ever delivered telegrams in that city before, because these jobs had always been for White boys only. I did have to deliver the telegrams in the rain without wearing one of the special-made raincoats they had for White boys. After I quit the manager remembered this and sent out to the Negro school and hired several Colored boys to deliver telegrams.

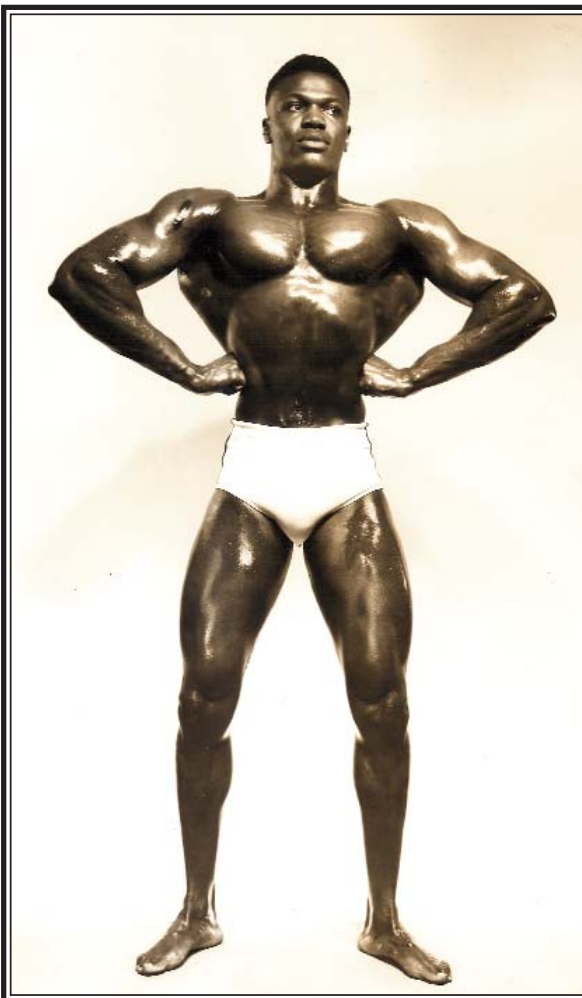
During the summer days I would contact Mr. H.L. Summerall, a Colored school teacher in Lynchburg, Va. I would meet him and about one hundred other schoolboys of his between fourteen and eighteen years of age and we'd ride a special bus to Hartford, Connecticut to work on a tobacco

farm. We worked like men in Connecticut. And we also had good times. The White people treated all of us like we were celebrities. At first I thought they were playing some kind of joke on us, but later I felt almost like I was one of them. There may be many evil and prejudiced White people living in Hartford, but I didn't meet a one out on Hartman's tobacco farm where we were. The only time we ever got into arguments or fights it would be on the weekends with some of the other poor Colored fellows.

After our ten or twelve weeks were up we would return South with each boy having some \$200 saved up. I would buy some school clothes and get myself a job delivering some 350 newspapers with my friend Clinton Quarterman. It was that year, 1944, that I first heard of

weight lifting. An older friend of mine, Charles Moore, had some back issues of *Strength and Health* magazines and one day he showed them to some fellows on the school campus. On the cover of one was the picture of John Grimek. Then one of the Colored fellows said, "Ah man, the guy is muscle-bound. They're not strong." Another said, "Men who are muscle-bound can't knock a fly down." Then Charles showed them one of Steve Stanko being the first man to total a thousand pounds in the three Olympic lifts. Another student said, "Fool, he didn't lift that much weight over his head. They just printed it that way to sell the book."

Then all of a sudden the argument stopped, and all of them were staring at one of the magazines and asking, "who's this, who's this? Why haven't I ever heard of him before?" What they were looking at was a picture of the Great John Davis, one of our own race. Charles then told them that Davis, Stanko, and Grimek were close friends because



New York photographer Gebbé (who did not use a first name professionally) wrote Peary Rader on 1 August 1953 that he had finally photographed Richard Hubert and found him to have a "very fine body and [be] a very nice guy." Said Gebbé, "Sure will be proud to see them [the photos] in *Iron Man*."

they and some other men lifted on the same weight lifting team, trying to defeat teams from other countries. We looked at Davis' picture for a long time, and at Grimek's and Stanko's, too, and as I was walking away going to the cafeteria I heard one say, "Man if I had a build like that Grimek I'd wear a polo shirt all winter."

The only exercise I did during that time was calisthenics, although sometimes I'd do curls with two buckets of water, but not in sets. I was tall for my age, and our coach at school, who taught us football and basketball, told me that if I would practice like some of the other boys I could become one of their greats in about two years time, but I would lie to him and tell him I didn't like football or basketball. I was on my own and couldn't afford to get hurt playing football. I also couldn't afford to be playing a sport when I could be working—which I had to do to live. At that time, when I didn't deliver papers I did other work such as dishwasher, delivery boy, porter work, helper, etc.

After returning from Hartford the second time I did everything I could to find myself a job but I couldn't find one. After several months of looking for work and spending all my savings I then caught a rare case of malaria. I was very sick, but with the help of some good friends and God I managed to live. I went from 147 lbs. to 85 lbs. in body weight. When I recovered I had to learn to walk all over again.

After recuperating I moved North-east to live with the rest of my sisters and small brother in Jersey City, New Jersey. I noticed that Jersey City had a certain amount of housing and job discrimination, as well as a few slums and some bad White people, but it was almost heaven compared with the South. I got myself a job as a helper at the Monarch Photo Studio, one of the largest in Jersey City. I also went to school from 6:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. at Dickinson high school, which was equal to any school in America. We didn't have evening schools in the cities I lived in down South.

At Dickinson, the teachers had names of all nationalities and they treated me like I was something special. I will never forget them for doing this. I remember once that when a big boy with an Italian name



In this Gebbé photo, Hubert's exceptional pectorals and small waist command the viewer's attention.

tried to start a fight with me for something our lady teacher, who also had an Italian name, had a private talk with the boy. After the talk, he became my best friend and even tried to help me with my lessons. I also noticed many of the other White students overlooked the evil "dictatorship" of the color line.

After graduating from Dickenson, I and my family were forced to move to Brooklyn because our house was condemned, but each morning I would ride by subway to Jersey City to work at the studio. One morning while riding to work I noticed a man that looked like Captain Marvel or Superman. Sure enough it was Abe Goldberg, the fellow I had read about in the magazine. After introducing myself, Abe told me that he worked in Jersey City, too. He also introduced me to the East Side Barbell Club, where he worked out in New York City. At first I just trained on my own. I not only ordered myself a 50 pound York dumbbell set but my

employer's son at the photo studio bought himself a set of Weider weights right around the corner, and I then did upper body work as well as leg work too. After a few weeks of training my bodyweight jumped from 160 to 175 pounds.

A few weeks later I was laid-off from my job in Jersey City but I found a job in New York not far from the East Side Barbell Club. So I joined and began to work out with such greats as Abe Goldberg, Marvin Eder, Leroy Colbert, Lenny Rukofsky, Angelo Caminiti, Artie Zeller, Sammy Glass, Morty Gottcliff, Lou and Joe Marino, Judah Tatarsky, Joe Maggio, George Stark, Morris Tanenbaum, Ken Rosa and many others. At first, I worked out only once a week because of money problems at home. I would work out all day every Saturday, and I made gains, too. Later, my younger sister and I found an apartment together. With me being the man of the house I managed to find a better job and could afford to work out three times a week. After a few months my bodyweight jumped to 190 lbs. at a height of 6 ft. 1½ in.

When I was twenty-one years old I was drafted. As bad as I was needed at home they took me anyhow. I was so upset that it made me ill. Some months later,

after they checked and found that I was telling the truth about having my little sister and little brother as dependents as well as three other little cousins looking upon me as a father, they couldn't discharge me because by then I was so depressed that I was under the care of special army doctors. I even had a nervous breakdown, an operation on my brain [*Ed. note: probably a lobotomy, common at that time and, since he was in the service, involuntary*], and many electric shock treatments. These shock treatments made me forget my worries, but they also made my reflexes slow and my memory very bad. I also lost my initiative and I became suspicious of everyone. The only good thing about it all is that they were human enough to give me a pension after my honorable discharge. I was in such a bad way that I would have died of starvation after getting out if it hadn't been for the pension.

After months of looking for a job, I was lucky enough to get one temporarily as an elevator operator which helped me to get into the union. Although I am unemployed right now, I am feeling better, I am still in the union, and I will go to work soon. I didn't train at all while I was in the Army and being treated, and I put on about fifteen extra pounds—all fat. After re-joining the East Side Barbell Club, the fat I had on me changed into solid muscle. I noticed my friend Abe Goldberg had put up his own gym which looks like paradise inside. It is not far from the East Side Club, but I still work out at the East Side because I came to love it like a home. I even had my own key. Many of the same fellows like Marvin Eder and the Marino brothers still trained there. This Marvin Eder, I must say, is probably the strongest boy of all times. Only the other day he grabbed 320 pounds, cleaned it to his chest, and pressed it three honest-to-goodness repetitions, with almost no backbend. I saw him with my own eyes one day, after he did a three-hour workout, bench press 445 pounds with a dead stop at the chest. He did it almost too easy.

I have been training off and on with barbells ever since I was eighteen, but I have more time to train regularly now. I don't train for strength. I believe, like many others, that you should train for shape and the strength will follow. I work out three times a week. My first exercise is the squat, because I don't like squats; I do them first so the rest of my workout will be enjoyable. I use only 300 pounds in this lift for eight to ten reps but could use much more. I do them on a block with toes pointing straight in front and heels only about eight inches apart for four or five sets. I sometime do the Hack squat in the same manner with a much lighter

weight. Then come toe raises with a heavy friend sitting on my back. Next is the military press. I never use over 160 lbs. for five sets of eight repetitions, and then I do straight arm lateral raises with dumbbells, three or four sets of eight to ten reps. My next is rowing motion. I have a very good way of doing this that really gets my lats. I keep my back bent parallel to floor and my feet close together while using a narrow grip and holding the weight awhile at the chest after the last rep before dropping it to the floor. I do three or four sets with 200 lbs.. Next I do front lateral raises with dumbbells. Then comes the prone press [*Ed. note: in those days, even many magazines referred to bench presses inaccurately as "prone" presses.*]. I do four or five sets starting with 230 ending with 290, doing less reps as I go up in weight. After prones I do bent-arm pull-overs, using up to 190 while having a friend sit on my thighs. I then do presses behind neck—using a light weight of about 120 lbs. for eight to ten reps.

Then comes the arm work. After warming up like I do in all of my other exercises I take a heavy barbell of about 170 lbs. and do cheating reps for six to eight reps and three to four sets; then I take two 70 pound dumbbells and do alternate cheating curls for four sets of eight reps. I sometimes add reverse curls and Zottman curls, but not regularly. Next comes the seated concentration curl with a dumbbell that lets me do ten or twelve reps without cheating for three or four sets. After this I do my one waist exercise—leg raises on a bench. My waist never goes over 30¼" no matter how much I eat or lay off. I do believe if I worked on my waist every day it would go down to 28" and that I don't want. Right now it's 29½" and that's small enough. After doing three sets of 25 reps, I do deadlifting to strengthen my waist. I start off with 250 lbs. doing 6 to 8 reps and sometimes I work up to 400 lbs. doing less repetitions. My best is 500 lbs..

I don't do neck work any more, because it grows too fast when I work on it. I had a 20¼" neck but it's down to 18½" now. My last exercise at the gym is dumbbell prones. I do these while keeping the inside of my fist pointed parallel to the bench so it will work my upper pectorals, and triceps as well. I save my triceps until after I get home some 45 or 60 minutes later; for this exercise I use only one 40 pound dumbbell while holding the inside of my biceps next to the side of my head for about five sets of ten repetitions. I can't press at all, because of my small waist and height, but I've done three reps in the full squat with 430.

Sometimes when I don't feel like working out

when I get to the gym I open my locker and look at some pictures I keep in there of Melvin Wells that were published by a Negro magazine called "Our World," and they really encourage me to work out. Those shots are some of his greatest. I also try to eat the best and most healthy food, which includes liver, raw eggs, self-cooked steaks, honey, brown cereal, milk by the pint each meal, leafy vegetables, whole wheat and rye bread only, prune juice, grapefruit juice, etc. I don't eat many starchy foods.

I have also tried Johnson's, Hoffman's and Weider's high protein food for awhile. My measurements are—expanded chest, 50 inches, 29½ inch waist, 25¼ inch thighs, 15½ inch calves, 18 inch arm, body weight from 209 to 214 lbs. at a height of 6 feet 1½ inches with shoes off. I don't smoke, drink or use profanity. The only bad habits I have, that I know of, are not attending church regularly, being anti-social, and eating too much candy because I couldn't get candy when I was a child. My ambition for the future is to work hard and save so I can buy myself a home and also put myself up a gym not far from my home—a gym for men and women with results guaranteed.

I have several favorite bodybuilders. Although John Grimek is getting old, I still think he is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, bodybuilder of all times, for he looks good from any angle, even in relaxation. Another fellow I like is Reg Park, who's over six feet tall, like me. It was his photos that showed me a tall man could come close to looking like Grimek. Not only can Reg Park do strength feats and win the top physique contest, but he can also win almost all the special awards such as best chest, best back, best abdominals, best arms, best legs, most muscular man, and best poser—just like Grimek can.

I also enjoy reading about or watching strength feats by all the greats, like Norbert Schemansky, Jim Bradford, Pete George, Tommy Kono, Marvin Eder, Dave Sheppard, Joe DiPietro, Doug (see it and believe it) Hepburn, Paul Anderson, and, of course, the great John Davis—who stayed near or right on the top as a heavyweight for approximately 15 long years and who still shows winning form even in a contest where they have strict judges.

Many people who have seen me wanted to make a prize fighter out of me; they keep telling me that's where all the money is, but I turn them down because watching guys beat blood out of each other for a crazy audience, even if they are getting paid, looks sadistic to me.

Some people say nothing is impossible. Well, it may not be possible for me to build my tall body up like Reg Park or Steve Reeves, but I do hope to win a few local awards such as Mister City and State. I also would like to enter the Mister America contest one day, but I am not going to do it because, frankly, I don't believe a so-called Negro can win. Even if he had big calves in his legs and looked like Clancy Ross, Steve Reeves or Reg Park, or even Grimek. But even if the judges do ever let a Negro win one, it would be many long years from now [*Ed. Note: The first African-American to win the major Mr. America title was Chris Dickerson, in 1969.*] I will say that the Mr. America contest is, in a way, much better than that thing called the Miss America contest because Negroes can at least enter the Mr. America contest.

Another thing that's wrong is the way some of the magazine publishers forget to use Negroes on their covers. They only use Negroes on their covers every once in a long, long, long, long while even though there are several men whose pictures could, or should have been on some cover or another. Some of the men who either haven't been on any covers or haven't been on as many as they deserve are: John Davis, George Paine, Robert Shealy, Leroy Colbert, Arthur Harris, Rocky Kent, Jim Johnson, Arthur Ollivierre, and Len Peters. Some have very good write-ups inside the magazines, but what's wrong with the cover? I guess some of the publishers believe it will keep their magazine from selling, which isn't true today because a magazine like THE RING uses many Negroes on its cover, and it sells, too. I don't think my own picture should be on a cover, but some of the others should.

Today, a Russian communist or any other enemy with a white skin could go down South while hiding his identity and he might be treated like a king. And if he should come back up North, take up bodybuilding, and become one of the all time greats he not only will be on the cover of magazines, but will also become Mr. America. Mr. America. That's why the word Negro shouldn't be used. Just plain "American" should be good enough. In that way, if a White man put a Negro on the cover of his magazine, that publisher would just be using his own brother—an American. To tell the truth, I believe the world would be better off if we all acted as if there were only one race, the human race. I really have to take my hat off to some of the educated Negroes down south who could come up here and be much more successful, but who feel it is their job to stay down there teaching the needy. Today, after so many



Negroes fought and died for this country in the last World War, their children still can't get a good education in the South since the White people won't let a Negro come into their schools to learn and to better themselves.

Some people who read this story, if they see it, may say, "what is he squawking about? He's much better off than some poor people." While that may be true, I think people all over the country, as well as in the government, should be told by every kind of newspaper, by every kind of magazine, by every kind of book, and by every kind of other way that they are making a mistake by not concentrating on the race problem now.

What people should realize is that our biggest enemies, the communists, use all of America's "faults" to try to make our country and our government look bad. Every time some harm is done to a Negro in America, the communists and non-communists all over the world hear about it. Even when we do not hear about it ourselves, they hear about it. Some people may say that if the communists don't use race prejudice to make the U.S. government look bad they would just use some other fault. I say let them pick some other fault, and not race prejudice. Nothing is as bad as race prejudice. I know. I have experienced it.

While ending this, I would like to say that I don't believe this story is the wrong kind of story for this nice little magazine, or any other type of magazine. Therefore I would like very much to thank Mister Peary Rader for being an honest to goodness "True-American" for not only publishing other stories of many Americans—but my story also...

Thank You,  
Richard Hubert

*Ed. Note: Whereas Peary Rader did not publish this remarkable article, had he not been interested in it he would never have written to Richard Hubert to ask him to send more information. Nor would Rader have taken the article, the two letters from Hubert, and the half dozen photographs and put them all together in an envelope that remained in his files until, as per his instructions, his wife, Mabel, gave them to us. It should be remembered that Peary Rader—along with Joe Weider and Bob Hoffman—did more than most leading sports figures of the day to advance the cause of fairness between the races. Similarly, weightlifting and bodybuilding did more than most sports, including baseball and football, to break down the color line. Also, we should not forget that John Davis was a National Weightlifting Champion prior to World War II, or that*

*many photographs of African-Americans appeared in the major muscle magazines during the 1940s. Could the iron sports and the magazines that covered them have done more? Of course they could have. But the iron game has been better than most when it comes to looking beyond skin color. Why else would the audience at the 1966 AAU Mr. America contest have booed so lustily when Bob Gajda instead of Sergio Oliva was chosen by the judges to be that year's Mr. America? Or why else would so many weightlifting fans all across the country have cheered when the great John Davis proved again and again on the platform that from the late thirties until the early fifties he was the strongest man in the world? And why else would Peary Rader not have thrown Hubert's article in the trash as soon as he read it, instead of asking Hubert to send more information and asking Gebbé to take Hubert's photos? Had Rader not saved it we would not have it. Very likely Rader agonized over whether to publish this long, often heart-breaking article in 1953, and we like to think he hoped that one day it would be given the space Hubert requested. Well, today is that day.*



*We have spoken to several men who remembered Richard Hubert from his days at the East Side Barbell Club—Ken Rosa, Joe Marino, Marvin Eder, and Leroy Colbert. All of these men remember Hubert's height, his breadth, and his troubled mind. They recall a quiet, gentle, friendly man. The men who knew him best also remember how emotionally wounded he was by what had happened to him growing up and, later, in the service. Leroy Colbert recounted a phone call he got telling him that Hubert was at Bellevue Hospital. When Colbert rushed down, he learned that Hubert had been brought there in handcuffs by the police after they had responded to the calls of a woman who was frightened when Hubert tried to start a conversation. Believing he was blameless and shouldn't have been handcuffed, the police took him to the hospital, where he was put in a straitjacket. The policemen asked Colbert about Hubert, and Colbert vouched for him and told them that the big man was "just a bodybuilder"—a rare breed in the early fifties. They let Hubert go, but the incident only served to deepen Hubert's sense of racial injustice. Unfortunately, none of the men who remember him from the East Side Barbell Club have either seen or heard from him for over fifty years. If anyone has any information about his whereabouts we'd very much like to have it. We have never paid for an article, but we want to pay Hubert for this one. And send him a copy.*