



IRON GAME HISTORY



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The Arnold Strength Summit

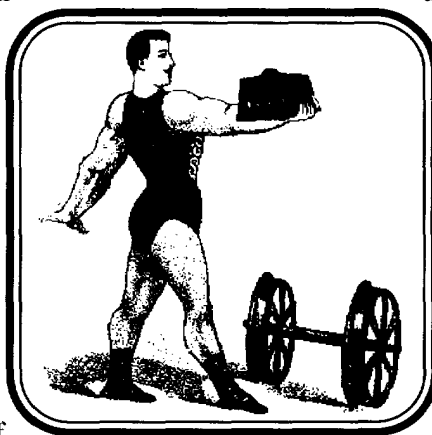
by Terry Todd

One of the principal reasons for the lateness of this edition of *Iron Game History* was the hundreds of hours I spent (and Jan spent many, too) thinking about, talking about, worrying about, and emailing people about the design and implementation of a “Summit of Strength” in Columbus, Ohio in conjunction with the Arnold Classic and Fitness Weekend. When I accepted an invitation from Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jim Lorimer to create and conduct such an event I failed to realize how difficult and time-consuming it would be, and how it would impact our ability to stay on any sort of schedule with *IGH*. But next year things should be much, much easier and less of a time sponge, and we should be able to adhere to a reasonably regular publication schedule. In any case, the Arnold Strength Classic wasn’t the only reason for the lateness of this issue; other problems included a heavy teaching and administrative load at the university (publishing *IGH* is not part of our “load”), the illness of two members of our family, a major fire that destroyed part of our home, and the shifting of part of our Physical Culture Collection from one place to another in our building because of renovations. But we hope to stay on track from now on and we greatly appreciate your patience and understanding during our hiatus. As a way of allowing all of you

to more completely understand the complexity of Arnold’s Strength Classic, we have deviated from our normal policy of staying away from traditional journalism and have provided the following detailed account of how this “Summit of Strength” was conceived and conducted.

In early March of 2001, Jan and I went to Columbus, Ohio to see and be a small part of the annual iron game extravaganza known as the Arnold Fitness Weekend. The 2001 event was the twenty-sixth year of a show conceived back in the middle ‘70s by Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jim Lorimer. Both Arnold and Jim are men of large imagination, but even those two could never have foreseen that what began as a bodybuilding show — albeit a major one — would have morphed through the years into a ten ring physical fitness circus featuring approximately ten thousand athletes in ten sports, a crowd of seventy thousand people, and a trade show with over six hundred booths selling equipment, magazines, clothing, food supplements, tapes, photos, and etc.

Jan and I had never attended the event, but in 2001 Jim and Arnold asked us to come and gave us a small booth where we could display and sell copies of *Iron Game History*. Once there, the scale of the thing



blew us away, particularly the trade show — called the Arnold Fitness Expo. Held in the huge Columbus Convention Center, the Expo opened on Friday and continued through Sunday, playing host to contests in arm wrestling, powerlifting, gymnastics, martial arts, military fitness, and, of course, bodybuilding. The cavernous room in which the trade show was set up featured a 48' x 48' raised stage, flanked on either side by a Jumbotron screen and a state of the art sound system. This stage was the scene of a continuing series of exhibitions and competitions throughout the three days of the Expo, and at any given time — depending on the event — crowds

of between one thousand and ten thousand would be watching.

One evening during our 2001 visit, in a casual conversation involving Jim and Arnold, the subject of “strongman” shows came up, and I offered my take on the ESPN event called the “World’s Strongest Man” (WSM) show. I explained that even though I saluted Barry Frank, the Trans-World International executive who gave birth to the show back in the late ‘70s, for having the vision to create the event and the clout to bring it off and sustain it all these years, I nevertheless thought it could be improved in certain ways. I pointed out that

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because so many of the events had time limits of ninety seconds or even longer the winner was often not the man who was the strongest, but the man who had the best combination of strength and endurance. I mentioned several examples, including a famous incident in which Gerritt Badenhorst — who had an official deadlift of almost nine hundred pounds had been in a WSM contest against Scotland's Forbes Cowan, a tough but

much more slightly built and generally weaker man. The contest featured the two men standing face to face with their backs to a car, to the frame of which were attached a pair of handles that were gripped with straps by the two men in a "wheelbarrow" fashion. The winner would be the man who could lift his car and hold it off the ground for the longest time. In any case, when the signal to lift was given, Badenhorst stood up with the car effortlessly, whereas Cowan needed every bit of his relatively meager back and leg strength to raise the car to a locked position. Even so, once he shook and trembled his way to the top he was able to hold it longer than Badenhorst, who was by far the stronger man. I argued that although the longer time limits of this and similar events perhaps made for more colorful TV — as the men were gasping for breath, red as beets, and shaking with effort when they finished — the strongest man often didn't win, which violated the implied promise of the title of the show. I also offered other examples to bolster my case, including the infamous race in 1990 in which the 400-plus pound O.D. Wilson was asked to carry a very small load for a very long way in what amounted to a two-man race for the WSM title against Jon Pall Sigmarsson, the much smaller, more telegenic Icelander who was far behind going into that last event and needed a big win to retain his title.

Another problem with the WSM contests, as I



History was made when Mark Henry power cleaned and push pressed this replica of Apollon's Wheels not once but three times, cleaning it on each rep. From left: chief referee David Webster Francis Brebner, Jeff "Mad Dog" Madden, and Bryan Neece.

Photo by Joe Roark

saw it, was that they had so many events — an average of eight to ten — that more men were injured than was good for the sport. In some past WSM shows three or four of the ten contestants were injured during the event so badly that they were unable to continue. I suggested that four or five carefully chosen events should be adequate to determine who had the greatest amount of raw, brute strength. I concluded my rant by saying that I thought it was possible to create a contest that would be safer than the WSM shows, more accurate in ranking the contestants in terms of overall strength, and maybe just as exciting to watch.

A couple of months later, I got a call from Jim Lorimer, who said he and Arnold had been talking about what I'd said that night in Columbus and that they wanted to have such a show as part of the 2002 Arnold Fitness Weekend if I'd agree to design and run it. Taken completely by surprise, I told Jim that I was flattered and that I'd think about it and get right back to him. Finally, after talking to Jan, I decided that I couldn't very well say no after blathering on about how an ultimate strength contest should be conducted. Thus it was that we began a quest to design four or five representative strength challenges and to attract the strongest men in the world to face them.

One of the first things that was clear to me at the outset was that we needed to make the contest appealing

not just to WSM-type competitors, but to athletes in all three of the main disciplines of strength — weightlifting, powerlifting, and strongman events. Each of the three sports has had a long history of referring to the man who was the top dog of the moment in their particular field as the Strongest Man in the World. This is understandable, and perhaps as it should be, for each discipline requires great overall body power. And the title itself — the Strongest Man in the World — is certainly one with true value and great historical weight, not unlike “The World’s Fastest Man,” or “The Heavyweight Champion of the World.” For at least the last century hundreds of professional strongmen have claimed the mantle for themselves as a way to increase their prestige and, as a result, their income. But how could we attract the best weightlifters, powerlifters, and strongman competitors to take part in a contest that would take all of them out of their “comfort zone?”

I realized that what we really needed was a prize package that would be instantly appealing to the world’s top men, and I suggested to Arnold that he might be able to convince the people who manufacture and sell Humvees to award one of those huge and powerful vehicles to the winner of the Arnold Strength Summit. He agreed, the Humvee people agreed, and armed with this great plum I appealed to the executives at MET-Rx (sponsors of the WSM show) for additional support. They agreed to a three year package in which they would provide \$50,000 each year as well as a year’s supply of their food products to the winners of each of our four individual events. Jim and Arnold agreed to absorb the additional costs, including transportation, meals, and housing; and so we were able to approach the athletes with an offer of a contest with the largest prize list in the history of such events.

Perhaps the most crucial thing I did after agreeing to design the show was to contact two of the very best men I knew to work with us in designing the events and choosing the contestants. One of these men was David Webster, Scotland’s ageless wonder of energy. David has been part of most of the WSM shows over the past twenty years as well as having promoted and/or judged at hundreds of Highland Games, weightlifting, and strongman events around the world. The other man we asked was Bill Kazmaier, a former world powerlifting champion and the most famous of the WSM competitors — a man who has added to his stature in the game over the years by creating unofficial world records in a variety of strength feats and by serving as the color commentator for several of the most recent WSM shows

on ESPN. I’ve been friends with David for almost forty years and I’ve known Bill for almost twenty-five, having helped him get started as a powerlifter and strongman competitor. Both men were intrigued by the idea of a strength event structured to test basic power and designed to bring together the best men in the world in the three disciplines of strength.

Together we began to talk about what events we could use that would be reasonably safe, reward brute strength more than technique, and yet not be totally familiar to either the weightlifters, the powerlifters, or the strongman competitors. We all wanted some sort of overhead lift, but we knew that if we simply tested the men in the clean and jerk using a standard Olympic bar we might just as well give the top prize in that event to the best weightlifter in the show. One day early on I suggested to David and Bill that a good challenge might be to reproduce a replica of the bell made famous by Louis Uni (Apollon), the legendary French strongman of the turn of the last century whose name had been given to a set of railway wheels which had only been lifted overhead by three men in the past one hundred years — Charles Rigulout, who cleaned and jerked Apollon’s Wheels in 1930 after several months of practice; John Davis, who lifted them with no practice at all in 1949 using a reverse grip to clean them (being unable to clean them with a traditional overhand grip); and Norbert Schemansky, who cleaned the Wheels in 1954 and then jerked them three times. It should be added here that at the time each man conquered the Wheels he was generally considered to be the strongest man in the world. There is considerable dispute as to whether Apollon himself ever raised his great Wheels overhead, but as to the merits of lifting the cumbersome bell, Olympic Coach Bob Hoffman said that Schemansky’s performance was, “the greatest feat of strength which has ever taken place in the world.”

Apollon’s Wheels weigh 366 pounds, and have a bar 1.93” in diameter, but the cleaning of them is made even more difficult because the thick shaft fits into the wheels so that when the shaft turns the wheels must turn, too. We all felt that the thickness of the bar (the bar’s diameter makes a “hook grip” impossible) and the fact that it didn’t revolve would make this event a real challenge, even for the weightlifters. Once we all agreed on this as an event, in the early fall of 2001. I contacted Tom Lincir of the Ivanko Barbell Company and asked if he would accept the challenge of reproducing Apollon’s Railway Wheels, knowing that Tom would match the dimensions of the Wheels precisely. An avid collector

of old barbells and dumbbells, Tom enthusiastically agreed to design and build the replica as a way of joining us as we tried to honor our past heroes by testing our present ones. So one of the events was set.

We also felt that we needed to do some sort of event that involved carrying something heavy — an event somewhat like a WSM-type Farmer's Walk, but sufficiently different so that the contestants from the Strongman world would have their natural advantage significantly reduced. After much discussion we determined that there were several primary ways in which this could be done — by making the object or objects to be carried much heavier than what was normally carried in Strongman events, by using a time limit of thirty seconds instead of ninety seconds so that endurance would play only a small part in the event, by having the men carry one solid object rather than the two normally carried in Farmer's Walk events, and by requiring the men to go up a short ramp with a grade approximating that of a wheelchair ramp.

Our first plan involved building the apparatus out of logs, but as we discussed this and as I made dozens of calls to lumber-mills, it became clear that logs presented a series of technical difficulties. We also considered simply building a metal frame with holders for Olympic plates in front and in back, and although this would have been far easier and less expensive it would have made the event less visually exciting as the iron weights would look much lighter than something less dense—like wood. Finally, after I located a source for old timbers (from demolished barns and wooden buildings) we decided to construct the apparatus out of 8"x8" and 8"x10" timbers. The timbers were held together by iron bolts drilled completely through, and the majority of the weight was placed in front and in back of the athletes, with two large timbers on each side plus the two handles connecting the timbers in back to those in front. Once assembled—only a few days before it was placed on a trailer and driven from Texas to Ohio—the apparatus was so massive that it looked unliftable. After much thought and deliberation we had settled on a weight of just over eight hundred pounds, as this seemed heavy enough to be a major challenge but not so heavy as to be beyond the strength of at least some of our eight stout contestants. We consulted with many men experienced in the Farmer's Walk, and most thought the best handle size was approximately 1¼", so that's what we used. Setting the bars in the wood so they wouldn't rotate. The same men felt that the bars should be approximately 30" inches apart, so that's the distance we used.

The ramp was constructed in the Columbus area, and it was four feet wide and thirty-two feet long, with a starting pad of 8' x 4' and a flat platform of approximately the same dimensions at the end. We would have made the ramp a bit longer, but the stage on which the event was scheduled to take place (the Columbus Auditorium) prevented this. The surface of the ramp was raw plywood, which provides good footing. The men had to lift the timber apparatus with their hands alone, as straps were not allowed, but they could put it down and re-grip if they lost their balance or their hands gave way.

Another event that we all supported from the earliest discussions last summer involved lifting a car or truck in a type of deadlift. Most experts through the years have considered (correctly, in my opinion and that of Jan, David, and Kaz) the deadlift to be the most basic test of brute strength in the iron game. It requires strength in the largest muscles of the body — the thighs, hips, and back — and it relies very little on technique. But since we wanted to make it different from a regulation deadlift, we decided to have the men lift a metal frame on top of which rested a vehicle of some sort. This would mean that the path of the lift would be considerably different from the path of a normal free-weight deadlift on an Olympic bar. Our first plan was to have the men lift the Hummer that would be the top prize, but as it was impossible to get one of the four ton behemoths onto one of the stages we chose instead to use a mid-size pick-up truck. The frame we planned to use had been used in several strongman events, but with the gripping handles set much higher from the ground than the height of a regulation deadlift. Another difference would be that in our event the grip used would not be the "wheelbarrow" style (palm facing palm). In our event we would use the normal, bar-in-front-of-the-shin overhand grip. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, when lifting a car the "groove" familiar to competitive powerlifters doesn't apply, so we thought this would even the odds for the non-powerlifters even more. Unfortunately, the frame apparatus failed to work as planned, as will be described later.

The fourth and final event was one over which we agonized for months, as we went back and forth considering three or four "possibles." Finally, we decided to require the men to push a Hummer, as we wanted to involve our major sponsor in some way. We knew, of course, that a Hummer, even as heavy as they are, would be no match for the men we intended to bring. Unless we took almost all of the air out of the tires — which is what we did.

Even before we had chosen our fourth and final event we had been involved in heavy discussions about who to invite and how to invite them. We had decided to limit our competitors to eight as a way to streamline the event, and it was critical that we devise a fair set of criteria on which to base our invitations. We started by agreeing to invite the two leading weightlifters, the two leading powerlifters, and the two leading Strongman competitors, and to fill out the contest with people who were outstanding in two or more of the disciplines.

In weightlifting, the top man in 2001 had been Saed Jaber, a Bulgarian national who had transferred his citizenship to the oil-rich (and athlete-poor) nation of Qatar. Our second choice was the venerable Andrei Chemerkin of Russia, former Olympic gold medal winner and multiple world champion. Accordingly, these men were contacted — at first informally and later formally — to invite them to take part. Both men responded well to the informal contact, and although Chemerkin never accepted the formal invitation Jaber told us via officials in Bulgaria as well as through backchannels that he was definitely coming. Unfortunately, he declined the invitation at the last minute, telling one of our contacts that he feared he was not heavy enough to do as well as he wanted. We also invited Ronnie Weller, but although Weller said he would probably train for the event and come the following year he declined. We then decided to ask Raimonds Bergmanis from Latvia as he was an elite weightlifter whose chances in the event would be, we thought, improved by his having also competed quite well in WSM events over the past several years. Bergmanis accepted enthusiastically.

In powerlifting, there are more federations than layers in a bench shirt, but we finally settled on the largest and oldest federation — the International Powerlifting Federation — and invited the man who had won the past two world championships in the superheavyweight class, Brad Gillingham of the United States. Once Brad fully understood the events, he told us he wanted to be part of the show. The other man we invited was Gary Frank, the WPO superheavy star who had put up such high totals over the past year or two. At 6'4" and almost four hundred pounds and with a background in field events and football we suspected Frank would acquit himself well. Kaz spoke to Gary at length, as did I, and after some original reluctance he agreed to come and began to do some event training. Just a short time before the meet, however, he told us he had suffered a tom biceps while doing deadlifts in training, and would be unable to compete. We hope he can come to the 2003 show as he recently became the first man to make offi-

cial lifts in one contest of over one thousand pounds in the squat, over seven hundred pounds in the bench press, and over nine hundred pounds in the deadlift. But with Franks hurt we needed another top powerlifter right away, and after David and Kaz and I conferred it was decided that David would call England's Andy Bolton, the WPC world superheavyweight champion and holder of the all-time highest deadlift with 925 pounds. Andy is a man unafraid of a challenge, and he enthusiastically agreed to take part.

In the Strongman world, our first step was to contact Dr. Doug Edmunds of the International Federation of Strength Athletes — the man who over the past 20 years has been more central than anyone else in designing and overseeing for Trans-World International the World's Strongest Man contests (and not coincidentally the author of a fascinating autobiography — *The World's Greatest Tosser*). We made contact out of respect for Dougie, Jamie Reeves, and the WSM organization. We wanted them to know that we had no intention of forming some sort of rival organization, but were merely trying to create a real test of basic strength and to provide the sort of prize package that would be of benefit to men of strength everywhere. We told Dougie that we hoped an invitation to the Arnold Strength Summit would be seen as the years passed as one of the perks a man would earn by winning TWI's World's Strongest Man contest.

With Dougie's blessing, we went first for Norway's Svend Karlsen, a consistent and colorful athlete who had won the WSM title in the fall of 2001. We also invited the 2001 runner-up and former winner, Sweden's Magnus Samuelson. Both men indicated some original interest, but both were reluctant to commit absolutely. As it happened, Kaz and Jan and I had a chance to see Magnus in person in San Antonio during the winter at a convention sponsored by the National Strength and Conditioning Association. While there, we did all we could to convince the big strongman to come, but he cited his wife's pregnancy as a reason for his uncertainty. We even invited him to take part in an impromptu exhibition by Mark Philippi (the UNLV strength coach) and Mark Henry there at the NSCA convention. Magnus declined to take part, but Kaz and Jan and I were so impressed by Philippi's strength and aggressive attitude about the show that after a discussion with David Webster it was decided to invite him to take part in the show, an invitation he readily accepted.

As the show neared, Magnus became difficult to contact, although we heard conflicting stories from mutual friends as to whether or not he was coming.

Finally, hearing nothing, we moved on to Phil Pfister of West Virginia, the top-rated American Strongman competitor over the past couple of years. Another man we had invited earlier, in anticipation that either Magnus or Svend or both would turn us down in the end was Canada's Hugo Girard, who had avidly courted an invitation by sending a lot of information about his career in strongman events and his interest in setting records in certain strength feats. Because of his grateful acceptance we were quite surprised when he bailed out just a few weeks away from the event. Svend



Svend Karlsen needed all of his Viking power to push this approximately eight thousand pound Hummer with virtually flat tires. The mighty Norwegian, who is the current TWI World's Strongest Man champion, finished second in this event to Latvia's Raimonds Bergmanis.

Courtesy Buckland Gillespie Graphic Design

remained on the fence until the last minute, but as the day to decide drew near his Viking spirit prevailed and he told us he would definitely come and that he would do well. After Magnus and Hugo declined to take part David called Janni Viertanen, but the Finnish strongman said no, too, citing a slight biceps problem and a belief that the events didn't particularly match his abilities. The last man chosen was Brian Schoonveld, a stout-hearted man who has been climbing the strongman ladder for several years and a man who had the stones to agree to come with very little preparation.

Our fourth category of participants — for those who had distinguished themselves in two of the three strength disciplines — came in handy as we wanted to include Mark Philippi, who was an outstanding lifter in the American Drugfree Powerlifting Federation before deciding to concentrate on the Strongman events, in which his best showing was a win at the Strongest Man in the U.S. back in 1999. Another switch-hitter who got one of the original invitations was Shane Hannan, the young Oklahoman who was one of the greatest squatters in the world (with an official best of over 1000 pounds)

before following Mark Henry from powerlifting into weightlifting and erasing all three of Mark's national records. Short, but massive and explosive, Shane appeared to us to be an ideal candidate. I had a long conversation on the phone with him about the contest and why I thought it would be fun for him and probably good for his career as well as his pocketbook; and at first he was very enthusiastic about taking part, saying that he could see the events were real strength events, sounded safe, and didn't require much endurance. Unfortunately, six weeks or so later, after speaking to his weightlifting coach, Shane told me he had decided not to come to Columbus and try to win the first prize package of approximately \$100,000 (the Hummer, \$10,000, a vacation for two and a year's supply for a superheavyweight of MET-Rx supplements).

Another man we wanted from the first — Greg Kovacs — was a bit off the charts, as he had never to our knowledge taken part in any sort of high level strength contest. Even so, he had been given so much publicity in the bodybuilding press because of his strength and size that many people in that field had come to believe

that he was the strongest man in the world. This is what the 6'4", 380 pound Kovacs has been called, in article after article, and claims came from his camp that he had done such things as incline presses with 650 pounds for six reps, seated presses with five hundred pounds for ten reps, and so on. Our reasoning was that since the Arnold Classic Weekend started as — and remains — a bodybuilding show, we thought Kovacs' fans would love to see the big man in the contest. Also, to be honest, we were all a bit skeptical about some of the claims made in his behalf and we were curious to see just how strong he really was. So Kaz and I began our assault, and we both had numerous conversations with Greg and/or his wife. At first, he appeared to be genuinely interested, though a bit apprehensive, too, but in the end he decided to pass, saying that he planned to enter a bodybuilding show in May and so would have begun to cut his weight by late February — the time of our strength contest.

Another man who earned his invitation because of his abilities in two of the three disciplines was Mark Henry, who has made his living since 1996 as a professional wrestler for the WWF (now the WWE). Mark won several national championships in the mid-90s in weightlifting and set all the national superheavyweight records, and he won the National and World Drug Free Powerlifting Championships in 1995, setting many world records in the squat, deadlift, and total. In fact, his combined best official lifts in weightlifting and powerlifting — all made within approximately six months — add up to a total poundage that is the highest ever made. Mark had been out of competition and heavy training for a very long time, however, and his weight had dropped about 70 pounds through dieting and doing an hour of cardio every day at the request of the WWF. For these reasons, I never gave much thought originally to him taking part because I knew the WWF really wanted him to keep his weight down and because they were the ones who paid his handsome salary. However, in the fall he got word that his mother had gone into the hospital and almost certainly wasn't coming out. So he took a leave of absence, went home to East Texas, and stayed with her for the final three weeks of her life. He stayed there for an additional two weeks, attending to the funeral and other related affairs, then returned to wrestling. I was in frequent contact with Mark, as Jan and I have remained in touch with him after he joined the WWF. During the times when I spoke to him while he was with his family following the funeral and after he had gone back on the road he seemed to be terribly depressed. His father died when Mark was quite young and his mother had raised him mostly by herself, and they were unusually close.

One night I talked to Jan about all this and asked her if she thought Mark could take part in the Arnold Strength Summit without embarrassing himself. At that time there were less than four months before the show, and for the previous five years all he had done in the weight room was light bodybuilding — of his upper body. He had done no pulls, no deadlifts, no cleans, no snatches, no jerks, and very few squats since 1997, and I was afraid that even with his great natural strength he had too far to go. But then I saw him one weekend and noticed that he had gained a lot of weight since before the funeral — most of it fat. I realized that while he'd been home he'd been eating comfort food at the tables of his grandmother and aunt and doing no cardio work. When I asked him what he weighed he said he was up to almost 360 — about forty pounds over his summer and early fall weight of 320 to 325. This, plus his depression, gave me the push to seriously consider inviting him.

Even though Jan and I were unsure if Mark would have enough time to build the strength he would need, I asked David and Kaz if they thought he deserved an invitation. I added that I knew if we invited Mark we'd open ourselves for criticism from people who might think the event had been rigged to favor him, especially if he did well. But both David and Kaz said that Mark's accomplishments had earned him a place at the table if he wanted to sit down and eat. They both added that whenever someone did something unusual there would be critics, but that most people who took the time to look into it would realize that we had already established three of the four events before Mark was even considered, and that the events themselves were so basic and straightforward that anyone who could win or do well in a contest featuring those events would unquestionably and obviously be a very strong man. So, bolstered by David and Kaz, I called Mark and told him we would invite him to take part in the show if he would agree to really bear down and devote his whole heart to the effort. I told him also that if his answer was yes he still had to get clearance from Vince to have the three months off to train and take part. I explained that deciding to enter such a contest carried some very real risks for him — the main one being that he had been promoted in the past by the WWF as "the strongest man in the world." I said that if he did poorly they could hardly promote him as "the fifth strongest man in the world," or whatever. "You have to really give this some thought," I added. The next day he called and said he had prayed about it, and that he definitely wanted in — that he saw the contest as a way to honor his mother's memory. In so many words he explained that going back to basics —

to his early roots as a lifter — would let him relive the days when his mother bought him his first set of weights and later walked with him at night up and down the dark streets in their neighborhood to help relieve the cramps he got from doing too many squats in junior high school. Mark is well aware that many fans of lifting wanted him to continue his competitive career rather than to take up the hard road of professional wrestling, and he realized that the Arnold Strength Summit would be a way for him to further unwrap the great gift of strength he'd been given and to share it with the world. The next step was Vince McMahon, who agreed enthusiastically after asking Mark if he thought he could win and hearing Mark answer, "Vince, I think I can win if you'll give me the time to train."

Finally the week of the contest arrived and one by one our eight strength athletes began to arrive in Columbus. By Thursday night everyone was there and settled into their large suites in the beautiful Radisson Hotel. Thursday evening the athletes and officials assembled in a conference room along with their coaches to meet Jim Lorimer, hear him explain the activities of the next three days, and then go by bus to look at the venues and the implements that would be lifted, pushed, and carried. Jim asked me to say a few words that evening and I used my time to pay my respects to him and to Arnold for supporting our efforts so generously and to thank David, Kaz, and Jan for their hundreds of hours of work in preparation for the show. Finally, I thanked the eight champions who had accepted the challenge and risk of our competition. I told them that we had invited the top men in the world in all of the strength sports and that not everyone had been willing to accept an invitation and to meet the challenge. I told them also how brave I thought they were for being ready to step outside the comfortable bounds of their individual sport and take part in the Strength Summit. I explained that I had conceived the event for strongmen everywhere, and that I was very happy we were able to offer the largest purse in the history of such contests. I closed by saying that Kaz and David and I wanted the strongest man in the room to win, and that we were extremely proud that so many outstanding, powerful, and valiant men had come to Columbus to make history.

The Contest

We decided to begin the competition with Apollon's Wheels, as we wanted the men to be as fresh as possible for their assault on this legendary implement. If any one of the four events could be seen as the signature

event for the contest this would be it, because the Wheels carry such a unique pedigree. We saw this event as a way to not only challenge our eight champions, but to pay tribute to the past — to the professional strongman Apollon and to the three iron game immortals who prior to the Arnold Strength Summit had been the only three men to successfully lift the Wheels from the floor overhead — Charles Rigulot, John Davis, and Norbert Schemansky. We knew, of course, that thick bars with 2" handles had been manufactured and sold over the past several years, but we also knew that if the plates used on those bars allowed the bars to rotate inside them, cleaning as well as push pressing or jerking the bar would be much easier with any given weight than the same weight would be on an implement which allowed the bar to turn only if the wheels turned at the same time and to the same degree. This point cannot be overemphasized.

Over the weeks prior to the meet Tom Lincir of Ivanko Barbell kept us on pins and needles as he perfected his design and built the Wheels. Originally, when Tom agreed in the late fall of 2001 to build the replica, he also agreed to build a lighter set of approximately 325 pounds with the same dimensions, so the men could have it as a warm-up and so we could use it in the contest for the athletes who were unable to raise overhead the 366-pounder. The construction of the big set proved to be so difficult and time-consuming, however, that two weeks before the show we agreed I would arrange to have the light wheels made in Texas. Fortunately, a talented, semi-retired machinist lives in my neighborhood, and he cut a 2" steel, extra-thick pipe down to 1.93" and fitted it securely into two 150-plus pound oilfield pulleys and we had our light set of wheels. True to his word, Tom finally finished the big Wheels and they were delivered via airfreight the day before the show. And a beautiful set of Wheels they were, too, up to his usual high standards — gleaming and yet somehow ominous.

Because cleaning the Wheels is the most difficult part of the lift, we agreed from the beginning to require the men to do repetitions of the clean and jerk and not just the jerk. Actually, because we heard that some of the men were having trouble cleaning 365 pounds even with the easier-to-lift 2" bar using regular plates, we finally and reluctantly decided to allow them to lift the Wheels to their shoulders in any way they wanted — with two exceptions: standing the barbell on end and rocking it over onto the shoulders or "continentalizing" it by placing it on top of a lifting belt and boosting it up from there. Similarly, we allowed the men to raise it overhead by pressing it, jerking it, push pressing it, or push jerking it, so long as they brought it under

control to the satisfaction of the judge. We knew these rules would set on edge the teeth of many purists, but we certainly didn't want to give the men a task that none of them could accomplish. We wanted to honor the men of the past, but we didn't want to embarrass the men of the present. We also thought that it might be interesting to see the sorts of inventive ways the men might find in their effort to elevate the massive, awkward weight.

Because we thought that some of the men would be unable to get the big Wheels to their shoulders and then overhead we decided to start with the heavy Wheels and then to allow those who failed to negotiate them to lift the smaller ones for as many reps as possible in order for us to rank the men for points. The winner of each event was to get eight points, with the next seven men getting from seven to one. In case of a tie the points

would be split. We also required the men to lift the small Wheels backstage before the event in front of the judges in order to qualify to continue in this particular event. We did this as a way to save time. As it happened, only England's Andy Bolton was unable to clean the smaller Wheels, so he finished last. The night before at our meeting at the hotel, the men had drawn lots to determine the lifting order in which they would attempt Apollon's Wheels on stage. Svend Karlsen wound up having to go first and Phil Pfister had the advantage of going last. Following the first two events, of course, the men went in reverse order of their current point score. In other words, the man in last place after the Wheels and deadlift would go first in the next event and the man in first would go last, having earned that right.

Finally the time came to roll Apollon's Wheels onto the stage in front of approximately seven thousand excited people and give the men a chance to join the ranks of Rigulot, Davis, and Schemansky. We had prepared some slides of these three immortals lifting the Wheels in France, and Kaz explained that it had been almost fifty years since the original Wheels had been lifted. Kaz didn't say — but I think it's fair to point out — that although all of our eight competitors weighed over three hundred pounds, most of them well over. Rigulot, Davis and Schemansky all weighed between 220 and 230 when they hoisted the great weight. I spoke to Ski several times before the show, and invited him to be there, and he helped me appreciate the difficulty of the challenge. "Hell," Ski said in his typical crusty, blunt way, "if you wanted to make it really tough, you should bend the bar like the original one was bent after Davis dropped it all those times back in '49." (Actually, according to most of the experts with whom I discussed this, it's likely that a bent bar would be easier to clean, as any sort of significant bend would allow the bar to be positioned so that the bend faced upward. The upward-facing bend would keep the bar from wanting to roll out of a lifter's hands, and thus make it easier to hold onto during the pulling motion. Ski is right, of course, that unless a bent bar is released at the top of the clean so that



British powerlifter Andy Bolton now holds the world record in the deadlift with 925 pounds, shown here. At the Arnold, he and Mark Henry, whose official best is 904, went head to head in the deadlift event with Mark making two reps with 885 and Andy making three.

Photo courtesy Andy Bolton

when it is caught at the chest the bend is still facing upward, the jerk would be much more difficult because if the ends of the bar in the jerk point upwards the bar would have a gravity-driven tendency to roll backward or forward and end up with the ends facing downward, thus twisting out of the lifter's hands as it rolled.) In any event, Ski wanted to be in Columbus and, at first, he thought he could come; but he's been having trouble with one of his hips and so in the end he didn't make it, much to our collective disappointment. He got the full results, of course, and I know he took some well-deserved pleasure in them.

The first man to try the Wheels was the 6'3", 320 pound Viking, Svend Karlsen, current winner of the WSM contest. Like all the other contestants, Svend was given 30 seconds to begin his attempt after his name was called, and two minutes after he began his first pull, to do as many reps as he could. Svend decided to use a technique in which he pulled the bar a few inches above his belt, rested it there briefly while leaning back, then boosted it onto the top of his abdomen and from there boosted it again to his shoulders. This he did with a slight struggle, but when he tried to push press the Wheels over his head they only went about 2/3 of the way. After a short rest he once again took the bar to his shoulders in three stages, but once again he was unable to shove the bar to arms' length although he came much closer the second time, using a rough push jerk technique. He appeared to have the same sort of problem several of the men had, which was controlling the non-revolving bar as they tried to adjust it on its way over their heads. In the months prior to the event I stressed to the competitors that the three things that would make Apollon's Wheels difficult to lift were its weight, its thick handle, and the fact that whenever the bar itself would turn the wheels would also turn. Practicing with a 2" bar and standard Olympic plates no doubt gave them unfounded confidence, as most 2" bars or axles will turn inside of the Olympic plates and thus not prepare them for the "feel" of an implement that is all one solid piece.

Brian Schoonveld was the second man to try the Wheels, and he devised a clever way to raise them to his shoulders. He used a reverse grip and lifted them to the tops of his knees and rested them there while he assumed a parallel squat position. He then released his grip and hooked his elbows under the bar and stood up so the bar was held in the crook of his arms — as in a Zercher Lift. Next, he moved his upper body forward and then quickly backward (as in a power clean) and raised his arms

into the air so that the bar rolled along his upper arms and came to rest on top of his deltoids. At that point both his arms were pointing skyward — more or less at the angle of a Nazi salute — and Brian still had the task of getting his hands under the bar so he could try to raise it overhead. Slowly but surely he managed to get first one and then the other hand under the bar, but when he tried to elevate it his hand-spacing was quite wide and he was so exhausted that on two attempts to push press it he got it only a bit beyond halfway. Even though he failed, his brave attempt was an amazing feat of strength and ingenuity. After a ten or 15 second rest he tried again, but this time he couldn't get the bar back on top of his shoulders.

The next competitor was big Brad Gillingham, a world powerlifting champion. He came out with fire in his belly and used a conventional power clean technique. He pulled the bar very high, but on the first attempt he failed to catch it on his shoulders. But on his second attempt he made a majestic power clean and just barely failed to fix it overhead. His textbook clean made Brad only the third man to clean Apollon's Wheels using a traditional cleaning style, as John Davis used a reverse grip to pull the bar into the air before he let go with his "underhand" and switched it back to a traditional grip. (It might interest readers to know that Davis' dramatic lift, made on his sixth or seventh attempt, was captured on film. Bud Greenspan of Olympic documentary film fame — making his first "major" documentary — followed Davis to France in 1949 to film him at the World Weightlifting Championships. While there, Greenspan immortalized Davis' heroic final effort with the Wheels, including the aftermath, when an exhausted Davis fainted and slumped into the arms of a nearby official.)

To students of pure strength, Brad Gillingham's power clean of Apollon's Wheels was one of the highlights of the entire contest, as it represented the first time that anyone — including Rigulot, Davis, or Schemansky — had used the power clean style to take the weight to their shoulders. A biomechanical analysis of the demands of bringing this particular implement to the shoulders reveals that it is easier to clean the Wheels using a split clean style than a power clean style (or, for that matter, a squat clean style). I say this because when a split clean is done the lifter is able to lean the torso slightly backward and thus catch the thick bar on the top of the chest more comfortably. In a standard power clean or squat clean the hips go a bit backward and the torso is inclined a bit forward as the bar is received at the chest — especially if the lifter lowers his torso more than

an inch or so from a fully upright position — and this forward-leaning position makes it very difficult to fix and hold the thick bar in place. What this means is that it requires more strength or, to be more precise, power to do what Brad Gillingham did than to do what Rigulot, Davis, and Schemansky did because Brad had to pull the bar higher in the air than would have been the case had he used a split clean style. This fact wasn't lost on the thoughtful Gillingham, a man who is part of what surely must be the strongest trio of brothers in the world. Brad told a few of us the following day that he was so excited at having cleaned the historic implement that he had been unable to get to sleep that night.

The fourth lifter to try the Wheels was Mark Henry, by far the heaviest of the contestants. Although none of the men were weighed, we had bio sheets on them all and, according to the information they provided, their weights ranged from approximately 300 to 335 — except for Mark, who weighed between 390 and 400. Most observers thought that because of Mark's having made a clean and jerk of five hundred pounds in the past he would be one of the favorites in this event, and those observers were correct. Using the same power clean style Gillingham had used, Mark took a traditional, pronated grip on the bar and hauled it nose-high before catching it on top of his massive chest. He then drove it overhead effortlessly, using a push press to get the bar up. He then dropped the bar and, after the spotters had replaced it in the center of the platform, made another powerful clean and another laughably easy push press. Down crashed the Wheels again, and once again it was re-centered on the platform. (During this time and throughout the contest he was being coached by Jeff "Mad Dog" Madden, the head of strength and conditioning at the University of Texas at Austin, and Jeff was giving him updates on how many seconds had gone by.) After Mark's second successful lift the huge crowd of 8000 or so iron game fans were all standing and screaming, as they knew they were witnessing a truly historic event. They roared their encouragement as Mark grabbed the Wheels again and yelled as he pulled them to his chest a third time and popped them overhead like a toy. He had done what he hoped to do — take it clean to his shoulders and get it overhead three times. "I hoped I could do it three times," he explained, "as a way to honor each of the three great lifters who lifted it before I did. I did one lift for each man, and I'm lucky there were only three."

David Webster, in an account of the contest published in the magazine *Muscle Mob*, had this to say about

Mark's performance with the Wheels, "Sensational. There is no other word for it. He was like a raging bull. He stalked the stage, then tore the bar to the shoulders easier than either Davis or Schemansky did. He celebrated exultantly with the crowd, then did another clean and jerk. Storming around like a man possessed, he psyched himself up for a third and final lift within the two minutes allocated for the attempts. The huge crowd, vocally supporting him in every lift, then showed their appreciation in no uncertain fashion. I have been organizing strongman competitions since the 1940s and can honestly say that the atmosphere created at Columbus Convention Centre has never been surpassed. This should give television producers food for thought."

As the crowd noise subsided, another Mark was chalking his hands and making ready to have a go — Mark Philippi. Having seen Philippi do so well in that exhibition in San Antonio, I thought he stood a good chance of lifting the Wheels, and he proved me right. Using the same reverse grip squat clean and sliding his left hand (underhand) grip to the center of the bar as he descended, he pinned the bar against his throat and held it there as he recovered. Once he stood up he gradually switched his left hand off the bar and then back under it so that it matched the position of his right hand. Finally he was ready to lift the Wheels overhead, and although the lift was a bit hard for him he used his athleticism and strength to balance it once he drove it off his chest and then pressed it out and held it for the "down" signal. He approached the bar for a second attempt, but gave it up as he realized he wouldn't be able to make another clean. Even so, by elevating the weight, he became the fifth man in history to lift either Apollon's Wheels or a replica of the Wheels and the crowd gave him a well-deserved and rousing ovation.

Latvia's Raimonds Bergmanis was another competitor who some predicted would do well with the Wheels because of his extensive weightlifting experience. Raimonds was taught the intricacies of "Olympic lifting" by his father, who was for years the national superheavyweight champion of Latvia. Raimonds has lifted more than 500 pounds in the clean and jerk and he has the large, thick hands of a natural strongman. But Apollon's Wheels proved too much for the genial Latvian, and even though he attacked the bar again and again he was never able to catch it and hold it at his chest as he dropped into a mid-range squat clean. He had it high enough to squat clean several times, but not high enough to power clean, and, as explained earlier, the thick, non-rotating bar and his forward-leaning style of

cleaning prevented him from completing the lift.

The last competitor was the big fireman from West Virginia — 6’5”, 320 pound Phil Pfister — who had larger hands than anyone else in the contest. As he approached the bar Phil exhorted the crowd for some support and they were glad to give it. But as he pulled for the first time they were no doubt as surprised as I was when he only managed to lift the Wheels a few inches off the floor. But Phil wasn’t finished. He psyched again and managed to raise the bar just above his belt and lodge it onto his stomach. From there he boosted it a few inches higher and caught it again before giving it another “jump” and taking it a bit higher still. Finally, he made one last boost and turned the Wheels into position at the top of his chest. But although he gave it a manful effort, his push press only went part way up before stalling and crashing back down. After a brief rest he tried again but the weight was just too heavy for him. A professional strongman competitor, Phil does very little standard lifting with barbells or dumbbells, preferring to concentrate his efforts training on the events he must do in the strongman contests.

At that point in the contest the exact replica of Apollon’s Wheels was rolled off the stage and replaced by a set of wheels that weighed 325 pounds. The lighter wheels had a bar with the exact same diameter and the bar was set firmly into the wheels, which came from a set of oilfield pulleys. The pulley-wheels were a bit smaller in diameter than the railway wheels used by Apollon, and so the bar was approximately 1 ½” inches higher off the floor than an Olympic bar is when it’s loaded with forty-five pound plates. But we needed the smaller wheels, as they allowed the remaining four men (Schoonveld, Gillingham, Pfister, and Bergmanis) to fight for placings. In a controversial ruling, Svend Karlsen, on the basis of his two “cleans” with the heavy wheels, was awarded third place and not required to try the smaller wheels. For the rest of the men (except for Andy Bolton, who came in last on the basis of his inability to get the small wheels to his shoulders during the warm-up/qualifier), the order of lifting was the same.

First up was Brian Schoonveld, who got the small wheels to his chest using his unique style and then push pressed them three times before returning them to the platform. Apparently, he was afraid that he might fail to get the wheels to his chest again and wanted to do the extra jerks and finish ahead of any man who did one successful “clean” and overhead lift but then failed to get it to his shoulders again. Not satisfied, however, Brian did get it to his shoulders again, but this time was unable

to bring his hands from the “Nazi salute” position to a position under the bar.

The next man out was Brad Gillingham, who manhandled the lighter bar—power cleaning it three times and push pressing it solidly after each clean. This took most of his two minutes, and he settled for three repetitions. Following Brad was Raimonds Bermanis, who made a hard, awkward squat clean and an easy push press, but then failed to clean the wheels again—although he made eight more attempts in the 90 or so seconds he had left after making his first lift. Obviously frustrated at his inability to clean a weight that he had probably snatched at least a hundred times during his long career, Raimonds attacked the bar furiously and with admirable heart. But the characteristics of both the light and heavy wheels, as we predicted, made the implement so much more awkward to lift that it took away from the weightlifter the natural advantage conferred by years of training on a modern, revolving bar.

The last man to lift was Phil Phister, who once again used his four-stage quasi-continental style to get the bar to his shoulders. This he was able to do three times, and to follow these “cleans” with three push presses, thus tying Gillingham for fourth place. So after the first event, the placings and points were as follows:

Mark Henry.8 points
Mark Philippi	7 points
Svend Karlsen.6 points
Brad Gillingham.45 points
Phil Pfister (tie for fourth)45 points
Brian Schoonveld.	3 points
Raimonds Bergmanis.	2 points
Andy Bolton.1 point

During this event David Webster was the chief referee, with Dr. John Fair and Jeff Everson serving as the side judges. Had it been necessary to call on them, we had a jury of sorts, which included Vic Boff, Joe Marino, Ray Stem, Ed Coan, and Bob Delmontique.

The Apollon’s Wheels event took place late on Friday morning, and the way the schedule worked out we decided to do Friday’s second event—the car lift — almost immediately afterward, while the men were still a bit warmed up. Unfortunately, it was necessary for us to set up the lifting area for the car lift in a large room where thousands of martial artists were having a contest. This made for major crowd control problems and made it difficult or impossible for those who wanted to watch to be able to see what was happening. But our major

problem had to do with the design of the frame on which the truck the men were to lift rested. Without going into more detail than such an article can sustain, I'll just say that although we were assured a small Chevrolet pickup (an S-10) had been lifted on the same frame that was brought to us in Columbus, men such as Brad Gillingham, Andy Bolton, and Mark Henry found during warm-ups that they were unable to lift without limit effort (and maybe not then) a Ford Ranger pick-up resting on the frame. As the Chevrolet S-10 and the Ford Ranger appear to be very equivalent in size and weight we were — and remain — puzzled as to how this could be so. But once we realized that none of our men might be able to lift the truck when the official contest began we were forced to scramble around and find a test that would require the same sort of basic hip, back, thigh, and shoulder strength we planned to test with the lifting of the car.

After a quick conference involving David Webster, Bill Kazmaier, John Fair, Jan, and I we decided to borrow an Olympic bar and as many Olympic plates as possible and simply ask the men to use straps and do singles in the deadlift to determine who was the strongest. But lo and behold — even though we found an Olympic bar there were no hundred pound plates, and so it would probably be impossible to put enough weight on the bar for at least some of the men in the event. At that point it was suggested that we get the 150 pound plus oilfield pulley-wheels that we used on the light bar in the previous event and put them on the inside with Olympic plates from there on out. This we did, only to learn that the most we could squeeze onto the bar with a collar was 88.5 pounds, and we feared that even that might not be enough for some of our eight young bulls. Our fear was based on two things, the first of which was that we were permitting the men to wear straps. This was done because we didn't want gripping strength to be the determining factor in the event, especially since two of the other events (Apollon's Wheels and the Farmer's Walk) were good tests of hand strength. The second thing which made us suspect that some of the men might reach 900 pounds is that the oilfield pulley-wheels were a bit larger in diameter than standard Olympic plates, which meant that the bar would be a bit higher off the floor at the start of the lift than an Olympic bar loaded with 45 pound plates. We reasoned that these differences should translate into slightly heavier deadlifts.

During our instructions to the competitors we told them that they would each get three attempts, as in a standard lifting contest, and that if they felt able to lift

885 pounds they should lift it for as many repetitions as they could as a way to separate themselves from one another. David Webster continued as the chief referee, and we were fortunate to have two outstanding lifters serving as side judges — Jill Mills, a former powerlifting champion and winner of TWI's World's Strongest Woman contest, and the legendary Ed Coan, many time world champion and world record holder in powerlifting. Jill, by the way, gave a well-received demonstration of her ability in some of the "strongman" events in front of the vast crowd at the Arnold Expo.

Using the "round system," in which the men with the lightest first attempts go first and then, once everyone has taken an attempt, the bar is lowered so the lightest second attempts can be done, and so on, the contest commenced. Schoonveld was first up with 615, followed by Pfister (615), Karlsen (705), Bergmanis (705), Philippi (755), Gillingham (755), Bolton (805), and Henry (805). All of these attempts were successful, and so the second "round" began, starting with Brian Schoonveld (665) Phil Pftster (675), Raimonds Bergmanis (765), Svend Karlsen (775), Mark Philippi (805), Brad Gillingham (815) and Andy Bolton (865). Mark Henry decided to take 885 on his second attempt, and he pulled this massive weight easily to the finished position once, then lowered it and did it again with power to spare. Then, for some reason, he put the bar down and began to celebrate. Later, he said that the bar had bumped his shin on the second rep and that he decided to stop — a serious miscalculation, as we'll soon see. For their third and last attempts, Schoonveld was again first, taking (and failing with) 705. Next up was Phil Pfister, a notoriously poor deadlifter, who managed a fine effort with 715. Svend Karlsen followed, taking 815 but only managing to get it a bit past his knees. Raimonds Bergmanis took the same weight and was delighted to make what was for him the heaviest deadlift of his life. Mark Philippi followed with 825 and made it solidly. But Brad Gillingham is one of the greatest deadlifters in the world, and he brought up 865 with no trouble at all — looking capable of perhaps as much as 900. Andy Bolton took 885 for his final attempt and made Mark Henry pay by hauling the big load once, twice, and then three times to take the lead. His last lift was a real limit — slow and soft on the lockout, and featuring one of the most spectacular nose-blood explosions I've seen in forty years of powerlifting. This blowout was all the more exciting as the spectators in the bleachers (including Arnold, Maria Shriver and their children) were no more than eight to ten feet away when the eruption

occurred. The crowd loved it, even though the scene was hectic and disorganized because of our inability to use the frame to lift the pick-up truck. Anyway, after a bit of deliberation, Mark decided to forego his last attempt. His coach, Jeff “Mad Dog” Madden, reasoned that even if Mark made four reps (which would have been doubtful) and finished first he would only have gained one extra point, and that one point would have required him to expend a great deal of effort.

Even though the deadlift event was more or less designed on the spot, the poundages lifted by all of these men were exceptional, and some were phenomenal. Five of the eight lifters exceeded eight hundred pounds, and the top three men, especially Bolton and Henry, could have gone to nine hundred and even beyond. So easily did the weights go up that anyone watching had to remind himself just how much was on the bar. That evening, as some of the lifters were rehashing the deadlift, it was generally agreed that both Mark and Andy might very well have been able that day to take a standard Olympic bar and, without straps, exceed Andy’s official all-time best deadlift of 925. It was also agreed that from an organizational and spectator standpoint the deadlift event left much to be desired. Even so, to a real student of strength our impromptu test of back, leg, hip, and thigh was a breathtaking thing to watch.

At the end of two events the placings and points were as follows:

Mark Henry.	15 points
Mark Philippi.	12 points
Brad Gillingham	10 points
Andy Bolton.	9 points
Svend Karlsen	8.5 points
Phil Pfister	7.5 points
Raimonds Bergmanis.	6 points
Brian Schoonveld.	4 points

The next day — Saturday — the final two events were scheduled, and the first of those was the Hummer Push. Because one of our primary sponsors was the General Motors Humvee, we wanted to feature one of the motorized beasts in an event. Rather than trying to find a way to lift a Hummer in some way, we decided that pushing one with deflated tires would be a real challenge. We did our best to make the event as fair as we could, and in this effort we bought shoes for the men so they would all have the same footwear. We also placed a long runner of rubberized matting between the tires so that as the Hummer was pushed the tires would roll on

concrete whereas the men would have the traction provided by the rubberized and slightly spongy runner. We realized, of course, that to push a “mere” Hummer would look somewhat unimpressive when compared with the things that have been pushed via a harness in TransWorld International’s World’s Strongest Man contests — tractor-trailer trucks, buses, airplanes, etc. But we were limited to an indoors format — we couldn’t go out to a local airport or train terminal. But we thought that if we took the air pressure down to almost zero even the strongest men would find it difficult not only to start the vehicle rolling but to keep it rolling. Finally, the GMC people sent a Hummer to Columbus (just a couple of days before the show) and so we were able to work with our two official testers — local strongman Bryan Neece and Francis Brebner of Scotland, an outstanding Highland Games athlete — in an effort to find where we should set the tire pressure. One of the bedrock principles under-girding the competition was that all of the events involving continuous effort could last for no more than thirty seconds. The reason for this decision on our part is that the “anaerobic threshold” is between twenty and thirty seconds, so if an event takes ninety seconds or two minutes to complete it’s quite possible for a man who is strong but also very aerobically fit to defeat a man who is stronger but less enduring. If at all possible, we wanted the stronger men to place highest in all of our events.

As we put the testers through their paces, lowering the tire pressure again and again, we finally learned that when the pressure was reduced to about six pounds the Hummer became very difficult to start and to push. I actually wanted to lower it a bit more as I reasoned that the men in the competition would be brimming with energy and adrenaline and that in any case they were also a bit stronger than our testers, but I was out-voted and we set the pressure at six pounds. In hindsight, it appears as if we probably should have reduced the pressure a bit more, as seven of the eight men completed the 40’ course in considerably less than thirty seconds. One problem, however, that might have been exacerbated by a further lowering of the pressure was that it would have been even more difficult than it was to correctly align the deflated tires at the start of each man’s attempt. As it was, several of the men experienced problems because, try as we might (and did), it was apparently impossible to align the tires for each man so that they were facing dead ahead. We learned that if the tires were even a fraction off dead straight it was far more difficult to get the Hummer rolling; the deflated tires seemed to sometimes

squish to one side or the other and form what amounted to a rubber wedge that had to be overcome before the man behind the wheel could straighten the tires and keep them aligned down the course. This became apparent when Brad Gillingham had trouble moving off the line and even more apparent during Mark Henry's attempt. It almost seemed — as Mark began to apply his huge body to the rear of the Hummer after the signal to begin had been given — that the driver had his foot on the brake. Once Mark got the Hummer started, however, it appeared (and the videotapes support) that he was moving the vehicle very fast. Brad Gillingham, in fact, said a week or so after the show that "it was clear that the tires were wedged in some way when Mark began to push, because once he got it started his world's strongest legs moved it faster than anyone else." Another problem we faced is that since the event was held inside the Expo Center, we were not permitted to start the engine and leave it on during the push, which would have triggered the power steering and made it much easier for the driver to keep the tires properly aligned. Several of the men had been able to find and push a Hummer in preparation for the event, but they all did so outside with the engine running and the power steering mechanism working. But we learned from our mistakes, and next year we plan to involve a Hummer in a very different and, we hope, more error-proof way.

The surprise (and very popular) winner of this event was the man who came the farthest — Raimonds Bermanis — who burned up the course by covering it in 17.07 seconds. Raimonds is an extremely explosive and determined athlete and his thick legs drove like pistons over the course of the race. The athletic Svend Karlsen came in second at 17.62 seconds, followed by Phil Pfister (18 seconds), Mark Philippi (18.53 seconds), Mark Henry (20.59 seconds), Andy Bolton (23.47 seconds), Brad Gillingham (25.60 seconds), and Brian Schoonveld, (who managed to make it 35'6" in the allotted 30 seconds). The idea of pushing or pulling a heavy object over a relatively short course in 30 seconds or less is a sound one, but the trick is to find something to pull that doesn't generate a lot of momentum on its own once it begins to move. Anything with wheels, for example, will usually develop a lot of momentum once it begins to roll; and even a series of connected train cars can be rolled over a flat course if they can be "started." Next year, we may require our strength athletes to push or pull an object that has no wheels so that it is not much more difficult to start than it is to move once it's started.

At the end of three events the overall placings on

points were as follows:

1. Mark Henry.19 points
2. Mark Philippi 17 points
3. Svend Karlsen15.5 points
4. Raimonds Bergmanis 14 points
5. Phil Pfister.13.5 points
6. Andy Bolton.12 points
7. Brad Gillingham12 points
9. Brian Schoonveld5 points

The final event — a variety of what has come to be called the Farmer's Walk (we called it by such names as the Log Haul, the Timber Trudge, and the Lumberjack Logs) — was one that required a lot of research, thought, and experimentation. Earlier in this account, I explained that David Webster, Bill Kazmaier and I had concluded that the Farmer's Walk event as it's usually done lasts too long and uses implements which are too light for it to be a true test of brute strength. Naturally, it doesn't require a Ph.D. in the science of rocketry to understand that, in a race for time, the lighter the objects carried and the farther they are carried the less chance there is for a really strong man to win. Imagine, if you will, two objects weighing one hundred pounds each and a race in which the contestants are to carry the two objects as far as possible in five minutes. Does anyone think that it would be particularly difficult to find athletes (certain football players, for example, or wrestlers) who could have easily defeated Bill Kazmaier and Jon Pall Sigmarrsson (in their primes) in such a race? Or what about a race lasting ten minutes, in which the contestants carried fifty pound implements? In that race it would be no great challenge to find very fit, enduring athletes who could defeat the men who defeated Kaz and Jon Pall in the previously imagined race. And so on. The point is that we wanted to keep the time of the race near the upper limit of the anaerobic threshold and we wanted to load the men as heavily as possible so that we were coming as close as we could to testing limit strength and not a combination of strength and endurance. However, even the latter part of the plan — to "load the men as heavily as possible" — proved problematic as we had no completely trustworthy method of knowing just how heavily we could load our eight strong men, especially since we were going to ask them to carry the implement up a ramp and not on a flat course. (One of the reasons for the ramp was that we feared a load near the limit of the men's total body strength would be too heavy for their grip. We hoped to use a weight and a ramp angle

that would mean their grip strength and their body strength would be tested to approximately the same degree.)

Originally, the plan had been to stage this event on Saturday night at the Columbus Auditorium during the crowning of the winner of the Arnold Classic bodybuilding contest. That stage would only allow us a total course length of approximately forty-five feet, and so that's what we had the Ohio carpenters build. Early on, I had suggested to Jim Lorimer and Arnold that by allowing us to have the final event that night it would be a fitting way for the audience to watch as these giants of strength fought one another for the keys to a new Hummer. In most Strongman competitions, the Farmer's Walk is usually very popular among the spectators.

But as to how heavy we should make the implement the men would carry, we were entering uncharted waters. The heaviest Farmer's Walk we had heard about involved implements of approximately 350 pounds on a flat course, and most such Walks used far less than that in terms of weight. Plus, we had to consider that having to walk up a ramp with any given weight would be more difficult than walking along a flat course with the same weight. One unanswered question was that by using one solid implement (not unlike a giant trap bar) instead of two separate implements would we be making the event

easier or more difficult? We thought we knew, but could we be certain? We *were* certain of one thing, which was that by using one solid implement instead of two unconnected implements we would be making the event *different* — and this would help to insure that the “strongman” contestants with years of experience in the Farmer's Walk would lose a bit of their “training” advantage. With all these considerations in mind, David, Kaz, and I spent dozens of hours agonizing over how heavy to make

the implement, and each of us called other experts to get their opinions. Finally, as was stated earlier, we decided to build an implement of just over 800 pounds, reasoning that such an implement would be heavier than anything used in any previous Farmer's Walk. Regarding the bar thickness of 1 ¼”, the general consensus was that anything much smaller would cut into the hands of the contestants and anything much larger might be impossible to grip and hold in a carrying event with such a heavy load.

The only one of the athletes I saw train during the run-up to the event was, of course, Mark Henry, and I watched him each week as he would load a rectangular metal apparatus he'd had made (at a machine shop). Each week he'd load it with more and more weight and carry it up a ramp at the Varsity Weight Room at the University of Texas in Austin. Although he had never done a Farmer's Walk event, and had only tried once to carry two objects (he carried two plate-loaded metal racks that day weighing 365 pounds each up a slight hill for a distance of approximately 50 feet and said he could have gone further), I suspected that because of his overall body power and strength of grip he should be able to meet this challenge if he had enough time to practice. Watching him get stronger gave me the confidence to suggest that a weight of eight hundred pounds would not

be asking the men to do the impossible. I realized, of course, that an apparatus made out of thick logs or timbers would be more cumbersome and difficult to balance than the small metal rectangle Mark was using in practice. Even so, I thought that when the Hummer was on the line most of the men would be able to carry eight hundred pounds at least part of the way up the ramp. I was joined in this assessment by several of our contestants, including Svend Karlsen, who thought eight hundred pounds sounded about



American strongman competitor Phil Pfister had the fastest time in the log carry on Saturday afternoon. Phil, without straps, carried the 815 pounds of wooden timbers up the 40' ramp in an astonishing 8.5 seconds, as measured by referee George Oates, on the right.

Photo courtesy Jim Lorimer

right. As for my own vote on the weight of the timber apparatus, I chose to stick with eight hundred pounds even though I suspected that an even heavier weight would have been a truer test of brute strength. I opted for the lighter load because I wanted all the men to have a good shot at carrying the timbers all the way to the top. I discussed this with David and Kaz and they both agreed that we should try our very best to load the men so that most of them could finish the course.

Finally, a father and son team of carpenters in Lockhart, Texas began to build the apparatus about a month before the event. After I had at last located some old timbers, and they finished just a few days before the apparatus had to be loaded onto a flatbed trailer and hauled up to Columbus. But before we loaded it, I asked Mark to come to the small town where it was built and try to lift and carry it. Even though it could be argued that by doing this I was giving Mark an advantage over the other contestants I felt we had to be certain that the apparatus could be lifted, balanced, and carried up a slight grade. I discussed this with David and Kaz and they concurred. We had to learn if the much more massive load of timbers would create problems for Mark and, by extension, the other competitors. And whom could I ask if not Mark? If there was a problem with the apparatus we needed to know it, so the problem could either be fixed before the actual contest or so we'd know we had to use a smaller, plate-loading metal frame instead of that brutal load of timbers. In any case, Mark drove down and it was good that he did, as he bent the braces the carpenters had used to hold the carrying bars in place. He predicted after looking the apparatus over that the braces would bend, but the carpenters said they wouldn't. The braces did bend when he lifted it, however, but new and larger braces were installed and the new braces held when Mark raised it off the shop floor for the second time. Encouraged, we loaded the bolted-together pile of timbers onto a trailer, drove it a couple of miles to the parking lot of a nearby grocery store, and unloaded it. Quickly, so as not to draw a crowd and perhaps be stopped by the store managers, Mark (already warm by having lifted the apparatus a few times while the bracings and balance were being checked out) stepped inside the timbers, chalked his hands, took his grip, lifted the timbers, and carried them up a grade fairly comfortably for about thirty-five feet. This was impressive to see, of course, but what really made Jan and I happy was that the apparatus appeared to balance well and, even more important, was definitely not so heavy as to be un-liftable. So we reloaded the apparatus, wrapped it securely with a tarp, tied it in place, and the

next day two of my neighbors — Josh Kosarek and Pat Hall — drove off toward Columbus, along with the disassembled “light” version of Apollon's Wheels.

The night before the contest began — during the tour all the contestants were given to view the implements and the places where they'd be lifted, pushed, and carried — the men saw for the first time the daunting pile of timbers for themselves. They were asked if they'd like to lift it, but understandably no one stepped forward on the night before the contest was to begin. Even so, after being assured that the timbers weighed “only” about 815-825 pounds, and that Mark had had one successful “test-flight” with them, the men collectively decided they could be lifted. They did make a group request to have the apparatus placed on blocks for each man so it wouldn't be necessary to squat down so far to lift the apparatus before carrying it up the ramp. The officials accepted that request.

One final twist in this event was that on Friday afternoon, just after the first day of competition, Jim Lorimer approached me and said that he and Arnold had been looking at the pile of timbers and were concerned that if none of the men could carry it up the ramp it would put a damper on the final show on Saturday night. He said they both doubted if anyone could really carry it all the way to the top. I explained that Mark had done it, and that after seeing the pile of timbers for themselves the men agreed that it could be lifted and carried. I also told him Kaz and I felt fairly certain that several of the men would be able to lift the timbers and carry them the full length of the ramp inside the thirty second time limit. I explained that even if some of the men failed to go all the way up we would mark the distance they achieved and that their failure would prove to the audience the difficulty of the task. Jim said he would talk it over with Arnold and get back to me. He did so the following morning, when he told me that he and Arnold were still worried and wanted us to move the event to Saturday afternoon on the stage at the Expo Center. Naturally, the officials and I and all of the competitors were disappointed by the decision, but we were grateful to Arnold and Jim and wanted to make the best of things. We consoled ourselves with the knowledge that an even larger crowd would get to see the men lift and carry the timbers, because the Expo Center on Saturday is even more crowded than it is on Friday.

Accordingly, the ramp was loaded onto a truck in pieces and assembled in the center of the Expo stage for the final, and deciding, event. The first man to challenge the timbers was Brian Schoonveld, and he drew roars of approval from the crowd by hauling the appara-

tus up the ramp in only 13.5 seconds and then holding it in the air for at least five seconds longer, smiling for all to see. He had been a bit overmatched in the overall contest, and it was good to see him finish on a high note. The only dark moment of the entire contest occurred on the next attempt, when Brad Gillingham injured his biceps just as he lifted the timbers off the frame. He immediately dropped the weight, and at first it was unclear if his injury was serious, but unfortunately he had partially torn his biceps, and a few days later he underwent surgery to repair the injury. The good news is that he recovered so fast that he was able to squeeze in enough training to finish second in the USAPL National Championships, earn a spot at the upcoming World Powerlifting Championships, and thus have the chance to defend his title and go for his third consecutive world superheavyweight title. Here's hoping he can pull it off. My personal feeling is that if he had not gotten a bad start with the Hummer and not torn his biceps with the timbers he would probably have finished in the top three in this contest. Brad is large, athletic, and powerful to a degree rarely seen. He is also an uncommonly fine young man.

The next man up was Great Britain's Andy Bolton, who fought his way to the top of the ramp in a time of 19.2 seconds. Mr. Pfister then came out to wrap those colossal mitts around the bars and show the crowd why he's been so successful on the strongman circuit over the past few years. Nor did he disappoint, literally smoking the course in the amazing time of only 8.7 seconds. So much for the men not being able to carry the timbers up the ramp. As it happened, the only man who failed to take the timbers all the way to the top was the next competitor — Latvia's Raimonds Bergmanis — who was bothered by a slight hand injury he had sustained going for one of his many misses with Apollon's Wheels. The bum hand affected his grip, and without full command of your grip it's impossible to hold the bars tightly enough to make it all the way up the ramp.

Norway's Svend Karlsen was in third place going into this event, and he hoped to improve his position and, perhaps, to win it all if Mark Henry should happen to falter. So he summoned all of the Viking Power at his disposal and almost matched Pfister's time, hitting the finish line in only 9.5 seconds. Mark Philippi needed to finish no lower than one place behind Svend in order to remain in second place overall and bring home \$15,000, but he had a bit of grip trouble and finished behind both Bolton and Schoonveld. This put Svend temporarily in first, Phil in second, and Mark Philippi in third.



On Saturday evening, during the finals of the Arnold Classic Bodybuilding Competition, the strength athletes were invited onstage and given a chance to lift the "unliftable" Inch Dumbbell. West Virginia firefighter Phil Pfister had to use two hands to shoulder the unwieldy implement, but he had no trouble pushing it to arm's length overhead. He then received a rare standing ovation from the enthusiastic crowd.

Photo courtesy Buckland Gillespie Graphic Design

Things now rested in the broad paws of Mark Henry, who had led the contest from the beginning and, as the leader, had retained the important advantage of going last in the final two events. This is especially critical in the last event as the leader knows in advance of his attempt what he needs to do to win not just that event but the much more important overall victory. As Mark prepared for his attempt with the timbers he knew that he didn't have to win this particular event in order to retain the lead. He knew that the only way he could lose would be if he tried to really hurry, stumbled, and was forced to re-grip. Armed with this knowledge, he lifted the timbers carefully, got his balance, and then marched majestically up the ramp toward victory, \$10,000, a tropical vacation for two, the keys to a brand new silver Hummer with all the bells and whistles, and the screams and

cheers of the thousands of fans. After roaring out his joy and acknowledging the crowd, Mark walked down the ramp and toward the back of the platform. Halfway there, he collapsed to one knee and began to sob. Someone went to him to ask if he was okay, and Mark finally managed to say, "I won the contest, but I lost my mother."

The final results and point totals were as follows:

1. Mark Henry.25 points
2. Svend Karlsen.22.5 points
3. Phil Pfister.21.5 points
4. Mark Philippi20 points
5. Andy Bolton and Raimonds Bergmanis. . . 16 points
7. Brad Gillingham13 points
8. Brian Schoonveld 10 points

In the aftermath of the last event, most of the competitors said they thought we should add some weight for the show next year, and everyone was proud that the men rose to the challenge so well. Both Arnold and Jim said afterward that they wished they had had the faith to put the event in the Saturday night show, but that next year they would definitely do so. It should be added, in fairness, that what Jim Lorimer had told me about Arnold's legendary "gut instinct" was eerily accurate. Jim had told me that the reason they had wanted us to switch the location and time of the meet from the Auditorium on Saturday night to the Expo Center on Saturday afternoon was that Arnold had a feeling something might go wrong as the event was being conducted. As it happened, he was right. What went wrong was that several of the men built up so much speed as they carried the timbers up the ramp that when they dropped them at the top the momentum of that eight hundred-plus pounds hit with such forward force that several of the segments of the ramp were jerked apart. This meant that the carpenter crew had to rush out and put the ramp back together several times. Even though they did this quickly it still took valuable minutes and would have disrupted the carefully planned flow of Saturday evening's tight schedule of events. Now that we know what can happen, however, we can secure the ramp sections next year so they won't come apart.

One of the surprises of the final day was that because the Farmer's Walk had been removed from the Saturday night show, Arnold and Jim wanted the men to do something that night for the Arnold Classic audience at the Columbus Auditorium besides just shaking Arnold's hand and getting their checks and prizes. It happened that there was a replica of the famous Inch

Dumbbell available, and it was suggested to Jim that perhaps a small prize could be offered to the man who could pull it into the air the greatest distance using only one hand. Jim saw that this could be done quickly and would take very little set-up time. So that night, after the men were brought onstage and introduced, Bill Kazmaier and David Webster explained to the audience that any of the eight strongmen who wanted to attempt to lift the Inch replica had a chance to win an additional thousand dollars. The judges were David Webster and John Fair. Three of the men declined to make an attempt (Svend Karlsen, Brad Gillingham, and Andy Bolton), but five of the men decided to have a go. First up was Brian Schoonveld, who managed to pull the ponderous bell to the middle of his shin. Next up was the always-game Raimonds Bergmanis, who struggled for at least a minute but only managed to budge it a bit from the floor. Mark Philippi followed and made the best effort up to that point by pulling the bell approximately to his knee.

The next man out was the colorful Phil Pfister, who knows how to work a crowd. First, as he stood over the bell, he did a good Hulk Hogan imitation by cupping his huge hand around his ear toward the increasingly excited crowd. Next, he deadlifted the bell, placed one end of it onto his right thigh, and squatted to a parallel position, at which point David Webster signaled that the official part of Phil's attempt was over. But Phil wasn't finished. He then began inching the bell across his thigh toward his shoulder, but as he did so it began to fall and he was forced to touch it with his left hand and steady it. (With Phil's touching of the dumbbell with his left hand, Bill Kazmaier remained the only man to have "continentaled" an Inch replica with one hand and then pressed it overhead.) In any case, Phil was having fun, and he reasoned, correctly, that the crowd would enjoy watching someone try to get the famous dumbbell overhead. So once he had it fixed against his shoulder he stood up, and looked at the crowd as if to ask, "Do you want to see me put it up?" By then they were roaring their support for this impromptu effort, and so he tossed it about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up, hesitated, and then pressed it out as the normally somewhat sedate crowd leapt to their feet and gave him a standing ovation.

That was a hard act for Mark to follow, as I had urged him beforehand not to try to clean the bell because he had never tried to clean a heavy dumbbell before and so might injure himself in the attempt. So he had to be satisfied with pulling the dumbbell to the middle of his chest, which was far higher than anyone else had done, including Phil, and pocketing an additional thousand dollars. But Phil had stolen the show, and in spontaneous appreciation Arnold and Jim announced that they

were awarding him a thousand dollars for his dramatic effort, a gesture that delighted the capacity crowd. On Monday after the event, Arnold said his wife, Maria Shriver, thought Phil's lifting of the Inch Dumbbell was the most exciting thing of the entire weekend.

The word we got from Arnold and Jim — as well as from other veterans of the Arnold Classic over the years — was that the Arnold Strength Summit was a great success, warts and all. In fact, both Arnold and Jim have pledged to continue and even expand their support of the show for at least the next few years. We believe the subsequent shows will be much less difficult as we will have already worked through most of the problems. Overall, David, Kaz, Jan, and I were very proud to have played a role in the event, and excited at the prospect of correcting our mistakes and hosting an even better show in 2003. Already, we've been talking to people who share our love of strength and strength competitions and thinking about what we can do to make things even more exciting to watch. One thing we know for sure — all of the events next year will be held on either the stage of the Expo Center or the stage of the Columbus Auditorium the night of the Arnold Classic finals. We also know we will once again ask the men to face the challenge of Apollon's Wheels, and to carry as much as nine hundred pounds up some sort of a ramp. The other events are being planned as this is being written, and we will very soon begin sending out invitations and announcements of those events.

This report wouldn't be complete or accurate without a listing of the sponsors and all the other people who helped with the contest. Our sponsors included the Arnold Classic, MET-Rx, the General Motors Company, the WWE, the Ivanko Barbell Company, Plaza Travel, and Sorinex. Many individual people helped, too, including John Fair, Eddie Coan, Bob Lorimer, Jeff Lorimer, Francis Brebner, George Oates, Ron Burgess, Chad Koy, Erika Neece, Bryan Neece, Vic Boff, Joe Marino, Travis Trimble, Mandy Melloun, Steve Slater, Pat Hall, Josh Kosarek, Jeff Everson, Jill Mills, and Jim Lorimer's wonderful office staff, including Lucy Pinney and Pat Brown.

It was a great honor to be asked by Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jim Lorimer to take the lead role in designing and conducting this particular competition — this Summit of Strength. Few things I have ever done have been as challenging or, at the end of the day, as rewarding. It took me a long time to recover from the event, and this period of recovery added to the lateness of this issue of *IGH*. Had I not had the constant help and support of Jan, David, and Kaz — not to mention that of Arnold and Jim — it would have been impossible to do



Arnold Schwarzenegger shakes Mark Henry's hand on Saturday evening as he presents him with the keys to his new Hummer and a 10,000 dollar check. In the background, Bill Kazmaier, who announced the contest during the weekend, looks on with a big smile.

Photo courtesy Jim Lorimer

what we did.

At the 2002 Arnold Strength Summit we brought together the greatest athletes in the world in powerlifting and the strongman competitions, and we had two elite weightlifters, too. And the top men who weren't in Columbus weren't absent because they hadn't been asked. We did our dead-level best to assemble the very strongest men in the world in order to determine who was the strongest man of all, and we plan to do the same next year as well. In 2003 we want to have the top powerlifters and strongman competitors again, as well as the very best weightlifters. By placing first and second, Mark Henry and Svend Karlsen have already earned an invitation and have accepted. The prizes we will provide will exceed those of this year, and the events will be announced well in advance. The challenge will be there for anyone with a strong back, a stout heart, and a willingness to lay it on the line for everyone to see. The men this year behaved like the warriors they are — they were brave, valiant, and anxious to challenge the events and each other. At the same time, they were unfailingly open in their praise of one another and supportive of outstanding performances. They could not have conducted themselves more appropriately nor could we have been more proud of them. They were — all of them — strong men in the truest and best sense.