



## My Final Contest

was the 1983 Mr. Olympia in Munich, Germany. It was my third attempt to win a fourth Mr. O title. And this was going to be it, win it and retire. Finally.

Thoughts of retirement began to creep into my mind after I'd won the title a second time in 1978, but some powerlifting buddies talked me into a third time. After all I was a good 8 pounds heavier, stronger with great muscularity. Well, 1979 was a great victory, but looking back it would have been the best time to hang it up. After a life-threatening accident 8 weeks before the 1980 Mr. O in Australia, hindsight told me it would have been wise to skip the competition that year and appear in the best shape of my life for the 1981 contest. But I already had my plane ticket and Arnold said I should go to Australia and defend my title, so I endured tremendous suffering and attempted to make it four in a row at a bodyweight 10 pounds below 1979.

I was and still am a genius in retrospect. Skipping 1981 and competing in London in 1982, my goal was to be bigger than ever. After all, the consensus from the physique experts was "You need to get bigger." I'd show them. I competed at 200 pounds bodyweight, my heaviest ever, so massive (for me) that I just didn't look the same. Ricky Wayne, then editor of *Muscle and Fitness* told me at the competition, "Do some classical Zane poses so the judges will recognize you." Just what I needed, maybe I should put my name on my posing trunks. My retrospective genius told me afterwards that if I was 5 pounds lighter and more defined, I'd have won.

"I'll go for it one more time" I told myself. But in May 1983 I had a bicycling accident where my brakes grabbed, and I flew over the handlebars landing on my shoulder. Thinking it was just a sprain, I rested it a few weeks and then started serious upper body training. I discovered I couldn't lock out my right arm and wasn't able to train upper body as heavy as in 1982. The result was I came in about 15 pounds lighter maybe in the most defined condition of my life but a smaller version of my previous year.

I began relying on more machine work and after using the great free weights and pulleys at World Gym, I'd head down to Gold's Gym a mile away in Venice to use the Nautilus machines.

It was still 3 months before the Olympia competition, but I'd already started contest preparation, training 3 days in a row and resting the 4th day. The next day I worked legs and abs, arms, and abs the following day. Aerobics were done every workout day usually some time after my workouts and I had begun working on my suntan. Unlike now where bodybuilders get fake spray tans to show some color, in those days sunbathing was very much a part of the contest preparation ritual. Bottle tans looked orange and absorbed light on stage and couldn't compare to the glow elicited by a real tan acquired gradually. Thus, the training continued right up until Christine, and I flew to Munich in early October. I'd done as much as I could under the circumstances. I got therapy for my shoulder to ease the pain which actually wasn't too bad and dieted very strictly.

I might not be the biggest guy in the competition, but I'd be the most defined. Would it be enough?

With the rigorous workouts, aerobics and low carb low fat dieting all the body fat disappeared by mid-September. Observing what was happening I made even more intense efforts. Every week we'd drive to Zane Haven, our bodybuilding learning center in Palm Springs, sometimes to do seminars, other times to train and sunbathe. Everything seemed to be headed in the right direction.

One week before the competition I took photos with John Balik, now the editor in chief of *Iron Man Magazine*, who in those days was a photographer for *Muscle and Fitness Magazine*. I also shot a bunch of color photos with Mike Neveux and every one of them came out good. "Now I'll have enough photos Weider Enterprises can publish on a regular basis for an entire year" I thought. But *Flex Magazine* had just been started, I got one of the first covers and they used all these great photos for a two-page spread. It was impressive but they'd used all the photos. I wish I had a say in this, maybe I would have if I drove out to the Weider offices in Woodland Hills every week, but I was too focused on my training to bother.

Don't remember the exact date but October 10th sticks in my mind. We arrived in Munich on a Wednesday and walked around a park near the hotel that day. I hadn't gotten any sun for several days so I visited a tanning salon on Thursday, getting a little red but I knew my color would be exactly right for the show Saturday.

Come Saturday prejudging I remember being called up a number of times for comparisons. This is not usually an indication that you've placed first, at best the judges are trying to decide the top spot, but I was in just about every comparison. My competition seemed to be Lee Haney, Mohammed Makaway, and Samir Bannout. It was Haney's first Olympia, and he was big, Makaway had a fancy posing routine, but you couldn't really see the details of his development because he didn't hold each pose very long. Nice movements, great abs great teeth, no lats. Samir showed a fantastic back but was cramping badly and considered dropping out. When Oscar State the head judge learned of this, he told Samir in front of all the competitors that it would really be a shame if he didn't show up for the evening show. I knew this meant something, namely

that I hadn't won. Samir took some salt after the prejudging and recovered enough to make the evening show.

Nothing good ever happened to me in Germany and this year proved to be no exception. Standing backstage awaiting my turn to pose, there was Arnold and Franco Colombo drinking a bottle of red wine. I joined them and drank most of it, which proved to be not a bad idea to relax a little more, after all the decision was already made. "It's a drunken Octoberfest crowd" Arnold told me between sips of wine, "They want size." That was why Bertil Fox got the most applause of anyone. On top of that, right before me, a guy from France imitated my posing routine. Imitation wasn't flattery.

Then it was my turn. I held each pose long enough to give everyone time to scrutinize the pose and Artie Zeller's photos made me look like the winner. You can see this posing routine on You Tube.

Then it was time to announce the winners: sixth place not me, fifth place not me, I thought "I feel like they will call my name next." And they did. Fourth place. I didn't want to go out this way, but this was it. Reflecting on the experience years later I wrote in my diaries:

*Drew lucky number 7 in 1983  
But placed only 4th in Munich, Germany  
As defined as could be.  
Best I could do  
weighing 183.  
Later ate sausage, drank Octoberfest beer  
They went to Italy  
And changed \$600 into one million lire  
Couldn't spend it all in the streets of Florence  
Millionaires buying memories then  
Dashed hope washed away  
In the wine of bodybuilding oblivion...*

Christine and I toured Italy for the next week. I was starting to smooth out from eating pasta and drinking wine all week. Did lots of bicycling too. We returned with 20 bottles of wine wrapped in socks and underwear in our Haliburton suitcase. Here we are in Florence a few days before leaving Italy...

After returning home, my shoulder was hurting increasingly so I had it X rayed to learn there was a hole the size of a half dollar in my rotator cuff from the bicycling accident I'm sure training for the Olympia didn't help the injury either. So, on December 14th I had rotator cuff surgery, it was no fun, but 5 months later I was in contest shape again and gave a posing exhibition in Texas. The rotator cuff surgery enabled me to train hard for another 24 years after officially retiring after this competition at age 41. My window of opportunity for winning Olympia a fourth time had closed. It was time to meet new challenges.