

COMPETITION KEEPS YOU YOUNG by Dick Pariseau

On November 14, 2016, I watched USNA '60 Classmate, Jack Herbein, defend his World Championship at the World Bench Press and Dead Lift Competition, at Bally's Hotel/Casino, in Las Vegas, NV. The event is affectionately known by contestants and knowledgeable spectators as the "Push - Pull Competition." Jack is 78 years old. How did he come to hold the World Record, win six (6) World Championships, four (4) National Titles, and become a member of the Hall of Fame? Dedication, addiction, or foolishness . . . read on and you decide.

Jack came to Annapolis directly from High School and joined a similar group of mostly middle-class youths as a Plebe in July 1956. He was a hard scrabble youngster from Birdsboro, PA, weighing 160 pounds.

Early in his grade school years three boys who palled around together decided that he should be punched and pushed around at their discretion. Perhaps it was because his father was the High School Principal and they assumed Jack was the recipient of special privileges at school. After a few incidents, his father heard about the activity and asked Jack why he did not defend himself?

"Well there are three of them. They are all two grades ahead of me and are all bigger and stronger than me. The ringleader is especially tough." Jack explained. "Then you should catch each one when he is alone and fight them one at a time," was the special privileged, fatherly advice he received.

Plebe summer at the Academy, after our brief introduction to the fine art of boxing during PT class, we were paired off for a three minute round as our "Final Exam." Jack faced a classmate who was 3" - 4" taller than he was and it may have triggered some early school memories. Jack apparently worked his way inside his taller opponent's longer reach and displayed a reasonable amount of skill. When the bell ended the round, Boxing Coach Rubino was waiting as Jack exited the ring.

"Herbein, when they ask you what sport you want to play next Spring, sign up for Brigade Boxing and report to me."

He was a class hero when he won the 155 pounds weight class, Brigade Boxing Championship, as a plebe. Third Class year he fought in the 165 pounds weight class and became Brigade Boxing Champion for the second time. Second Class year, again in the 165 pounds weight class, he defended his title and became Brigade Boxing Champion for the third time. Coach Rubino was excited about training Jack during his First-Class Year because no one had ever been Brigade Boxing Champion all four years and because of the upcoming 1960

Olympics. Coach Rubino was on the Olympic Boxing Committee and revealed that he could guarantee Jack a Quarter-Final Olympic tryout.

Jack, who had wanted to be a seagoing naval officer since reading several seafaring books as a 5th Grader, was anxious to report to his first ship and to marry his fiancée upon graduation. By now he had had only 15 - 18 formal fights and envisioned an Olympic opponent - probably from Poland - with 60 - 70 fights to his credit, who might hit him enough to keep him from reporting to his ship on time or disfiguring him sufficiently for his fiancée to postpone the wedding until his face returned to its Hollywood, movie star quality. He declined Coach Rubino's offer, did not box First Class year, but did get married and report to his first duty station, a Destroyer, on time.

Home on leave from the Naval Academy, Jack was returning from a date when his younger brother, home on vacation from the Marine Corps, challenged him to lift overhead the weighted barbell he had arranged in the family living room. Surprised by the ease with which the barbell was lifted, both boys realized that Jack might be pretty good at this weightlifting stuff. He began training with weights his 1st Class year at the Academy and found weight training fun! Dedication certainly contributed to his success, but so did foolishness. When Jack's wife Angela referred to weightlifting as her competition and "Jack's mistress," I accused her of exaggeration. She responded with this story. "One day while I was out of the house Jack was weight training alone in basement. While performing bench presses with 225 pounds, he lost his grip on the barbell and it dropped on his forehead. Like most head wounds it immediately began to bleed profusely. He wrapped a towel around his head to soak up the blood and somewhat control the bleeding. Holding the towel in place with one hand, he drove himself to the Emergency Room at the local hospital. When I returned home, shortly after his return from the hospital, I saw his head completely wrapped in white gauze from the top of his head to the bridge of his nose, even covering his eyebrows. He looked like a mummy. I asked what happened and he told me how he had gotten the ten stitches in his head. I asked him how long he had been home, and he said, "Not long. I stopped at the YMCA to complete my workout."

All I could think of in reply was, "Yes. You have competition and Jack has a mistress."

The entire competition lasted a week. The day I attended it was all weight classes, men and women, ages 60 years and older. Three judges, each armed with a toggle switch connected to a white (good lift) or red (no lift) bulb, were

positioned in front and on each side of the lifter. Each contestant was allowed three lifts. Weight could be added, but not decreased. The maximum weight lifted was scored.

After watching the awkward gait and stiff legged shuffle of the contestants aged 60 years and older, I asked Jack, "Do all dead lifters have knee problems?"

"It is mostly arthritis and it is both in the knees and the hips." he replied.

"So, how are your knees and hips?"

"I replaced my right hip in 2001. Then during a training lift in 2003, my lower, right side went limp. It seems that I had split and broken my artificial, right hip." So that one was replaced a second time. In 2010 I had my left hip replaced. Addiction?

In the competition it is important to make your first lift, because weight cannot be reduced, and you may end up without a score. Jack weighed in at 198 pounds and was in the 75 - 79 age group. He made all three of his lifts in both categories with the following weights:

	Bench Press	Dead Lift
First Lift	92.5 KG (203.7 lbs.)	155.0 KG (341.5 lbs.)
Second Lift	95.0 KG (209.2 lbs.)	172.5 KG (380.2 lbs.)
Third Lift	97.5 KG (214.7 lbs.)	182.5 KG (402.2 lbs.)

His total of 280 KG (617 lbs.) won him the First-Place trophy. Before awarding the trophies, Jack was invited by the Tournament Director to attempt a fourth lift to set a new World Record, because his weight combination was only two pounds below the current World Record. Jack declined politely. When I asked why, he said, "It's my World Record. I set it last year. I'm tired. Let's go get a beer."

Jack was not only awarded the First Place Trophy in his age & weight category in the Push-Pull Event, but also the prestigious award as "Best Lifter in the Competition" based on his age, weight, and lift total. Over a beer he revealed that on occasion someone might beat him in one of the two, Push-Pull categories, but never in both, so he routinely gets the First Place trophy.

Competition keeps you young regardless of your age (as long as they keep making spare parts) just ask USNA Graduate and Class '60 hero, Captain Jack Herbein, USN Retired.