

Excerpts...
“Vince Gironda Legend And Myth”

by
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Vince Gironda, a legend in bodybuilding history will be forever be immortalized not only for his unique approach to bodybuilding but his unique approach with people as well. Perhaps the most controversial individual bodybuilding has ever known and without a doubt, Vince himself made certain it was that way. Vince was a master of many things. He was also lacking in some areas, such as marketing techniques. Vince was at his best however, when he could cause controversy and he was definitely a master at doing so. Loved by some, hated by others... all would have to agree Vince Gironda had a passion for bodybuilding.



Vince Gironda

The following are excerpts taken from the CD “Vince Gironda Legend And Myth.”

The information exchanged was fast and furious. I would reflect for days about what I was told. In fact I would have to carefully consider all of it and would have to put it into some order, in my mind, before I could fully grasp what I needed to get out of it. Sometimes it was frustrating, I felt like I was being bombarded with things I would never understand unless I could sit down with him face to face. In time, with patience on my

part, I could sort it all out and see the message. For me, the confusion that some might find in my not condensing by subject, represents a more realistic picture of what I want to present. This book is not only about Vince it is also my sharing with you the much too short experiences I had with him as well as the valuable methods he preached.



Steve Reeves is at the far right and Vince is in the middle

“What do you want?” Is this Vince, I asked? “What do you want?” I would like to speak to Vince Gironda please. “Look for the third time what do you want?” “I don’t have time to play phone games!” This was exactly how my first phone call to Vince went. Surprised? A little, I had already heard and read about his reputation and although you may have heard stories, nothing is quite like getting hit with it first hand. It didn’t take me long to realize I was talking to the real thing and it made me hesitate long enough for Vince to say: “I’m busy, call me back when you get your act together”. Wait Vince, I said, “I’m calling long distance from Tennessee and I would like to ask you a question.”

Years ago but it seems like only yesterday. Hard to believe time goes by so fast. I don’t recall the year I first talked with Vince but believe it to be sometime in the late sixties. I was active in bodybuilding in the 60’s, a time I consider the “Golden Era” of bodybuilding. The phone calls and correspondence continued well into the 70’s. I wish I had held onto all the letters but I still have the courses he sent. Worn and used they are still a keepsake I pick up from time to time just as I do other items I have from that period of time.

Deserving or not... true or not, Vince had a reputation for being rude and abrupt and that's putting it mildly. He also had a reputation for being one of the most knowledgeable, innovative, and intelligent people connected with bodybuilding. It has been said that Vince was self-taught in anatomy and kinesiology. He developed methods and techniques through experimentation, observation, and creativity that set the standard for bodybuilding years ago and are still followed today, time tested and proven.

It was Vince's reputation for knowing all the ins and outs of bodybuilding that I wanted to tap into. I felt if I was going to be able to do that I would have to put up with his harsh, direct manner and so I did. Glad I did as a matter of fact. What I discovered was Vince also had another side that was not so well publicized, one of being willing to share his knowledge with someone who would listen and follow what he said; exactly what he said and to the letter. Don't and he would spit you out in a New York second. For some reason, unknown to me, Vince also showed interest and understanding for my questions in each conversation and correspondence. It was almost like he was a different person from what I had heard about him and our first phone conversation.

Sure he would rant and rave but he also made certain I understood exactly what he was talking about. He must have had a good memory because I would call him two or three months later and he would ask direct questions related to what we discussed previously without me even bringing subjects up. He had a knack for getting his point across like I have never seen, before or since. Say what you want about Vince but you can't say he ever had a difficult time letting you know what he thought.

People change as they go through life. I do, those reading have or will, and I am certain Vince did. All I can tell you is that if he changed his philosophy or ideas about bodybuilding they were either before or after I was communicating with him. During the years I had a relationship with Vince, he remained consistent. I'm not sure I could write all he spoke of or what I learned from him. I must admit, although I never disagreed with him, I didn't accept everything he told me. Maybe that was a mistake. I knew then and I believe today he was way ahead of his time in many respects.

During the period I communicated with Vince I was already aware of my genetic limitations and grew to accept the fact I would never be a world-class bodybuilder. A local reputation would have to do and I would live with it. I also learned from Vince that one should build on what they have instead of trying to create something they do not have. Create illusions, just like a magician. Take what you have, blend it together and capitalize on your strengths. Easier said than done, especially when it is being said on the phone and through the mail three thousand miles apart. But it made sense, a lot of sense.



Vince demonstrating his version
Of the seated dumbbell curl

Vince himself was not a large man and I think this is why he stressed proportion and symmetry so much. I have no doubt he would not accept what our sport has become today. Size has its place but there is a limit to what is really appealing. Of course I might be wrong but I just can't see Vince putting his stamp of approval on what the sport has become. As unique as his thinking and methods were, if you look at them closely you will find they are built on a very basic foundation, a very solid foundation at that. Some of his concepts are today being exalted as being "New Breakthroughs." All you have to do is look at the past to see the future.

Did Vince believe everything he preached? I really don't know! I do know he could justify anything he said about bodybuilding and make a case strong enough so those that scoffed would leave and try it anyway. In secret mind you, so that no one would know they tried his latest theory or method. I honestly believe he was sincere in what he said and I also believe just as strongly he was an excellent promoter. He knew

how to promote his beliefs, his methods and concepts, his gym. I didn't and still don't see anything wrong with that. After all, business, any business, relies on being able to sell in order to stay open and profitable. The gym and health and fitness business is difficult no matter how you look at it. Vince was a success in the industry for many years, mainly due to his excellent ability to promote. Although he was a great promoter, perhaps the greatest trainer, and acclaimed author, he was not a great businessman. His interest was not business but in training and writing.

Most people associate Vince with Larry Scott but there were others, many others. Some stayed with him and others left. As times changed, so did bodybuilding as well as those involved with the sport. People became different. Arnold ushered in a new era. I'm still not certain whether I consider Arnold as the end of the "Golden Era" of bodybuilding or the beginning of a new era. Either way I think his arrival on the scene was at the same time a change was taking place. Did Arnold bring about the change or was change evolving on its own is a question for debate that has supporters on both sides.

.... During one phone conversation concerning my arm training Vince yelled; "cut back, cut back, cut back." "Take one full week off from all training and when you resume do exactly one half of what you're presently doing." "But Vince," I said. Slam, he hung up. I tried to call him back but someone else picked up the phone and informed me Vince was busy. I called for two weeks before Vince would talk to me again. Typical Gironda! When he spoke you were to listen and follow. I guess a lot of people would have gone on their way and just cussed him. Deep down I felt he knew I was sincere and I absolutely knew I wanted his experience and insight so I kept calling and writing. When I finally reached him he let me know that it was not his policy to accept phone calls and talk training over the phone. Like I stated earlier, I don't know why but this limited relationship continued on and I did call and we did talk training.

---- The story continues... in the CD, "Vince Gironda Legend And Myth."