

# INTERVIEW

Personal dialogue between  
PL USA Magazine and the  
Sport's Greatest Names.

**LM:** Gene, let's start out with some background information about you. How old are you, are you married, do you have any children and what do you do for a living?

**GB:** I'm 46 and married to my wonderful wife Dianna. We have a son named Ian. I served 21 years in the United States Air Force as an enlisted officer in the services career field. I managed dining facilities, lodging operations and fitness centers in the Air Force during my tenure. During my Air Force career, I was inducted into the Air Force Heritage Hall of Fame and United States Air Forces in Europe SPORTS HALL OF FAME. I won Air Force Athlete of the Year, Pacific Air Command Athlete of the Year and United States Air Forces in Europe Athlete of the Year. I also went undefeated in 8 consecutive Air Force

## Gene Bell interviewed for Powerlifting USA by Larry Miller



Gene Bell went 2110 @ 181, with an 843 squat, at the '88 Hawaii Record Breakers.

tional meets plus a couple of national and IPF world titles.

**LM:** How and when did you get started in Powerlifting?

**GB:** I grew up in Bartow, Fla., the county seat; an area known for producing world class athletes. As a high school athlete I was trying to find a way to become a better athlete in the off season for football, so I started working out on my own in my parent's backyard after school. In 1974, my high school introduced weightlifting as a sport; I soon dropped my passion for basketball and started being a regular in our high school weight room. I lettered in several high school sports and garnered two Fla. State High School weightlifting titles in 1974 and 1975. I entered my first official powerlifting meet in 1975 in Tampa, Florida - after that meet I was hooked.

**LM:** What records do you still own and what are your best lifts?

**GB:** I still hold the highest posted total in a sanctioned meet (APF/USPF) in the 181 class with a 2110 total. I also hold several USAPL National and American records in the masters division in the 198 and 220 weight division. I have set a lot of records in the masters division in few different federations. I still hold the Netherlander National Bench press record of 240 kilo's at 220 pounds. My best lifts in a meet are: 165 - 688 lbs., 441 lbs., 683 lbs.; 181 - 843 lbs., 529 lbs., 733 lbs.; 198 - 871 lbs., 545 lbs., 766 lbs.

**LM:** I know that you are recovering from recent surgery, but what is your normal routine for all three lifts?

**GB:** Yes, I'm the walking wounded. I normally train three days a week, hitting the core lifts once a week with some special exercise movements included to round out the conditioning work. My workouts last for about two

hours and I also complete some cross training three days a week with racquetball, jumping rope or sprint work.

**LM:** I have witnessed you drop a fair amount of weight in a short period of time. What is your secret?

**GB:** I normally consume a large amount of calories with regularity when I'm training hard. So when I start to cut back on the calories the weight just starts flying off. The last couple of pounds are lost overnight without much effort. I eat fairly clean most of the year, so staying fairly lean is no problem.

**LM:** Do you follow any special nutrition program?

**GB:** My dietary requirements are simple, nothing fancy or complicated. I try to stick to four to six well balanced meals a day and limit the alcohol consumption for special events.

**LM:** Last year in speaking with Ed Coan, I asked him to name

his three top powerlifters of all time and you were on his list. Who are your top three squatters, benchers and deadlifters?

**GB:** My top three squatters would be Steve Goggins, Ed Coan and Ausby Alexander. My best benchers would be Larry Miller, Deborah Ferrell and Jill Mills. My selection best deadlifters would be Ed Coan, Ausby Alexander and Lamar Gant.

**LM:** As a master lifter, do you still have any desire to compete at the open level?

**GB:** After competing at an elite level pace for twenty years, I don't have a desire to compete at the open level anymore - I have lost the hunger. At this point, it is too time consuming for my present life style, but I do train at a level whereby I could easily go in a national meet and hold my own.

**LM:** Do you have any

our sport?

**GB:** I would like to stay active at the grass roots level and keep helping where I can in the sport. Texas is known for its powerlifting availability, it has something for everyone. Johnny Graham and Gary Pendergrass do an awesome job promoting the sport in Texas; both guys are the best in the business at organizing powerlifting meets.

**LM:** I know you use Titan equipment. You and Pete Alaniz go back a long way. How has Pete helped your lifting?

**GB:** Pete is a great guy and has always been there for me as a friend. Pete has provided me with world class powerlifting gear for over a decade. He knows my gear sizing like the back of his hand, so I get a perfect fit every time.

**LM:** I know you've met a great number of lifters throughout your illustrious career. Any special lifters or friendships stand

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out?

**GB:** All my Armed Forces and powerlifting pals are the greatest friends a person could ask for. Pete Alaniz, Johnny Graham, Col. Scully, Ausby Alexander (Ret. Marine Corps), JD Carr (Ret. Marine Corps), Tim Taylor, Diane Siveny (Ret. Air Force) and my current training partners "Iron Mike" Trenton & Kimberly "Rage" Walford. This list goes on forever, sorry to leave out so many great people that are in my life.

**LM:** I guess we need to discuss the drug issue and equipment issue as well as the fractionalization of our sport. What are your views on these issues and do you have any thoughts on how our sport can move forward?

**GB:** Maybe in about twenty years, powerlifting will evolve into a main stream sport in the USA and rank up there with sports such as track, wrestling, baseball and basketball. All the major powerlifting federations are making positive steps to make the sport a positive experience for the kids coming into the sport. With all

the federations in the USA, there is something out there for all the lifters to get involved with - just have fun with it.

**LM:** What has been your most memorable moment in the sport and do you have any amusing stories to pass along?

**GB:** My favorite story was when I was deployed for five months in field conditions at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey in support of Operation NORTH-ERN WATCH prior to the 1994 USPF Nationals. I trained in a make shift gym, in a tent, for most of the time, hoping that I would get the chance to make to the Nationals to make my mark again. I traveled through most of Europe to get back to my home base at Soesterberg Air Base, NL (Netherlands) to get approval to travel back to the USA to lift in the Nationals. I went head to head against two former national and world champions (Sly Anderson and George Herring); the placements went down to the last deadlift, I went on to win another world title in Sweden a few months later.

**LM:** You have helped coach a number of teams. Do you enjoy

coaching as much as lifting?

**GB:** I have a lot of respect for the coaches helping the high school and college lifters. These coaches give so much back to the sport; my hat is off to coaches such as Sandra Perron, Wade Hooper and Jim Hart, they do such awesome work with the junior program. I coached my first team in high school in 1975 when our coach told us we were on our own. I have coached teams at the national and world championships in the last twenty years. I enjoy coaching with a passion; it gives me a personal satisfaction knowing that you are helping someone achieve some of their goals and dreams. I just formed the South Texas Powerlifting Team near my home in Schertz, Texas. The STP team is the tenth team I have formed in twenty years; the teams have produced some very talented lifters.

**LM:** Do you have any advice for the novice lifter?

**GB:** Start by finding a qualified coach or trainer to get you started. Research and read as much as you can on the sport. Attend meets in your local area and volunteer to help in any way you can. Also don't

limit your talents to just one federation - VOLUNTEER!

**LM:** Do you think that bringing prize money into our sport will help or hurt?

**GB:** The prize money approach is a great way to introduce the sport to mainstream America. When a lifter states he won ten grand in a powerlifting meet, it grabs your attention right away. It is a great alternative for lifters who have achieved all they can in the amateur ranks and are looking for a new challenge. Television coverage, cash money, and magazine/media coverage - these are the ingredients that really adds excitement to the sport.

**LM:** Gene, any final comments or individuals you would like to thank? Since I am doing the interview with you, I would just like to add that as great a lifter as you are, those people who know you find you to be a greater individual and a true gentleman.

**GB:** I would like to thank my family for the support from the start, without their backing my dreams would not have become a reality. Also, thank you Larry for taking the time out to complete this interview.