

Muscle

Bulges mark body building boom

By LYNN ORR

If Roger Honica pressed weights to please women, he would have quit six years ago.

"My wife thinks it's grotesque," he admits. "She thinks body building is a waste of time."

But with an eye to entering competition like "Mr. Universe" some day, Honica looks at body building as a personal challenge. And his wife Judith likes the fact that he's combined his hobby with a business venture by opening Silver's Gym in Plymouth.

With 220 pounds of prime muscle on a 6-2 frame, Livonia resident Honica is a walking advertisement for the gym which caters to advanced body builders as well as beginners.

Honica's gym is the first of its kind in Michigan.

"I'm the first gym to mix the sexes," he says. Four of the current 30 members are females, and Honica doesn't expect to increase that ratio dramatically.

Most women, he says, work out to keep in shape. They're not interested in the heavy body building equipment Honica offers at the gym at 953 Irvin, north of Junction.

But only about 10 per cent of the men who work out aspire to physiques like TV's "The Hulk."

SILVER, with a nameplay on the hit California gym, Golds, where TV's Lou Ferrigno keeps in shape, is Honica's latest sideline. He is employed at Ford Motor Co.

At the gym, which officially opens at the first week in February, beginners work out next to guys like Tom Semrau of Wixom, who has been pumping iron for 15 years since high school.

"It's my primary sport," says Semrau, whose father was also a body builder. Semrau's wife likes his rippling muscles, but she doesn't appreciate the time he devotes to working out — at least two hours a day, five or six days a week.

That's an average amount of time to spend on serious body building, Honica says, who works out about two hours a day himself. But the serious types quickly outgrow most equipment available at spa chains, he adds. That's what prompted his latest venture.

"I was working out at a health club in Redford, but it folded and I had no where to go. The closest place was east of Woodward."

Undaunted, Honica decided to open his own gym. He sold an A.S. Cobra, an expensive English Ford sports car, acquired in pursuit of another hobby, and invested about \$20,000 in equipment he had built from his own design.

Stu Galbreth, a welding instructor at

Schoolcraft College, built the different pieces. Each one is designed for one particular body part.

For example, a 500 pound hand works the front part of the thigh. Honica designed a special machine which allows the body builder to lift with his shoulders rather than his hands, allowing longer workouts and prompting larger muscles.

A 1,000 pound calf and leg press machine, 5-150 pound dumbbells, and 30-130 pound barbells stretch devotees to their muscle-bearing limits.

FOR MANY, "it's a craze," Honica says. For others, it's a hobby, a sport and a challenge. For Honica, 31, it all started when a former girlfriend called him a "zipper."

"I was 135 pounds and had a high jump record in high school, but that's all I could do."

Now as society becomes more health conscious, more people are turning to body building as a way to stay in shape, he says. He shrugs off medical criticism of the sport.

"When you're working out hard, you're tearing the body down, actually aging it faster," he explains. "But you're flushing your system as well."

Unlike many body builders, Honica doesn't use drugs like amphetamines, steroids, or niacin, purported to darken the skin for competition.

He has two goals — to enter body building competition and to reach a break-even point with the gym.

RON GROLLMUS of Livonia thinks Silvers has the best equipment he's ever seen.

With a bellow and a red face, Grollmus finishes using the lat pull and has only one response for why he puts himself through the heavy paces.

"I like it," says the Schoolcraft College student. "It makes me feel good about myself."

And he doesn't mind the admiring glances females cast his way. "They look," he confirms. "And why shouldn't a girl look at a guy who's built well?" he challenges.

No one had a response.

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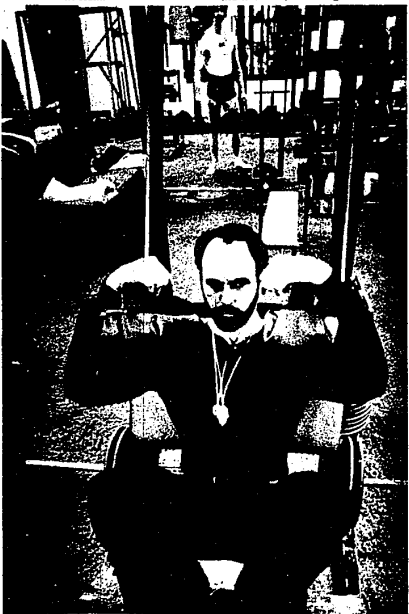
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Making use of his specially-designed back, Silvers Gym owner Roger Honica demonstrates the style that brought fame to his idol, 1950s' movie star Steve Reeves. (Staff photos by Bob Woodring)

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