When I was introduced to wrestling in junior high and high school I heard right away about the heavyweights. Heavyweight Les Loverude was the first in a long line of Cumberland, Wisconsin High School wrestlers to advance to state competition. He did so twice. I remember hearing my older brother Phil speak of the confidence he gained just by holding his own with Les, though he was younger and 50 pounds lighter. Phil later also competed at state. Then as I grew into high school I began training with our heavyweight. Ricky Chartraw was shorter than me but much heavier and much stronger. There was always the challenge to protect myself as moves were attempted. That was a good warm up for what was going to come my way in college.

Facing the "Gentle Giant" by the name of Chris Taylor was a whole new ball game for me. *(You can read the complete story of Chris in the book called "The Gentle Giant" by Lynn Moore & Harold Nichols.)* When people hear of Chris's size – 6'5" and 425#, they often remark, "You didn't wrestle him, did you?" My answer has most often been, "Of course! Who else was going to train with him?" I was the next weight class down (190 pound class) and besides, I was a team captain. If I made excuses, so would all the rest of the team.

The first reaction, and rightfully so, is to run in fear from a giant of a man like that. His power petrified me. His weight could smother you. The feeling of helplessness is never comfortable to a wrestler. It was easy to say "It is impossible to ever stay on the mat with him."

However, once I got past the fear I learned two things that were most helpful.

1) Chris was a gentleman and my teammate. He didn't want to hurt me. He wanted to learn and improve also.

2) <u>Deflect power and weight</u>. Patience, foresight and position were key to avoiding the dangerous situations. A bullfighter never charges the bull. He deflects the bull's charge each time.

My recommendation is to wrestle some with men much bigger than you. Take your time in doing so. As you begin to handle people your own size, move up the line-up. Always stay alert to protect yourself. Take your time. Don't do it all at once. Study and watch what the bigger man does. If he is given to charging you or spurts of frustration you must deflect and keep a distance. Never, never, never leave yourself unprotected. But if you do get vulnerable and get caught <u>swallow your pride and plead for mercy</u>. Then start over and be more careful.

If you think the sport of wrestling is all power and guts, beware. Someone is coming with more power and determination than you. Position is key. Use your power, use your gutsy determination, but learn to use them in the best positions. This is learned by trial and error, over and over and over. There is nothing like learning position and how to deflect power while wrestling someone much bigger than you.