THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF POLYMATH DAVID P. WILLOUGHBY

PART ONE: EDUCATION AND THE IRON GAME

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"Some know the value of education by having it. I know its value by not having it." –*Frederick Douglass*

David Patrick Willoughby was just a year old when the Milo Company began manufacturing barbells in 1902. When Willoughby was born there was no governing body for weightlifting in the United States; there was no agreed upon list of official lifts; there were very few gyms with weights for customers to use; and the sports of bodybuilding and powerlifting had yet to be invented. Compared to our modern, densely populated world of strength, the Iron Game was a virtual desert in the early twentieth century containing only a few oases. In the decades after his birth, however, as Willoughby grew to manhood, became an excellent weightlifter, and then used his typewriter and incredible intellect to promote weight training in all its manifestations, that almost barren landscape became ever more verdant, and people came to live within its borders and constructed gyms, associations, publications, and contests. He wasn't alone, of course. Alan Calvert, founder of both the Milo Barbell Company and *Strength* magazine helped plant and nurture the modern Iron Game; as did Bob Hoffman of York Barbell and *Strength & Health* magazine; and, later, bodybuilding empresario Joe Weider also played a seminal role. And, of course, we cannot forget the contributions of Eugen Sandow, Bernarr Macfadden, George Jowett, Sig Klein, and many, many others, who planted seeds, pulled weeds, and watered the world of strength when rain was scarce.[1] However, in several important ways, it was Willoughby who understood the breadth of the field and who, unintentionally perhaps, nurtured the seeds that developed into the modern sports of bodybuilding and weightlifting. It was Willoughby who helped organize and suggested competitive standards for weightlifting in the 1920s. It was Willoughby's writing that clarified and defined what bodybuilding should be in the 1930s. And it was Willoughby who resurrected the early history of strength in his research-based articles in popular magazines and thus provided the Iron Game with a record of past achievements for modern lifters to aspire to, and a pantheon of heroes and heroines that helped it find cultural meaning. Thanks to Willoughby, the achievements of modern lifters shone more brightly when readers understood how they compared to the best men and women of the past. By demonstrating that the Iron Game had such a long, distinguished lineage and linking that history to both science and statistics, Willoughby's writings helped the public understand why a person might want to lift weights and even why it mattered. Vic Boff, founder of the Oldetime Barbell and Strongman Association, summed it up succinctly in 1995 when he wrote, "Without any doubt, David P. Willoughby's contributions as a writer, theorist, and historian in the field of physical culture are without equal, and we are still very much in his debt."[2]

Taken in 1926, when he was 25 years old, David P. Willoughby autographed this photograph of himself posed as "The Thinker," for physical culture friend Ernest Edwin Coffin. Willoughby was both a champion weightlifter and internationally recognized for his excellent physique and he had a major impact on the evolution of the Iron Game.

In this first scholarly examination of the life and contributions of David P. Willoughby, we focus on unpacking Willoughby's personal life story—about which he was fiercely private—and then primarily consider Willoughby's important role in helping to establish the Iron Game—the term we use to describe those activities such as bodybuilding and weightlifting based on resistance training.[3] Willoughby's legacy however, reaches well past the boundaries of the strength world, for this self-educated polymath used his brilliant mind and endless energy to also make important contributions to such academic fields as endocrinology, anthropometry, paleontology, zoology, art history, and even the NASA space program. Although we won't be able to do justice to all of his achievements, this article is longer than normal because the life of this Iron Game icon was so wide-ranging and complicated. However, his published legacy, ranging across numerous academic fields and all the major muscle magazines, is evidence of Willoughby's power of perseverance, dedication, and his unstinting desire to improve himself. Although often thwarted by poverty and lack of education, Willoughby believed in the Progressive Era philosophy of self-improvement and, both physically and intellectually ignored the odds and continued to find ways to move forward.

This cabinet card shows Mary Ann Small, David's mother, who had a tumultuous life before she married David's father in 1897. Mary Ann ran away with a circus performer at age 16, and when that relationship dissolved, taught herself to be a trapeze and slack-wire performer and worked in a variety of circuses for the next 16 years. She even played the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 at the same time as Sandow and Al Treloar.

Willoughby, unlike many Iron Game authors, almost never discussed his family or early life in his articles, choosing when he published "David Willoughby: An Autobiography" in *Iron Man* magazine, to speak almost entirely about lifting—his own, and the organization of the sport—and to share no important details about his parents, siblings, marriages, or how and why he became passionate about measurements and chronicling the greats of the Iron Game.[4] Willoughby's autobiography appeared in print in January of 1983, the same month that he passed away. Written when he was 82 years old, his choice of primarily focusing on his lifting career in the 1920s and not discussing what happened in the five decades that followed those halcyon days is even more surprising. But throughout his published works, he displays an unusual reticence to speak about his parents, the hardships they faced as a family, and the peripatetic nature of his early life and thereby masks the true enormity of his achievements as a writer, artist, statistician, and researcher. But, Willoughby's accomplishments cannot be fully appreciated without knowing that his formal education lasted only five years. He began attending school at age eight and stopped in order to begin full-time work in ninth grade; he did not attend college. Using several memoirs written by his mother in 1934, his personal notes, correspondence, and the annotations he wrote on the back of photographs in his personal archive, we have attempted to piece together how and why David P. Willoughby became the man he did. In our attempt to understand some of the psychological motivations that fired his drive and ambition, we devote more space than is normal to the early lives of his parents, especially that of his mother, Mary Ann Small. We ask for your forbearance in including these details and can only hope that you will be intrigued, as we were, by learning about her surprising and often difficult life and how her past may well have impacted the course of her son's life.[5]

Circus Beginnings

Willoughby's interest in circus performers and the physical abilities of men and women was very likely inspired by his mother, Mary Ann Small, who spent her early adulthood performing in circuses, variety theater, and on riverboats that travelled the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. In her brief handwritten autobiography, Willoughby's mother, who was born in 1864 in Norfolk, Virginia, explained that she ran away from home at age 16 to marry William Flournoy Ashworth, a circus performer.[6] According to her memoir, they married in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 7 February 1880 and continued to live in Philadelphia "off and on" until the birth of her first child, Harry Ashworth, in May of 1881.[7] When her baby died four months later, Mary Ann "went on the road" and began training to be a slack-wire walker and trapeze artist. She does not explain what happened to Ashworth after the child's death, writing only that "After learning [to be a wire walker] went with the Miller, Stowe and Freeman Circus until I was proficient enough to go with a big show. Had to lay off when Walter, the second boy, was born in Bellevue Hospital, New York City, July 23, 1884."[8] Sadly, Walter lived only six months before dying of "cholera infantum," as Harry had.[9]

An alternate version of this early stage of Mary Ann's life is found on a single sheet of paper, in David P. Willoughby's distinctive handwriting. The paper is titled

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"David P. Willoughby, Born Mar. 17, 1901," and below that heading is a list of the members of his family with annotation for births, deaths, and marriages. That document does not mention Ashworth and records, instead, that Mary Ann Small married Walter Verona on 28 July 1879 in Richmond, Virginia, listing both Harry and Walter as Verona's children. There is no mention of a wedding date for Verona in Mary Ann's memoir.[10]

In 1885, after recovering from the loss of her second child, Mary Ann, then 21 years old, returned to circus life and it appears that Verona was with her. "I got in practice," she reported in her memoir, and "we" joined Adam Forepaugh's circus. Little information has been found about Verona other than that he worked at different times as a magician, fire eater, manager, and as an "advance man," who went to the towns before the circus arrived to scout locations, put up posters, and talk to the press.[11] After two seasons with the well-respected Forepaugh Circus, the Veronas toured with John Robinson's Circus in the summer of 1887 and then worked vaudeville that winter, as Mary Ann put it, "to keep in shape."[12] In either 1887 or 1888, they found themselves in New Orleans where they met Eugene Robinson, nephew of circus impresario John Robinson, who was fitting out three large riverboats as a floating circus to travel the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. The Floating Palaces, as Robinson called his boat-bound circus, contained a side show or "museum of oddities" on one boat, a menagerie of animals on another, and a large theater on the main ship where minstrel shows, melodramas, acrobats, and magicians played.[13] Robinson invited the Veronas to be part of the show, and they worked for Robinson for three seasons; Walter performed as a magician and was listed as general manager of "the outfit."[14]

In 1890, Robinson decided to sell the Floating Palaces, and Verona and a partner, Victor Mauberret, bought them at auction.[15] Verona and Mauberret managed to keep the Palaces afloat for the next several years, but they were not making enough money to cover the expenses related to running the show plus the loan they had taken out to buy the boats, menagerie of animals, and other contents. In 1892, the circus was docked near Louisville, Kentucky, on the Ohio River, when police seized the boats to cover their debts. "We disbanded for all time," Mary Ann wrote, "the outfit was taken . . . and sold. My husband lost every cent he had invested and (we) had to start out trouping again."[16]

Making life even more difficult at this time was the birth on 2 November 1892 of Mary Ann's first surviving child, a girl they named Mercedes Virginia Verona.[17] After several months of scrambling to find work, the Veronas, Mary Ann reported, "were only too glad of the chance," to join the Harris Nickle Plate Show, a one-ring, one-elephant circus that brought them to Chicago for much of the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition (Chicago World's Fair).[18] Given the fact that they played Chicago for several months, it is interesting to consider whether Mary Ann might have seen, or perhaps even met, Eugen Sandow, Bernarr Macfadden, or Al Treloar, all of whom were performing at the World's Fair when she was.[19]

After the Nickel Plate Circus ended its run in Chicago, it toured the Midwest, performing in a series of

When the Todds acquired David Willoughby's Collection in 1984, this large, battered photograph of Eugene Robinson's riverboat circus was in the materials they brought back to Texas. They had no idea why Willoughby had the picture, however, until Jan Todd began researching the life of Willoughby's mother and discovered that Mary Ann and her second husband, Walter Verona, bought the Floating Palaces—as the three-boat circus was called—in 1890 and ran it until 1892 when they went bankrupt.

In 1897, after losing her second husband to tuberculosis, Mary Ann met Canadian steam boat engineer David Willoughby and married him in New Orleans, Louisiana. This cabinet card, dated 1897, may commemorate their wedding in December of that year. The girl is Virginia Mercedes Verona, Mary Ann's daughter from Walter Verona.

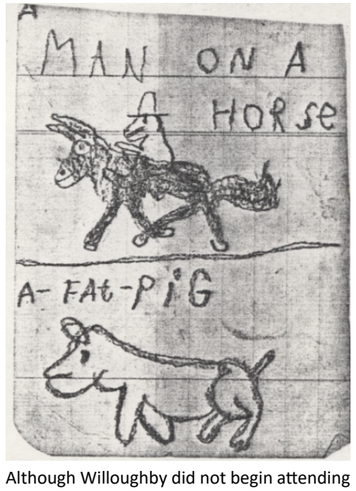
mostly one-night stands that eventually brought them to Texas where they all became ill from bad water. The show closed there, and she and Verona headed to Cairo, Illinois, where other circus performers stayed when not performing, before moving on to Cincinnati, where Verona, now struggling with tuberculosis, worked as the manager at "Heck and Avery's Museum" for a time.[20] As his health worsened, and they had no money to pay for medical care, Verona's "brothers," in the Knights of Pythias fraternal association, sent him by train to Denver where the Pythians ran a hospital for their members. Mary Ann and Mercedes could not afford to go with him and instead went to Virginia, where they stayed with her brother for a time. Verona, who was then 45, never discovered if Colorado's clean mountain air would cure him; he contracted pneumonia on the train trip and died 11 days after arriving in Denver.[21]

The Victorians loved ruffles and frills on both young girls and boys as this 1903 photograph of David P. Willoughby demonstrates. It was taken in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, where the Willoughbys moved shortly after David's birth.

Following Verona's death in 1896, Mary Ann returned to Cincinnati and performed with the Ada Gray theatrical troupe in the famous melodramas *East Lynne* and *Camille*.[22] When that job ended in April 1897, she found work in a "tent-show" that toured the Midwest where she again performed as an actress in the play *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. According to her memoir, she "staid [sic] with [them] till they busted up and then went to visit a very dear friend of my husband who had invited me to make my home with him and his wife as long as I wanted to stay."[23] She apparently moved in with Captain Frank Oltendorfer and his wife in New Orleans, and then through Oltendorfer—who owned a stern-wheel tow boat—she met David Willoughby, a riverboat engineer, and married him on 27 December 1897.

Mary Ann's new husband was two years her junior and stood 5'8" and weighed about 200 pounds. Young David later wrote that his father was "strong and robust naturally," with especially strong hands and forearms from all the manual work he'd done.[24] *[Editors' Note: For clarity, David P. Willoughby will be referred to as "Young David," and his father as "David Sr." in the paragraphs that follow.]*

David Sr. was born near Coburg, in Ontario, Canada, on 26 February 1866, and moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, to apprentice as an engineer while still a teenager. After completing his apprenticeship, he "started steamboating," and later also learned marine and electrical engineering on the job. He worked on the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes and advanced quickly to the head engineer position on his ships.[25] After their marriage, David, Mary Ann and five-year-old Mercedes, lived in a house on Walnut Street facing the Mississippi River.[26] Young David was born in that house on Sunday morning, 17 March 1901, which also happened to be St. Patrick's Day.[27]



Although Willoughby did not begin attending regular schools until he was eight years old, he had learned to write and draw by age four. These two drawings are remarkably detailed and accurate for an artist still so young.

Although born in New Orleans, Young David didn't get to stay there long, as the Willoughbys moved to Eden Prairie, Minnesota, the following December where, for the next five years, they lived on a 35-acre farm David Sr. had purchased for his aging parents. Mary Ann described those

years of living with her in-laws, in the country, as an "awful time." Her last child, a daughter named Hazel, was born at home there in 1906; Mary Ann was then 42.[28] The following year David Sr. moved his family to Minneapolis where he continued working on riverboats for several years. Although Young David was six when they moved to Minneapolis, it does not appear that he began attending public school immediately. A short autobiographical resume found in his papers contains one of the few discussions of his schooling. It reads simply: "Education: Attended public schools in Minneapolis, Minn., and Los Angeles, Calif., 1909-1914; mainly self-educated."[29] Although he may not have begun attending school at a normal age, it appears likely that someone had helped him learn to read and write as a pair of pencil drawings made when he was only four years old are not only surprisingly well drawn but also give testament to how precise and advanced his writing was for someone only four.[30]

In 1912, David's father opened a garage and automobile repair shop in Minneapolis in a partnership with his brother. Just two weeks later, it burned to the ground and the Willoughbys had to start over. On 13 March 1912 David, his younger sister Hazel, and his parents headed west, moving to California in the hope of having a better life.

It appears the Willoughbys were doing moderately well in Minneapolis for in 1910 they stopped renting and bought a house that Young David said cost $3000.[31] In 1912, David Sr. and his brother, Henry, even decided to go into business together, and opened Willoughby's Automobile Repair Shop (which also sold gasoline) although David Sr. did not yet know how to drive a car. Sadly, just two weeks after opening their new business, the garage "somehow caught fire" and was totally destroyed.[32] Following this loss, David Sr. and Mary Ann decided to head west to California for a new start. "I have often wondered," Young David mused years later, "what my occupation and career would have been had my family remained in Minneapolis."[33]

Standing on the front porch of their new home in Minneapolis, Willoughby's lanky frame is apparent, even at age six and a half.

Life In The Land Of Dreams

Based on a photograph of the family dressed in their travel clothes, we know that the Willoughbys left for California on 13 March 1912. How they travelled is not recorded but given David Sr.'s lack of driving skills, it is most likely they took the train.[34] How and where they planned to live when they arrived in Los Angeles is also not known. Perhaps David Sr. hoped to find work there as a marine engineer given California's many ports and its busy ship trade. If he did find such work, it isn't mentioned in Mary Ann's memoir, or in Willoughby's 1983 autobiography in *Iron Man*.[35] In fact, no records can be found for how either of the adult Willoughbys earned money in California although it seems clear that at least at times they were struggling financially. Young David, for example, began contributing to the family income by working as a newsboy selling papers on street corners at age 13. A photo taken of him in Los Angeles shows him with a trombone, an inscription on the back explaining that he played, "more or less" in a newsboy band.[36]

In 1915, David Sr. and Mary Ann separated and she and the children moved to San Francisco, for reasons that are also unclear.[37] It is possible that she was attracted to the area because of job opportunities made possible by the opening of the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition (1915 World's Fair) in February of that year.[38] It is also possible that she may have reconnected with the circus community for Young David began working for a small circus in San Francisco tending the horses once they arrived there. On the back of his 1975 book, *The Empire of Equus: The Horse, Past, Present, and Future*, Willoughby writes that his interest in horses began as a child and that at age 14 he was working as an "exercise boy" in a

At age 14, David P. Willoughby left school behind and became a full-time apprentice draftsman at Meese and Gottfried Engineering Company in San Francisco. It was by doing this work that Willoughby learned to draw with precision and developed a set of skills that allowed him to remain employed, if not always happy, for the remainder of his life. In this photo, taken when he was 15, Willoughby's small stature is even more evident when contrasted with the grown men with whom he worked.

dog and pony circus where "he fed, harnessed, rode, and became familiar with steeds of all kinds from tiny Shetlands and burros to huge Percherons." He goes on to say that the circus owner wanted him to train and become a bareback rider, but he told him that he was more interested in studying horses than in performing on them, a remarkable statement given his young age.[39]

While it isn't clear what work Mary Ann did in San Francisco, Young David left his circus job to take a fulltime apprenticeship at the Meese & Gottfried Company as an "apprentice junior draftsman" at age 14. The company manufactured conveyor belts, elevators and other kinds of heavy machinery.[40] A photo, taken after he turned 15, shows how small and childlike Willoughby was as a teenager; the contrast between him and the adult men in the room is especially striking.

Willoughby's job was to hand copy engineering plans and blueprints so that multiple copies existed. It was exacting work yet it appealed to Young David who liked to draw and appreciated the need for precision in reproducing industrial plans. "By the time I was 15," he wrote years later, "I could both hand letter or use a ruling pen as well as anyone. This ability to draw with precision has held me in good stead all my life."[41] He also noted on the back of a photo taken of him at work, that he'd been called "a wizard" by one of his bosses.[42]

After settling in Los Angeles, Willoughby began selling newspapers at age 13 and played trombone "more or less," according to a note on the back of this photo, in a newsboy band.

While the job at Meese & Gottfried taught him artistic skills and a trade that would enable to make his living in the years ahead, his formal education stopped when he began working there. Willoughby never attended high school or college, and never had any formal training as an artist.[43] For the remainder of his life, in fact, everything that he learned and achieved was through

his own efforts, fueled by his implacable will to succeed, his extraordinary intelligence, and his unstinting curiosity about the world around him. It also helped that he found two important mentors.

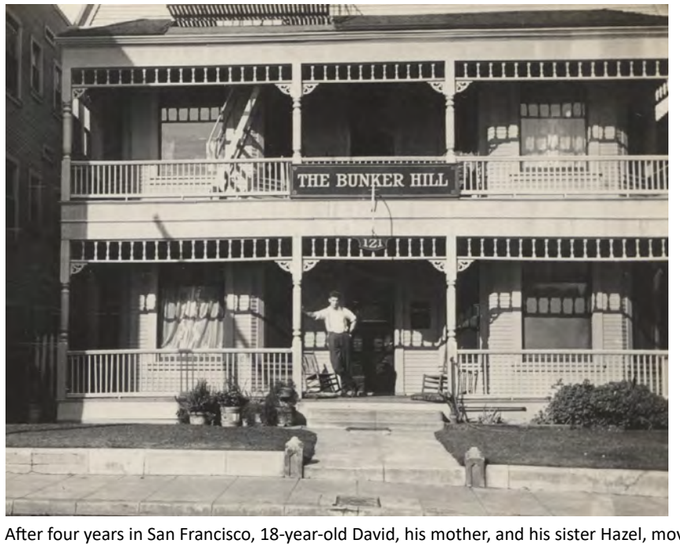
Barbell Beginnings

Willoughby's involvement with weightlifting began in San Francisco. Perhaps he heard about, or even watched, the two-day weightlifting contest Al Treloar organized in conjunction with the San Francisco World's Fair in August of 1915 and this piqued his interest.[44] Or, perhaps, he discovered Alan Calvert's *Strength* magazine which began publication in 1914.[45] As a slender, slow to mature, and frequently ill teenager who had no doubt begun to worry about his physique, it's also possible that his mother—who had doubtless met professional strongmen during her years with various circuses—also suggested to Young David that he give weight training a try.[46] In May of 1917, for example, when he was already 16 years old, Willoughby weighed just 112 pounds, "in street clothes." So, while we don't really know how he fixed on the idea of trying barbell training, Willoughby ordered a 100-pound, plate-loading barbell from the Milo Barbell Company in March of 1918.[47] He was then 17; it cost $13.00.[48]

The barbell didn't arrive, however, until he had been rushed to the hospital with a ruptured appendix in May of that year. Because infection spread throughout his abdomen, and penicillin had not yet been invented, Willoughby nearly died.[49] He was so weak, he recalled at the time of his discharge from the hospital, that he "could not make the step up on the streetcar without help."[50] He weighed only 128 pounds at 5'9 ¾" after his illness, and the doctors urged Mary Ann to not let him return to work right away.[51]

Willoughby spent the summer following his surgery with Marguerite Kratzer who owned a ranch and "resort" in the wine country near Glen Ellen, California.[52] His barbell went with him, and the combination of good food, country air, and barbell training proved to be exactly what he needed to recover.[53] When he returned to work in September, weighing 147 pounds and having grown half an inch in height, he had become a committed barbell trainer. By the following May, at age 18, his weight had risen to 161 pounds, and he stood 5'11 ¾".[54] He continued to grow for several more years, eventually reaching 6'1 ½" in height and weighing between 185-195 pounds during his active years as a lifter.[55]

After nearly dying from appendicitis when he was 17, Willoughby was sent to the wine country of California to stay at a health resort in Glen Ellen. Willoughby had been poorly the year before his appendix burst, and arrived weighing only 128 pounds at 5'10" in height and a biceps measurement of only ten inches. When his mother took him there to recuperate, they took his new 100-pound Milo barbell with them. Willoughby used it faithfully all summer and gained 20 pounds before returning to work in San Francisco in the fall.



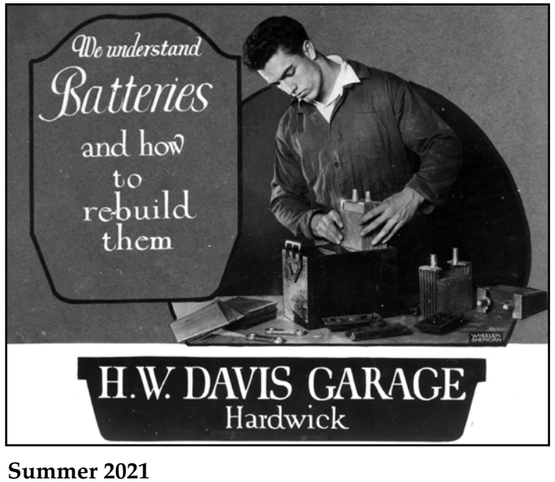
After four years in San Francisco, 18-year-old David, his mother, and his sister Hazel, moved back to Los Angeles where they were reunited with his father. The plan was for them to run a boarding house called The Bunker Hill, which his father had purchased. Sadly, this plan of his father's also went awry and they sold the property after only a few months.

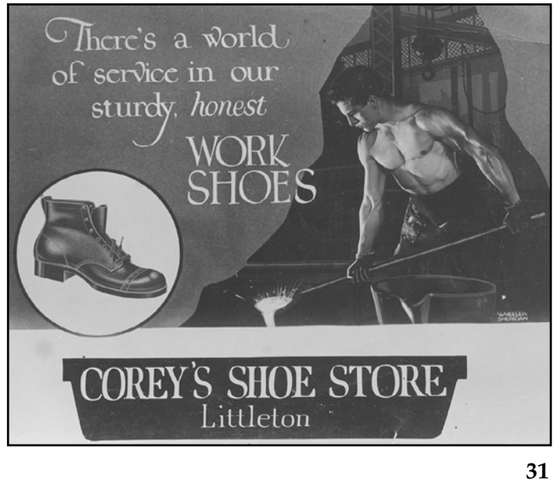
In September of 1919, Willoughby left his job at Meese and Gottfried, where he was well-liked but earned only a modest $18.00 per week, to move back to Los Angeles with his mother and younger sister, Hazel.[56] Young David described this as a "happy move," as he had reportedly not seen his father at all during the four years they lived in San Francisco. In his *Iron Man* autobiography, he spoke warmly of his father's ingenuity with engines and other mechanical tasks, statements that suggest he admired and enjoyed a good relationship with his father. In that same autobiography, interestingly, he does not discuss his mother, her work, or even name her, yet he lived with her until he was well into his thirties out of economic necessity.[57]

Mary Ann returned to Los Angeles to help her husband run a boarding house he purchased called The Bunker Hill.[58] According to her memoir, their ownership only lasted a couple months, before they sold the property to buy an "eight-room house," where the four of them lived for just four months before flipping it for a new house that they then sold a year or so later at a profit. Between 1919 and 1929 the Willoughbys would "move house" eight times in Los Angeles, sometimes renting, often buying and reselling. Although Mary Ann suggests in her memoir that they were generally bettering their position by these real estate deals, she describes houses that became increasingly smaller, not larger, and one can only imagine how stressful such constant moving must have been.[59] David's second wife, Carol Willoughby, observed in fact that the circumstances of his early life left her, " . . . amazed. With all the disturbances, continually moving—Dave never stopped learning. *Plus* he schooled *himself*. Supported his family. What a man!"[Italics in the original.][60]

In Los Angeles Willoughby worked as a gardener, and also did other sorts of outdoor work before beginning at the Wheeler Sheridan Slide Company on 18 April 1921. There, he flexed both his artistic and physical muscles. The company made large-format glass slides containing advertisements that were projected in movie theaters before the main feature began. Willoughby designed and drew slides, and also modelled for them. The photograph above showing him as a blacksmith and the image on the advertisement for Corey Shoes, both taken in 1924, are among the most compelling photos ever taken of him. His thick hair, impressive arms, and the juxtaposition of his sweaty physique against the industrial backgrounds probably sold a lot of product.

In Los Angeles, David tried a variety of jobs, including gardening and other outdoor work, before beginning at the Wheel-





er-Sheridan Slide Company on 18 April 1921. There, he flexed both his artistic and physical muscles.[61] Wheeler-Sheridan made large-format glass slides containing advertisements and public service announcements that were projected in movie theaters before the main feature began. Willoughby not only drew and designed slides, but as his physique improved, he found himself in front of the camera; his handsome face, thick hair, and impressive physique making him an ideal model.[62]

Willoughby's First Mentor

In August of 1921 one of his employers, knowing of David's interest in weight lifting, invited Willoughby to go with him to the Los Angeles Athletic Club (LAAC) to see the facilities and meet Al Treloar, former strongman and the club's famous "Physical Director."[63] Treloar is probably best remembered now for winning Bernarr Macfadden's first "Perfect Man" contest, and for the short film Thomas Edison made in 1904, showing Treloar doing his winning posing routine.[64] Treloar's engagement with, and contributions to, the Iron Game are much more important and extensive than the winning of one physique contest however, and, by befriending Willoughby as he did in 1921 and inviting him to come and train at the LAAC, Treloar geometrically increased his own impact on the Iron Game by becoming Willoughby's mentor.

Born in Allegan, Michigan, in 1873, Albert Toof Jennings (who took Treloar as a stage name), grew up in a home with a father who owned a barbell, a rarity in the nineteenth century. That same father allowed his son to join a local gymnastics club where Treloar learned to be an acrobat and began performing with a partner. Following high school, he turned professional and began appearing in vaudeville. In 1893 he and his partner were performing at the Chicago World's Fair when his partner left the duo act. The 20-year-old Treloar got lucky, however, as Eugen Sandow had also lost a troupe member and he invited Treloar to join his strength act for the duration of their run at the World's Fair. Willoughby wrote in his obituary of Treloar, "This incident changed and directed Treloar's whole life thereafter." Treloar, he reported, "took full advantage of the opportunity" to learn feats of strength and weightlifting from Sandow himself."[65] And, of course, much of that knowledge was undoubtedly passed along to Willoughby.

Born Albert Toof Jennings, this winner of Bernarr Macfadden's 1904 "Perfect Man" contest was known on stage as strongman Al Treloar. Treloar began directing the gymnasium and athletic events at the Los Angeles Athletic Club in 1907 and became David Willoughby's coach, mentor and lifetime friend after they met in the fall of 1921.

Treloar, like most physical educators in the early twentieth century, believed in the taking of physical measurements as a way to judge improvement from training. Treloar became interested in measurements when he was at Harvard and then used his own close-to-ideal measurements to market himself as a strength athlete.

Although Treloar stayed with Sandow's troupe for several months after their run in Chicago ended, pressure from his academically-minded father found Treloar accepted as a freshman at Harvard University, home of famous physical educator Dr. Dudley Allen Sargent, in the fall semester of 1894.[66] Sargent was one of the most famous physical educators in the world at this time and was known as the leading authority in the new academic field of Physical Anthropometry. At Harvard, Sargent made the study of human measurements his research focus and for years he collected several dozen body measurements on every male student who entered the university. He used this data, and other images of the body from the world of art, to create an anthropometric method to compare living physiques to an "ideal" male body based on his ideas of symmetrical development. Sargent became internationally

Scanned from a tiny 2" x 2" photo, Willoughby is shown here, in the two-piece suits still traditional for men in 1920 even at Santa Monica Beach. With him is his mother and sister, Hazel. Willoughby never mentions his mother's height, but in this and other photos, she appears to have been tall. Willoughby had not yet begun training with Treloar.

famous for this work and often appeared in the press as he measured and ranked athletes and other celebrities as well as his Harvard students. In June of 1893, for example, he measured Eugen Sandow for the *New York World* newspaper, declaring Sandow's measurements to be close to physically perfect.[67] Treloar noted years later in a letter to Willoughby, "When I first knew Sandow he cared very little about measurements. Later, however, with his new muscle-posing tricks and all the talk about development and measurements by the publicity writers, he commenced to take himself quite seriously in this regard."[68]

At Harvard in the fall of 1894, Treloar was measured—as all freshmen were—and found to be in excellent physical condition. He weighed 167.11 pounds, stood 5' 9.6" and if using the Greek ideal of symmetrical measurements for the neck, calves, and biceps, Treloar was also close to perfect with a 14.76" neck; 15.03" left calf; 15.34" right calf; and biceps measurements of 14.37" and 14.17" respectively.[69] One author wrote of these numbers, "Dr. Sargent and his associates were astounded to find that Treloar's measurements corresponded exactly throughout with the scientific ideal standard of physical perfection—the first man out of over 40,000 measured there who ever came up to this standard."[70]

Physical perfection and his teammates on the Harvard crew weren't enough to keep Treloar on campus, however. In the fall of his sophomore year, he married Georgia Knowlton, and then left Harvard after completing the spring semester in 1896.[71] When he left, he returned to vaudeville with a new act of posing, acrobatics, strongman stunts and card tearing, advertising himself as a "perfect man" based on his Harvard measurements. Georgia became his partner, adopting the stage name Edna Tempest. In 1904, when he won Macfadden's first physique contest, much was made of the fact that Treloar's neck, biceps and calves were all a symmetrically perfect 16 ¾"— just as ancient Greek sculptors would have wanted them to be.[72]

Treloar was appearing at the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles in 1907 when he was approached by the Los Angeles Athletic Club (LAAC) about becoming its "Physical Director." Willoughby later wrote that during Treloar's 42-year tenure at the LAAC he "made weightlifting and competition come to life."[73] While true, Treloar's engagement with anthropometry, and his ability to build a physique according to a template based on measurements, proved equally inspirational to Willoughby, whose interest in human anthropometry and competitive weightlifting reached new heights after meeting Treloar.

When Treloar and Willoughby first met, the Iron Game was in a liminal space between its more exhibitionist and often exaggerated roots in the sawdust-filled rings of the circus, and what would become a regulated, highly-quantified future. Their time together coincided with, and in some ways precipitated, a paradigm shift for the sport of weightlifting as it began transforming in the late 1910s and 1920s from what sport historian Allen Guttmann called "pre-modern" to "modern" sport. Pre-modern sport, Guttmann argued is not truly organized, has no of-

After beginning to train at the Los Angeles Athletic Club in the fall of 1921, Willoughby's physical improvement was amazing. In this photo, taken just a year after the Muscle Beach photo above, he shows great muscular gains, especially in his legs. Willoughby and his teammates often trained on the roof of the LAAC, where this photo was taken in 1922.

ficial records, lacks governing bodies, and the conditions for competition and rules for performance vary from contest to contest. Modern sport, on the other hand, is organized by governing bodies, records are kept, and the standardization of rules for competition make the sport essentially the same in all situations.[74]

In 1924, when the National Championships were held at the LAAC, Willoughby and his teammates had new, matching uniforms to wear for the contest. And, as strongmen, they elected to only have one strap going over the shoulder, just as Sandow and Attila and other strongmen did when they wore singlets made from animal hides.

In California, Treloar had been running meets under the auspices of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) since at least 1915 when he ran the "National Championships" at the World's Fair in San Francisco. However, as meet director he determined the rules and chose the lifts which would often be different in the next meet he sponsored. Treloar had also established a weightlifting team at the LAAC before Willoughby began training there. Willoughby had mostly trained at home, with limited equipment and by himself, so joining a community of strongmen in a gym filled with barbells and dumbbells ranging as he put it, "from a few pounds each to immense weights that seem to defy you," filled Willoughby with enthusiasm to not just make himself strong but to also help build the sport.[75]

Willoughby participated in his first weightlifting competition on 24 February 1922, at a bodyweight of 174.5 pounds. It was part of a city gymnastics championships (organized by the Los Angeles Turner Society), and he lost to LAAC teammate Al Bevan in his first outing.[76] Willoughby kept training, however, and came back to beat Bevans in 1923 in the same tournament.[77] According to historian John Fair, that contest, run by Willoughby and Treloar at the Los Angeles Athletic Club, "has as much right as any other to be called the first weightlifting contest in the United States held under official conditions."[78] It, like the other early California meets organized by Treloar before Willoughby appeared on the scene, was sanctioned by the AAU.

On 19 April 1924, Willoughby and Treloar hosted the AAU National Weightlifting Championships in the gymnasium of the LAAC. This meet truly created a template for future lifting competitions as they had chosen five lifts to perform, they saw to the accuracy of the weights, they created weight classes, and they wrote rules for proper judging.[79] Although considered by all to be a great success, it was a disappointment for Willoughby on a personal level even though he won first place. Because 1924 was an Olympic year, his gold medal in the light-heavyweight class meant he qualified to go to the Olympic Games in Paris. However, the AAU decided not to send weightlifters to the Olympics that year and Willoughby, of course, did not have the money to go on his own.

On the roof of the LAAC, Willoughby holds the ladder while Howard Rathbone performs a flag. At the height he is on the ladder, and with the ladder being held by a man, even a strong man like Willoughby, this was a dangerous stunt. He must have really trusted Willoughby.

Because of Treloar, Los Angeles was one of the few places in the United States where real weightlifting competitions were being held in the 1910s and early 1920s. A few men outside California—particularly Alan Calvert, Ottley Coulter, and George Jowett—had begun discussing the need for an American organization to promote the sport, but even after it was launched, California continued to dominate American lifting. To form their new American organization, called the American Continental Weightlifting Association, Jowett and Coulter turned to the British Amateur Weightlifting Association (BAWLA) as a model and essentially copied its rules and their list of 49 recognized lifts. As historian John Fair has documented, the doubly-named Bernard Bernard, former head of BAWLA, moved to Chicago in 1922 to begin publishing *Health & Life* magazine and then, with help from George Jowett, launched the American Continental Weightlifting Association.[80] When only ten members signed up by the following January, Bernard stepped away from the organization, turning it over to Jowett and the few state chairmen then enrolled. Among those state chairmen, the most active organizer and promoter, was 22-year-old David P. Willoughby.[81] Fair clearly shows in his essay how the ACWLA had not run an actual contest or made much other progress by 1923, outside of California. What saved weightlifting, Fair contends, "was the independent initiative taken by Dave Willoughby . . . Contrary to the unfulfilled promises of [the ACWLA] . . . Willoughby and his confrères were holding real contests and setting real records."[82]

The growth of the ACWLA was complicated, however, by the expense of joining an association and also, it seems, having to pay additional fees to establish records. At this time, the ACWLA was trying to establish a set of American records and was encouraging its members to submit their best efforts as a way to begin establishing such a list. In a letter to Ottley Coulter written in July of 1923, Willoughby explains he has been so slow in submitting official records for the ACWLA list because of the fifty-cent fee to have the record recorded. "It is very hard to ask a man to pay to make a certain lift, not knowing how long it would stand." Continuing, Willoughby wrote, "I don't want to be in opposition to any of your ideas, but personally I believe that these first 'Temporary Records,' should be allowed to go on the Record Lists without necessitating the customary 50¢ cents fee…Suppose I did have to demand a 50¢ entry fee, then suppose a certain lifter was capable of making 10 good "starting" lifting records. There's a total demand of $5.00 which, experience teaches me, would be exceedingly difficult to get."[83]

By the time he was 21, and with a year of hard work under Treloar's tutelage, Willoughby had become exceptionally strong and skilled at acrobatics. Although the supported man is unidentified on the back of the photo, it was taken on 11 November 1922.

From 1921 through 1926, Willoughby did in fact, compete in, and help run, a variety of weightlifting contests—winning the AAU Championships of Southern California in 1923, 1924, 1925 and 1926 along with the National Championships in 1924. He also founded the first AAU state weightlifting association, called the California Amateur Weight-Lifter's Association, and formed the Los Angeles Weightlifting Club in 1924 at the LAAC, "to furnish suitable means to keep the average man fit."[84] In addition, he regularly reported on the lifting activity in California in *Health and Life* magazine, publishing his first article, "Strong Men of the Far West," in December of 1922. The article profiled some of his teammates at the LAAC and included more than a few kind words about Treloar and his knowledge of how to train.[85] Despite all this AAU activity, however, Willoughby did join ACWLA and served as state chairman and later as vice president.[86] However, most meets held at the LAAC continued to be sanctioned by the AAU because of the club's policies related to amateurism.

In September of 1924 Willoughby travelled east to meet with Bernard in Chicago, and then went on to Philadelphia to visit George Jowett, who was then editing *Strength* magazine and serving as president of the ACWLA.[87] During his stay in Philadelphia, Willoughby and Jowett finished writing the official ACWLA rules for lifting, and they discussed employment opportunities. As Fair explains, however, the two men did not hit it off. Willoughby had never met Jowett in person and was shocked to discover that what he'd been doing in California for the love of the sport, his partners on the East Coast were doing to make money. Willoughby disagreed with Jowett's paying himself a salary from the ACWLA dues, and Jowett found Willoughby to be "too much of an idealist."[88] Jowett clearly felt threatened by Willoughby's idealism, writing to Ottley Coulter on 26 September 1924:

> Willoughby left for Virginia last Tuesday. I really was glad to see him go, for he is one of these fellows that has his head up in the clouds all the time. He cannot see reason, all he sees is himself, everybody else is wrong. For a fellow of his age, on practical subjects, he is terribly dumb, all the time wanting to talk in the abstract, simply will not accept what does exist, otherwise he is a great enthusiast, but you know how sick you get of a fellow like that, talking all the while when you are working at it all day long too. Especially, when you cannot make him realize facts.[89]

Years later, Coulter provided other proof of Jowett's jealousy as he recounted a story told by Milo Steinborn in a letter to Willoughby. "He stated that you were bending a big spike to demonstrate your great grip and hand strength and that George Jowett ignored your impressive stunt by looking out a window." Continuing, Coulter wrote, "Personally, I cannot understand such an attitude, especially considering that Geo. always appeared to have special pride in his own grip and hand ability."

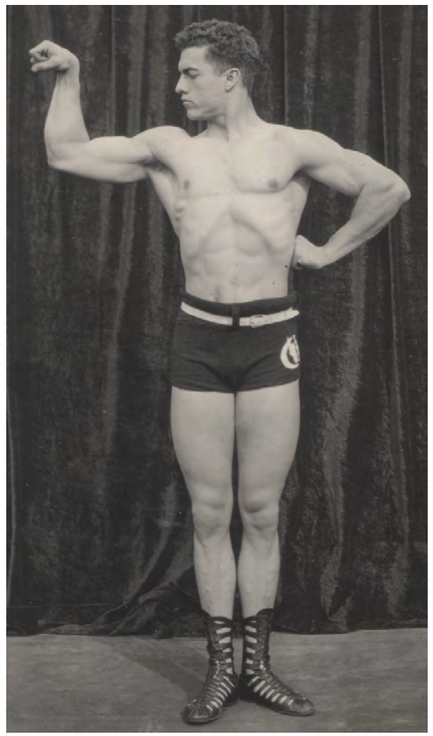
This back biceps pose is made even more dramatic by the interplay of his deep tan with his lighter back muscles. It was taken in 1926 when he was 25.

Perhaps, Coulter continued, "George thought only his hand strength was important," noting that it could be seen as "an attempt to discourage you from any further attempts to better yourself or make any reputation for yourself."[90]

Willoughby didn't get a job at *Strength* magazine, but in January of 1925, his story and two accompanying photographs were used in a back cover ad for the Milo Barbell Company that was clearly written by Jowett. No doubt Willoughby and Treloar took offense at the advertisement that gave full credit to Jowett, for having "specially coached" Willoughby to his National Championship win in 1924. Jowett's willingness to stretch the truth went even further, claiming that "by employing the power which he got from his barbell exercise, and the scientific methods imparted to him by Mr. Jowett, young Willoughby succeeded in outdoing the best efforts of all his competitors, and the Olympic Committee awarded him a medal, as the best amateur lifter."[91] Willoughby received no medal from "The Olympic Committee" and, of course, he was never coached by Jowett.

Whether Willoughby was paid for this ad is not known. However, he definitely was looking for ways to make money in the Iron Game at this time and Jowett was wrong in thinking that he was "terribly dumb." The truth was that Willoughby knew far more than most people writing for the muscle magazines even though he was still in his twenties. It's unclear how he developed his incredible appetite for learning, but by the mid-1920s he had read nearly everything available in English on lifting and taught himself rudimentary German and French so he could read the works of Theodor Siebert and Edmond Desbonnet in their original languages as well. He had also begun studying art history, was working with statistics and higher mathematics, and had become increasingly interested in the sciences, especially physical anthropometry and zoology.

After this trip, Willoughby continued to train at the LAAC although it appears he competed less frequently. In 1925, he and his fellow teammates at the LAAC decided to test themselves on all 42 ACWLA recognized lifts in a series of club-only competitions.[92] Since many of these were single-hand lifts, the poundages seem small by modern standards but at their meet on 3 October 1925, the men did five lifts and Willoughby made a 204 ½-pound right-hand bent press and did 165 with his left. He also made 162 and 141 ½ in a right- and left-hand "get up" in which the lifter started flat on the floor with the bar at arm's length and then rose to a standing position with the bar overhead. He was most happy with his "hip left" on this day. Weighing only 178 pounds, he made a new personal record by raising 2673 pounds from the floor while wearing a belt and chain around his hips. [93] Willoughby reported in 1940 that during the 1920s he trained on "sixty different lifts and feats, and—outside of 'pressing'—made respectable records in all of them." He was credited in that article with a right-hand snatch of 163 pounds, and a right-hand clean and jerk of 195 ½ pounds. He also did a regular snatch with 214 pounds and a two-hand clean and jerk of 274 pounds.[94]



Willoughby briefly belonged to the YMCA in San Francisco, but began following the Milo courses after his barbell arrived. When he began training with Treloar, he reported that he "made considerable progress from the start."

This amazing photograph shows David Willoughby, at age 21, performing a handstand on the railing of the roof-side gym on top of the Los Angeles Athletic Club on 12 November 1922. Willoughby did acrobatic work as part of his training and there are a number of photos of him doing stunts. He was also apparently not afraid of heights, as one series of photos in his collection shows him climbing, and then standing, at the very top of a giant sequoia tree.