

REMINISCENCES AND IMPRESSIONS OVER THE YEARS

BY OTTLEY COULTER

The *Police Gazette* and *Physical Culture* publications increased my interest in strength and physical training. Although they were very limited in the amount of subject matter dealing with strength and muscle, they did furnish the means for future contacts, which eventually furnished me with means and methods of training for strength.

The *Police Gazette* was essentially a sporting publication. It was published weekly in those days, although it is only published monthly at present. There was very little in it about the training methods of strongmen, but it did have pictures of strong men from time to time mixed in among more numerous pictures of boxers and wrestlers. There was seldom such information about any of those strong men and often nothing but the name and city of residence was given. If my memory serves me rightly, there was nothing about their methods published during my early contact with the publication.

My reading of the *Police Gazette* did afford some knowledge of the lifters and muscle men of that day. The leading strong men, as published by the *Police Gazette*, were professionals. Lifting was not organized at that time and nearly all men of ability with any serious intentions became professionals during my early days.

It is true that there was some amateur lifting, but any man with real lifting ability was

almost forced to become a professional in order to receive any public recognition. The Amateur Athletic Union did have a casual interest in lifting, but apparently had few if any officials with any great interest or real knowledge of lifting. The United States had some amateurs entered in the Olympic Games of 1904 at St. Louis, MO, but the meager information concerning the names of their lifts and their method of accomplishment shows a lack of understanding on the part of the A. A. U. officials responsible

for the listing of the records in the official Athletic Almanac.

Fred Winters and O. C. Osthoff competed for the United States in the 1904 Olympics and established some lifts in the official Athletic Almanac for 1905. These dumbbell lifts, which were listed, are somewhat uncertain as to manner of accomplishment. One of the lifts listed credits Winters with pushing up slowly with one hand

from the shoulder 126½ pounds but gives no information to the position of the body during the pushing.

Another listed under "Dumbbells" credits Osthoff with putting up in a bridge with two hands 177 pounds six times. Probably, this was performed in wrestlers bridge position but the reader can only guess. Perikles Kakousis is credited in the same issue with lifting a barbell of 246 pounds but nothing is stated as to style of lift. The lifting was vastly different from the present Olympics in both poundages and styles.



Taken in 1945, when he was nearly 55 years old, this photograph and the solid, muscular body it captures, clearly shows that Coulter had not forsaken the weights.



The 1904 Olympic Games were held in conjunction with the World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri. In these early days of the Olympic movement, there were relatively few full teams in any event in the Games, and in Weightlifting, only five men actually participated. There were three Americans, one German, and Periklis Kakousis from Greece who took the gold medal in the "two-hands" lift (competitors could use any style to get the barbell overhead) of 111.7 kilos (246.25 pounds).

Actually the lifting in 1904 was not the first to receive some recognition as amateur records. "Father" William Curtis is credited with two lifts performed many years earlier. He is credited with a harness lift of 3,239 pounds performed 20 December 1868 and "Curling and putting up from shoulder to full arm's length above the shoulder, two dumbbells at the same time, one in each hand weighing 100 pounds" performed 10 September 1859.

This "curling" has been a source of contention for later students of weightlifting. As Curtis only weighed about 165, curling of two bells totalling 200 pounds appears to be an impossibility, if performed in accordance with later requirements of genuine curling. Certainly, Curtis was a very strong man—especially so, considering his weight and the early date of performance. The description of the manner of accomplishment indicates that his harness lift was a genuine lift without any of the leverage advantages, as used by some of the professionals.

This harness lift of Curtis and a lifting with the hands alone of 1,034 pounds by H.[enry] Leussing at Cincinnati, Ohio on 31 March 1880 indicate the professional influence of the time. Apparently, the public knowledge of lifting, which was almost entirely due to the activities of the professionals during my first interest in lifting, was a heritage from earlier days.

Lifting was of so little interest to the A. A. U. officials of the time that there was no more American representation in the Olympics until many years later. The interest manifested by

the A. A. U. in my early days was vastly different from that accorded weight lifting at the present time. Probably, the present interest of the A. A. U. is a result of the influence of George Jowett, Mark Berry and Dietrich Wortmann rather than from any real concern of the leading officials of the A. A. U. However, regardless of the cause, the A. A. U. is doing a great job for amateur lifting and I am strong for it. My greater interest as a result of training and early associations is for lifts other than the three amateur lifts, but I am pleased with the encouragement that has been given the amateur lifters and regret that conditions of time and location permit me to attend so few amateur lifting exhibitions.

The interest created by the inclusion of weight lifting in the Olympics of 1904 was so little that there appears to be no further publicity of Osthoff and Fred Winters would have been forgotten except for the publicity given him by Prof. [Henry W.] Titus, who advertised him as one of his star pupils. This publicity was definitely commercial, but it certainly increased Winter's reputation, especially among men and boys, who had some interest in strength and muscle.

It was necessary for me to subscribe to the *Police Gazette* because it was my desire to learn as much as possible about weight lifters and muscle men as possible and the *Police Gazette* and *Physical Culture* were the only publications known to me at the time, which furnished such information.

There were some publications in Europe at the time, which devoted more space

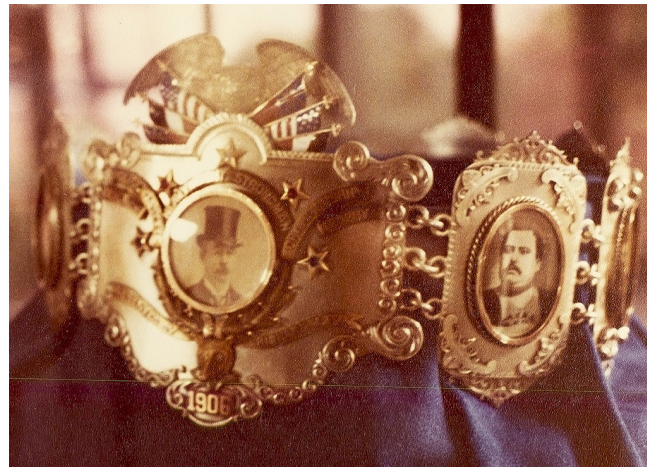
to strong men and their training. *Health & Strength*, *Apollo's Magazine*, *Illustrierte Sportzeitung*, *La Sante los Sports*, *La Culture Physique*, and a few others published then devoted considerable space to the doings of the muscle men, but I did not learn of these magazines until some years later.

The *Police Gazette* and *Physical Culture* were very poor mediums of lifting and muscle information and have no comparison with *Muscle Power*, *Muscle Builder* or any of the other present day publications devoted to progressive training with weights. *Physical Culture* was a strong advocate of hygienic living and had some influence on my living habits. Its emphasis on the vegetarian diet was some contrast to the high protein diet which has proved so useful in building muscle.

The *Police Gazette*, although devoted mainly to boxing, did give some space to strong men and their activities. As previously mentioned, Cyr was sponsored by Richard K. Fox, the publisher, and, consequently, received his share of the strong man publicity.

Warren Travis, Louis Attila, Andy Kondrat, Arthur Dandurand, Wilfred Cabana, George Hackenschmidt, George Lurich, Adolph Nordquest, Ed Zello, [Edward] "Spike" Howard, John Y. Smith, The Great Santell [Arthur Blackmer, Jr., aka Arthur Santell], Lionel Strongfort and others were mentioned from time to time during my early reading of the *Police Gazette*. Pictures of these men usually accompanied the news items, which seldom gave much information.

Warren Travis was more active than Cyr shortly after my introduction to the *Police Gazette*, mainly because of Cyr's failing health. New items concerning Travis were quite frequent at the time and the *Police Gazette* recognized him as middleweight champion back and harness lifter of the world. Fox awarded him a diamond medal for his middleweight records of 2700 pounds, identical poundages for both the back and harness lifts. These poundages may cause surprise to readers of *Strong Men of Old* wherein mention is made of Travis lifting more on these lifts at a lower body weight, but the fact remains that the diamond medal was awarded for a 2700 back lift and a 2700 harness lift and the figure 2700 was engraved on the medal, as I personally know. I also have the *Police Gazette* supplement reproduction of the belt for proof of the actual official poundages. Possibly, Travis lifted greater poundages at a lighter body weight, but if so, they were not recognized by Richard K. Fox in awarding the middleweight



Richard K. Fox, publisher of *The Police Gazette*, created championship belts for many sports that were used to build competition and interest in the activity. One such belt was made with images of Louis Cyr as a challenge to other strongmen. Fox hoped Sandow might challenge Cyr for the belt, but when that did not materialize, Fox gave it to Warren Lincoln Travis. Travis had to agree, as the holder of the belt, that he would meet anyone in competition who wished to try and win it from him. No one did. The belt is now on display at the York Barbell Hall of Fame.

back and harness lifting championship.

Later, Travis was awarded the *Police Gazette* Heavyweight Strong Man Championship belt, which Richard K. Fox purchased to award the winner of a planned contest between Cyr and Sandow. This contest, which most certainly would have been won by Cyr, did not take place because Sandow would not compete against Cyr. This belt was given to Travis with the stipulation that it would be his as long as he defended it against all competition. Although Travis gave open competition to the world, he was never defeated in an official contest and the belt was in his possession at the time of his death. My admiration for Travis did not lead to meeting him until years afterwards but more about that later.

Prof. Louis Attila, who is perhaps best known as the trainer of Sandow, was a strong man in his own right. He was considered the leading trainer by Mr. Fox and, consequently, was accorded considerable publicity by the *Police Gazette*. Many of the best known strong men of his time were trained by or received advice from him. Prof. Attila first appeared as a professional strong man in Europe. Sandow was the most famous strong man managed and trained by him but was not the strongest. Cyr and Travis both received some instructions from Attila, but Cyr's strength was mainly a matter of heredity and previous training and Travis gave his allegiance to Prof. Anthony Barker.

Prof. Attila was associated in an adviso-

THE MARVEL OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

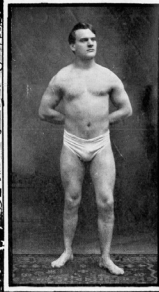
THE PHENOMENAL

❖ BROOKLYN STRONG BOY. ❖

A CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS.

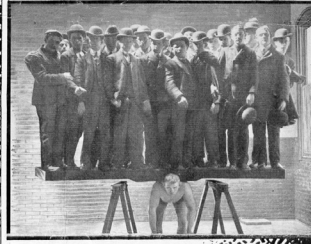
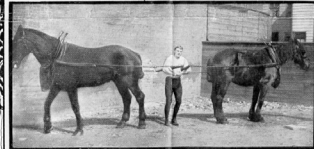
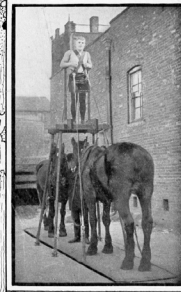
EXACT SIZE.
Value, \$1,000.00.

SOMETHING NOVEL AND NEW.



WARREN TRAVIS

WORLD'S CHAMPION
MIDDLE WEIGHT
BACK LIFTER.



2700 LBS.



AGGREGATE WEIGHT
MEN & DUMB-BELL: 608 LBS.

New York, 190



Warren Lincoln Travis's act was sensational as this original poster for "The Phenomenal Brooklyn Strong Boy" demonstrates. The poster displays several of the strongman feats that Travis performed at the height of his career and includes a photograph of the *Police Gazette* medal given to Travis for making world records in the back lift and harness lift. He made 2700 pounds in each.

ry capacity with other strong men both before and after he acted as a manager to Sandow. The Professor groomed Luigi Borra, an Italian wrestler and weight lifter, to contest Sandow after the latter had cast himself adrift from the Professor. Sandow did not contest Borra and did not enter any more contests after his unsatisfactory contest with McCann.

It has been claimed that Theodore Siebert and Professor Desbonnet received instruction from Prof. Attila. Certainly, there was some similarity in their methods but their association with Prof. Attila is not clear to me. No mention of it was ever made in any correspondence to me from Siebert or Desbonnet, but Attila was certainly known to Desbonnet.

Louis Attila was well known in Europe and some men came from there to New York and received instruction at his gym in New York. The best known pupils of the New York gym were men of the United States or Canada, who became famous as professional strong men. Arthur Dandurand and Horace Barre both received some training at the Attila establishment. Lionel Strongfort was another famous pupil of Attila. There were numerous other pupils who had a reputation for strength and development.

The only publication by Attila was *Prof. Attila's Five Pound Dumb Bell Exercise*. This was published by the *Police Gazette* and was considered the standard work on the subject at the time. It contained proper movements for development of the muscles and was concise enough to prevent any confusion as to what exercises to use. Certainly, the proper use of this manual would give some increases in development in undeveloped persons, but the necessary amount of repetitions required to stimulate the growth of the muscles soon becomes monotonous and cannot give the results obtained from progressive training with dumbbells.

Training with weights was taught in the Attila gym and the Professor was also personally familiar with the use of the chest expander and it would probably saved some of us some lost time, if he had published a book giving his knowledge of training with weights. However, training with five-pound bells was advocated by many of the leading American trainers at the time. Perhaps this was due to the Attila influence but there was considerable aversion to heavy exercise at that time and lighter exercise was no doubt easier to sell to the general public.

My first knowledge of Andy Kondrat came in the *Police Gazette*. He was a very strong

man but practically unknown by the physical culture public. He was trained by Warren Travis and was very good on some of the poundage lifts but never trained consistently enough to properly develop his natural strength. He could lift 250 pounds from the floor with his little finger, which is much more difficult than lifting with the middle finger as usually used. He was a very large man with a heavy physique. Unfortunately, the poundages of some of his other lifts are not available at this time because my scrap book of his clippings were destroyed in a fire. Kondrat soon gave up strong man activities, which were more of a hobby than a business with him, to devote his time to his prosperous saloon business in Brooklyn.

Andy Kondrat's saloon in Brooklyn was somewhat of a gathering place for men interested in strength. He had some strong man pictures on the wall and some heavy dumbbells in a back room. He also had a block weight lifted by James Walter Kennedy in an open contest sponsored by the *Police Gazette*. It was claimed that this weight was never lifted in the same manner by any other man. Certainly, none of the other contestants, which included some well known lifters and strong men of the time, were able to lift it. However the original crossbar or handle had been removed and two loops attached to the weight at the time of my observation in 1919. I was informed that Kondrat had lifted it with the loops but I never questioned him about it and never saw him lift it. The height and weight of the weight would prevent any short man from lifting it. My legs would not have reached the ground in the straddle position, as required by the rules at the time of Kennedy's winning.

The last time I saw Andy Kondrat he was giving me encouragement in the *Police Gazette* Strong Man Tourney Open to the World in 1918. Andy, accompanied by Warren Travis, was also present when I opened with the Frank A. Robbins Circus in Jersey City in 1912. Andy later moved to Chicago and I lost track of him, much to my regret, as he was one of the finest friends that I met in my professional career.

Adolph Nordquest is an older brother of Joe Nordquest, who is somewhat better known to the physical training enthusiasts but Adolph is better known to the professional fraternity and to the general public through his high class vaudeville act with that great athlete Otis Lambert. They presented an absolutely first class act, which consisted mainly of lifting each other in novel and difficult positions. Like the most

of the better known professionals of his day, he obtained advice and encouragement from the great Prof. Attila.

He was better known to the *Police Gazette* as "Young Sandow." He had a magnificent physique and a moustache and complexion that made him the nearest American likeness of Eugen Sandow. He was very good at the bent press and was capable of about 255, although he never practiced it to the extent that the other great exponents did.

The Milo Barbell Co. sponsored an exhibition many years ago at which he made a deadlift with a barbell, which was not made quite in accordance with official dead lift rules of lifting associations but was regarded as the best lift of its kind at the time. The remarkable thing about this lift that he used the over grip with both hands and lifted over 600 pounds.

In my opinion Adolph Nordquest was one of the greatest all around strength athletes that the world has ever seen. Probably G. W. Rolandow was the only strong man equal to him in all-around ability, but Rolandow was not a native American. Nordquest was capable of running the hundred yards in 10 seconds and was an accomplished jumper. He was also a good hand balancer and tumbler.

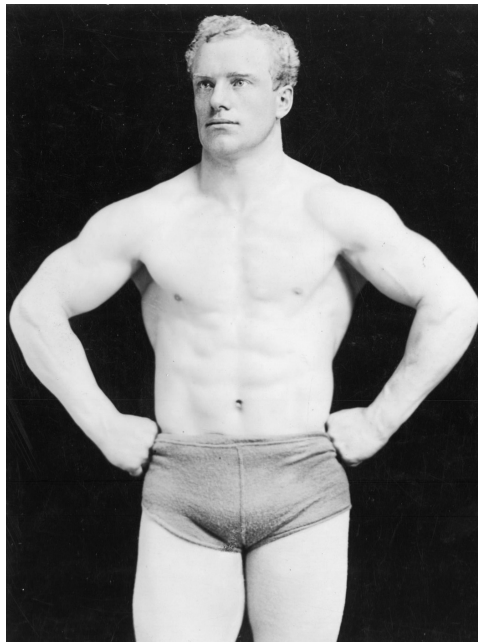
All of the lifts of Adolph Nordquest appear to have been accomplished with very little intensive practice with weights. He stated that he spent only two months of his time in any serious attempt to create records with the weights. Public exhibitions, especially vaudeville, offer very poor opportunity for training with weights. The cost of transportation eliminates excess baggage and that is why so many of the strong man acts of vaudeville days consisted of hand-to-hand balancing and other feats of using human beings for weight.

Some of the deadweight lifts of Nordquest were accomplished in a very offhand manner. There used to be a solid dumbbell weighing 648 pounds at O'Rourke's Café on Park Row, New York City. In 1917, Nordquest lift-

ed this several inches from the floor by grasping the handle with both hands and without any previous practice on this weight. This was said to be the first time it was ever lifted in this manner. He performed at Humber's [Hubert's] Museum at Coney Island in 1917 and on one occasion lifted from the floor with both hands in the overgrip, a barbell with 1 1/16-inch handle, weighing 586 pounds. He probably would have established some very high records in dead lifting, if he had trained as many of the dead lifters have trained.

Adolph Nordquest was highly regarded as a strong man by Warren Travis. In fact, Warren told me that he offered to join with him in a strong man act. Warren stated that he knew that he and Nordquest could put on an act that could not be duplicated. Nordquest did not join with Travis and, consequently, lost an opportunity to continue longer in show business and possibly attain an even greater career.

It is not generally known among muscle builders and strength fans that Nordquest was so highly regarded as a strength athlete by Richard K. Fox that he published *Strength and Health* by Young Sandow. It was the policy of Richard K. Fox at that time to publish manuals on sports and physical training and leaders like [Frank] Gotch and [James J.] Corbett authored books on wrestling and boxing. Nordquest's book was on the market at about the same time as the Attila dumbbell book. The exercises in Nordquest's book



Handsome Adolph Nordquest had a body to rival Sandow's and was frequently pictured in *Strength* magazine during Alan Calvert's years as editor. Like others remembered by Coulter, Nordquest also worked as a strongman in vaudeville and the circus.

were all posed by him and this was inspiring to youthful enthusiasts. The exercises were performed without any apparatus aside from two ordinary chairs. Some of the exercises pitted muscles against each other. Others considered [sic] of using the body as resistance, as dips, knee bends, hand stands and wrestlers bridge. The book was also illustrated with some of the most notable strength athletes of the time, but the most striking thing about the book was the numerous pictures of Nordquest and their noticeable resemblance to the original Eugen Sandow.

Personal Record Sept. 1944.

Ottley Russel Coulter Soc. Sec. No. xxx-xx-xxxx
 5 ft. 6 in. 175 lbs. brown hair, gray eyes
 Resident of state since December 1918
 Ancestry: Father-Irish Mother-German & Scotch-Irish
 Military Service-None
 Father-David Coulter Born at Chaddsford, Pa.
 Mother-Effie E. Ohl Born at Parkman, Ohio.
 Wife's maiden Name-Ethel Alexander Which Parents are Living-None

Children & Dependents

Ethel Grace Coulter	born Sept. 27, 1898	wife Scotland, Pa.
Olive Pearl Alexander	born Oct. 17, 1917	sister-in-law
Athelda Elizabeth Klink	born July 24 th , 1918	daughter
David Alexander Coulter	born January 23 rd , 1923	son
John Robert Coulter	born June 14 th , 1925	son

Group Insurance - X

EDUCATION

			Course
Parkman Public (Grade)	1896 to 1904 inc.	8 years credit	Academic
" " (high)	1905 to 1907 inc.	3 years "	"
Hiram College (college)	1908 to 1910 inc.	2 years "	Scientific
(1 st year at Hiram was high school work as Parkman High School ranked third grade and did not meet Hiram College requirements)			
(Other)	American College conferred honorary B. P. E. degree for work in Physical Education.		
	Speak	Read	Write
English	x	x	x

Service with Subsidiaries of the U. S. Steel Corp. - None except with the H. C. Frick Coke Co.
 Address - Lemont Furnace, R. R. 1., Pa. Phone-None

PREVIOUS EMPLOYERS OTHER THAN U.S. STEEL CORPORATION

From	To	Company	Location	Position	Immed. Superior	Salary	Reason
Sept. 1917	Oct? 1918	N.Y. C.R.R. & Gov. Agcy.	Youngstown, O.	World War 1. Foreman	Frank Baldwin Mr. Stevens	\$110 to \$195	Quit
Dec. 1918	Feb? 1921	Milo Gymnasium	Pgh. Pa.	Phy. Dir.	H.B. Barzen	\$140 \$25 weekly & bonus	Owner
June 1919	May 1924	M.H. Pickering Co.	Pgh. Pa.	Collector	Mr. Aimsworth		Quit
Jun 1920	April 1922	STRENGTH MAG.	Phila. Pa.	Writer.	J.C. Egan.	\$20	Change of Policy
May or J'24	June '26	City of	Uniontown, Pa.	Ptl. & PhyDir.		\$140?	Quit under political pressure

BUSINESS REFERENCES - NOT RELATIVES

Berwin S. Detweiler Uniontown, Pa. Automobile Dealer
 Central Garage Uniontown, Pa. Automobile Dealer

RELATIVES PENSIONED BY U.S. STEEL CORP. DISABLED OR DIED IN SERVICE OF U.S. STEEL CORP.

Edward Ohl 2nd cousin (deceased) Service terminated? Cause of termination-retired?
 Company & Works - Superintendent at Sharon, Pa.
 Later said to have been Director of U.S. Steel Corporation

This two-page document was put together by Ottley Coulter in September of 1944. It appears that it began as a job application for the U.S. Steel Corporation, but it is also a remarkable record of his working life. Only minor editing and slight formatting changes were applied to make reading easier and to fit on these pages. Ottley Coulter was known for his long letters with friends; he could really pack a lot of information into one or two pages.

In Case of Emergency Notify-Ethel G. Coulter Relation-wife
 Address-Lemont Furnace, R. R. 1., Pa. Nearest Phone

Started	N. Y. C. R. R.	Sept. 18, 1917	Quit Oct.? 1918
Started	Milo Gymnasium	Dec. 1918.	Quit Feb. ? 1921
Started	M. H. Pickering Co.	June 11, 1919	Quit May 1924
Started	STRENGTH MAGAZINE	Jan. 1920	Quit Apr. 1922
Started	Uniontown Police Dept.	May or June 1924	Quit June 1, 1926

Married at Hagerstown, Md. March 17th, 1917.
 Graduated from Parkman, Ohio High School in May 1908.
 Attended Hiram College, Hiram, Ohio 1909 and 1910.

1911 worked for D. Coulter & Son, Andover, Ohio.
 1912 strong man with Frank A Robbins Circus.
 1913 strong man with circus of Walter L. Main.
 1914 worked for D. Coulter & So, Andover, Ohio.
 1915 strong man and wrestler with Superior United Shows and Legette & Brown Shows.
 1916 night manager at restaurant in Hagerstown, Md.
 1917 foreman at freight house of N.Y.C. R. R., Youngstown, Ohio.
 1918 asst. claim agent for Mahoning and Shenango Railway & Light Co., Youngstown, Ohio.
 1919 Physical Director of Milo Gymnasium, Pittsburgh, Pa.
 1920 " " " " "
 1921 " " " " " " and also started to work as
 collector for M. H. Pickering Co. (worked only evenings at the Milo Gymnasium)
 1922 collector for M. H. Pickering Co.
 1923 " " "
 1924 " " " until May or June
 and started on Uniontown Police Dept in May or June as Phy. Inst.
 1925 patrolman on Uniontown Police Dept.
 1926 patrolman on Uniontown Police Dept. until May 30th.
 Started with H. C. Frick Coke Co. as Coal and Iron Policemen about June 2nd or 3rd.
 1927 H. C. Frick
 1928 "
 1929 "
 1930 "
 1931 "
 1932 "
 1933 "
 1934 "
 1935 "
 1936 "
 1937 "
 1938 " (Unemployed Dec. 1938 to Aug. 1939 because of reduction in personnel)
 1939 worked until Jan 16 and furloughed again because of personnel reduction.
 Sept. 1939? until June 6, 1955 employed by H. C. Frick Coke Co. United States Steel Co. and
 United States Steel Corporation.