

**Ed Notes:**

We would like to thank Pudgy and Les Stockton, Russ Saunders, George Eiferman, Relna McRae and Steve and Linda Ford for helping us with a panel discussion on the history of Muscle Beach at the recent meeting of the North American Society for Sports History in Long Beach, California. Steve Ford, who's working closely with Glenn Sundby on a pictorial history of Muscle Beach, got things underway with a fascinating slide presentation on the evolution of Muscle Beach from its Santa Monica beginnings to its new Venice Beach location. Jan Todd followed with slides of Pudgy Stockton and Relna McRae, the two most famous "Muscle Beach Girls" Then, for more than an hour, all the session participants took part in a panel discussion. George Eiferman and Les Stockton kept the audience in stitches with their quick wit, while Pudgy, Relna and Russ were literally swamped with questions and requests for autographs. It was a great event and we're deeply grateful to all our panel participants for taking the time to come and help us make the session such a wonderful success,

Iron Gamers on this side of the pond may not be aware that Scottish strength historian David P. Webster recently received his country's highest sports achievement award. At a ceremony in Edinburgh, Webster received the National Service to Sport Award for his numerous contributions to Scottish sports. In addition to his contributions to the field of weight training—where he has distinguished himself as an athlete, coach, promoter, author, and collector—Webster is also chairman of the Commonwealth Games Committee for Scotland and is vitally involved with the Highland Games. David has been actively involved in the world of Scottish sports since 1940, and, in our opinion, this award is long overdue. Congratulations, David, and thank you for your many contributions to our shared world.

We'd also like to commend another David—David Chapman, for tackling the time-consuming task of translating into English Desbonnet's fascinating history of the iron game. As can be seen by the first installment of David's translation of *Les Rois de la Force*, Desbonnet's book is a treasure-house of forgotten physical culture history and we eagerly look forward to the future installments. Chapman has asked us to see if there might be any IGH subscribers with a copy of *Les Rois de la Force* they would like to sell. The copy he is currently using was loaned to him by Joe Roark but, understandably, David would like to have a copy for himself. Should anyone be willing to donate/sell Chapman a copy, please write him c/o of IGH.

**Dear IGH:**

This letter is in regard to phone comments received concerning an article in the December 1994 issue (of *Iron Game History*) titled "Father-Figure or Phony? George Jowett, The ACWLA & The Milo Barbell Company, 1924-1927," by Dr. John D. Fair.

First—I would like to congratulate Dr. Fair for his very analytical article expounding on George F. Jowett's amazing career. The criticism I heard expressed concerned the use of the term "Phony" within the title and the prominent place given to the expressions of Charles Smith preceding the article.

To give Dr. Fair his due, one must carefully read his text in its entirety. His summation praises George F. Jowett's exalted status in the history of the Iron Game. As for Charlie Smith, I learned in speaking with him at the end of his career that he had become a very bitter man. Perhaps his physical problems created a negative attitude. In any case, Charlie apparently must have forgotten the interesting and informative article he authored for the Weider publication *Muscle Builder*, April 1955, wherein he salutes George F. Jowett as "The Father of American Weightlifting." Those were the great days when Charles A. Smith was healthy and recognized as one of the leading writers in the field.

In November of 1924, when Jowett joined the Milo Barbell Company they ran exciting full page advertising titled, "Jowett Now With The Milo Company" and telling all about his great career, his knowledge, and athletic abilities, and how the Milo Company and its pupils will benefit from having his knowledge and experience. Alan Calvert, famed authority, spoke of Jowett as "The Most Scientific Lifter in America."

This type of laudatory comment followed Jowett wherever he went. The International Correspondent School—considered the most respected home study institution in the world—promoted the Jowett Institute, courses, and books for many years until the Great Depression of the Thirties forced them to discontinue the relationship.

It seems that Jowett was involved with every great enterprise of the Iron Game. He helped to launch the career of Bob Hoffman with the beginning of *Stength & Health* publication. And in later years he was the mentor to the Weiders as they initiated their publications and businesses. It's even possible that Jowett wrote more articles on bodybuilding, weight training, lifting, and other strength subjects than any writer in history.

Jowett was a master at teaching informative and proper training procedures, always stressing the progressive training method with its functional, kinetic values. His influence was worldwide.

I often sat with this man as he wrote articles. Rarely, if ever, did he need to look up any references. His knowledge about the subjects was so vast. It was also rare for him to re-read or check a manuscript, no matter how technical. He also tried to answer all letters sent to him for advice. His motto was, "Once a Jowett pupil, always a Jowett pupil."

What about Jowett's strength and lifting abilities? Over the years, I personally spoke with Charlie Phelan, the Brooklyn Strong Boy; Tony Terlazzo; Bob Hoffman; Earle Liederman; Manny Orlick; Ottley Coulter; Tony Lanza; etc., and they all spoke highly of his

strength abilities.

Many years ago when visiting with George and his family in Morrisburg, Ontario, I had the opportunity to converse with people who had known Jowett either in name or in person. Always they had something to say about his great strength, wrestling and athletic skills. Way past his prime years, I witnessed him perform handstands and head balances, vault over a fence, and do amazing things with sledgehammers and anvils. So to those who have spoken ill of his athletic ability, I say that I have seen him, and have spoken to those who have seen him. To say he was not unusually strong is a lot of malarkey, pure and simple.

In *Muscular Development* magazine, October 1973, page 22, Bob Hoffman writes of Jowett's great strength capability in a very informative article, "Feats of Strength I Have Seen." This is one of many references concerning Jowett that has appeared in the York publications over the years.

Unfortunately, condemnation of George F. Jowett came about when he left the Milo Barbell Company in 1927 and D. G. Redmond, the owner, and his staff began with their mud slinging. It became clear that their priority was to discredit their mail order competitor, George Jowett and the Jowett Institute. Much of that mud slinging came about, ironically, after Milo's profits had been hurt by Jowett's success. After all, Jowett had been a tremendous asset to the Milo Company during the years of 1924 to 1927, as Dr. Fair points out. As to Jowett's advertising claims and trophies which were always in question from his mail-order competitors etc., the Federal Trade Commission investigations nullified the charge of fraud against him.

The criticism leveled against Jowett for having exaggerated about a few of the Iron Game personalities he profiled in the magazines seems petty to me, as he was only trying to inspire his readers to become enthusiastically involved with their training and goals. There is no such thing as perfection in the life of any individual. We can only strive toward such a goal. Therefore, at the end we have to evaluate ourselves over the long haul, pro and con, the black and the red side of our ledger. To me, George F. Jowett finished in the black by a much larger margin than most men in our game's history. Without question, he influenced thousands of physical culturists in all walks of life toward a healthier and happier life. I consider myself fortunate to have had the golden opportunity of knowing this man personally for over thirty years. He was a tremendous influence in shaping my early physical culture life, and he was a friend who will never be forgotten.

**Vic Boff**  
Cape Coral, FL





Dear *IGH*,

You two are doing a great job publishing *Iron Game History*. I enjoy reading it more than any other iron game magazine.

I especially enjoyed Jan's article on "Prom Milo to Milo" in the April 1995 issue. I was surprised, however, that the first reference in the article was not to Jan's dissertation. We academics would appreciate knowing the complete bibliographical entry for her dissertation.

Grover Porter  
Huntsville, AL

Okay, you asked for it: Jan Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: An Examination of the Role of Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women, 1800-1870* (The University of Texas at Austin: 1995), 526 pp.

Dear *IGH*,

Bob Samuels passed on to me a copy of your recent article written on learning of the passing of Paul Anderson. Now that perhaps the most notable strongman since Hercules and Atlas has left these shores, I think that there will be a lot of fireside recollections of this wonderful human being. So the following is my experience in knowing him through a long exchange of correspondence plus what I saw.

I once had a chance to talk to Paul Anderson in person, at my first lifting contest many years ago. But as a shy kid, as he lumbered past me I could not get up the courage to speak to a man who had not long before humbled the Russians. What I remember most about him was seeing him wrestle professionally. What impressed me was Paul's amazing speed and agility. He wrestled mostly from a squat position, leaping around the ring like a well-conditioned man a couple of hundred pounds lighter. The crowd came to witness his

strength, and he gave them that when he placed his hands under the 250-pound Irishman's ribcage, pressed him overhead with ease and sat him down in the corner of the ring.

My strongest memory of Paul Anderson that shall linger with me was his humanity. There are Bible-thumpers who make a show of humanity but really aren't caring people. Paul was a very good man with genuine feeling for the underdog, caring about people often shunted aside by the rest of humanity. He was often a friend to people who might not have had another friend, whether they be troubled youngsters, prisoners or the handicapped in nursing homes. He visited with them and until the very end of his life answered their letters with a personal reply and encouragement. I found this out through personal experience. As pleased as I was to find what an articulate man Paul Anderson was, I was deeply moved by his feeling for the underdogs of this world.

It was in 1987, and I had returned to see and compete in a powerlifting contest many years after I had lifted in competition (in Olympic-style contests). The astonishing event that transpired was the sight of meet director Bob Hafner, winning in the deadlift classification, then falling over backwards and laying there unconscious. He finally got up, and a few days later he was diagnosed with having a particularly deadly case of leukemia.

As he lay in the hospital fighting for his life, I wrote to several legendary lifters and asked them to help lift Bob's spirits with get-well messages. The only one who replied was Paul Anderson.

Paul Anderson sent Bob Hafner letters of encouragement and even tapes played by his bedside as he drifted back to consciousness, recalling Paul's own battles for life and urging Bob to make a fight of it. When Paul was asked as a deeply religious man why such terrible things happen to decent people like Bob, he replied that, "While I do not know why terrible things happen to good people like Bob in this rugged life, I *do* know that the Lord will use Bob's suffering to being about something *good*."

To make a long and incredibly dramatic story short, Bob Hafner's life was saved against seemingly impossible odds by a bone-marrow transplant from his twin brother Tom. Bob Hafner did more than just tell the story of his recovery as a source of inspiration to so many also fighting for their lives against seemingly impossible odds. He set an example, by competing again just one year after he fell on the same lifting platform, and managing over five hundred pounds, an astonishing comeback.

That the bone marrow transplant took was a wonder, but what then transpired was a miracle, one involving Paul Anderson. Bob Hafner had wanted to do something for the community in return for its standing with him during his battle for life, to show his thankfulness for being alive. He wanted to establish a powerlifting program for the handicapped whereby they would train and compete not in isolation from unimpaired lifters, but with them, to help them gain social skills and confidence that would enable them to enter the social mainstream. Money and volunteers were needed, and to get publicity was necessary. It seems that sportswriter Peter Finney had avidly followed Paul's Olympic triumph while a student at L.S.U., and he was transfixed by Bob Hafner's story.

The Frey article touched many people, as did the televi-

sion presentation of Hafner's return to the platform. The spirits of many were lifted, including many in hospitals. The end result was the presentation of the funds and the volunteer coaches that would make the program possible. Perhaps Bob's suffering brought about something good, just as Paul Anderson had prophesied.

The unique special Olympian program has succeeded better than even the optimistic Bob Hafner had hoped for, influencing many other such programs nationally and even world-wide. Not only have some top lifters been developed, but virtually all participants have markedly improved in self-confidence, self-discipline, and particularly in social skills. Paul Anderson remained keenly interested in the progress of the program and offered many suggestions, based on his own hard-won experience in education and youth work at his youth home, where he emphasized the development of self-confidence and positive values.

When one of our Special Olympians, plagued with cerebral palsy, fell down twice trying to make a deadlift and then finally made it and brought the crowd to its feet in tearful appreciation, Paul Anderson wrote to the lad in congratulation. When the boy went into the hospital for surgery on his legs, Paul Anderson contacted him and sent an autographed picture. All of this when Paul Anderson himself was living in pain confined to a wheelchair barely able to raise a glass of water to his own lips.

It is significant that one of the last people Paul Anderson ever spoke to by telephone was Bob Hafner, on the occasion of the critical fifth anniversary of his contracting leukemia, a very positive indicator that he has finally licked this terrible thing. The talk was not really about weightlifting, but about life and its value. Paul had to excuse himself because he was too weak to talk anymore after twenty minutes, but it was an experience that Bob Hafner will remember for the rest of his life. Paul knew he was dying, but was positive and caring about others until the very end.

I never really got to talk to Paul Anderson in person owing to my shyness as a young guy, but he and I were friends and he influenced my life far more as a man than as a strongman or lifter.

**Allen Smith**  
New Orleans, LA

**Dear IGH,**

I would like to first thank you both for passing along to me Joe Assirati's address so that I may correspond with him. As a member of the Oldtime Barbell and Strongmen Association and Fellowship subscriber to *Iron Game History*, it brought me great pleasure to be able to write to a true master of physical culture who is as knowledgeable as Joe Assirati.

Joe was most kind in sending me a prompt reply, which simply oozed with his everlasting enthusiasm for weight training and its great benefits. Joe spoke of the great happiness that *Iron Game History* brings him, as it helps him to keep in contact with those greats of the field that he grew up with, as well as those from generations before. Joe also spoke about his famous cousin Bert, for whom I have great admiration. He is going to send to me a photo of him, for which I will be forever thankful.

Joe explained that for the past year, he has been living away from home looking after two of his wife's relatives. However, at eighty-nine years young, Joe related to me that he still finds time to engage in his workouts and speaks highly of the deadlift. Joe credits this exercise as providing him with the ability to retain good strength in his upper and lower back muscles as well as good posture, and therefore healthy lungs and organs. On a similar note, Joe also shared with me his family's motto—*Sempre Avanti*—meaning "Always forwards and upwards." Joe also shared in my excitement of having my own home gym and saw this as a good thing, something that could be handed down through the generations, as in his case regarding his collection of old-time weights and his twelve great grandchildren.

On a final note, I am grateful to have physical culturists like Joe Assirati who have paved the way for many throughout the years and from whom we today can learn much. My best regards to you both.

**Lou Tortorelli**  
Howell, New Jersey

**Dear IGH,**

In my letter published in the January 1994 issue of *Iron Game History* I vented my resentment of Bob Kiputh, Yale's famous swimming coach. In it I stated I never understood the story that Kiputh changed his mind about weight training in his later years. I beg to correct this statement. I have since learned he did indeed.

Dan Biernacki, who became chairman of The Connecticut Weightlifting Association a few years after my years in that capacity, has advised me that Kiputh became a rabid supporter of weight training for his swimmers. At an annual A.A.U. meeting, Kiputh himself presented an award to Dan for the excellent job he had done for the association and took this opportunity to praise the virtues of weight training. It seems he realized that weight trained swimmers were eroding Yale's once complete domination of the college swimming scene. While my portrayal of our relationship remains unchanged, in all fairness I am obliged to give Kiputh credit for attempting to undo his original animosity toward weight training.

**Alton Eliason**  
Northford, Connecticut

**Dear IGH,**

I hope this finds all well with you. I am fine. I work out on the bar twice every day. I do over one hundred hanging leg raises every morning and every afternoon. I also do chins several times per week. On April 25, if I live, I was eighty-three. Can't tell I am old except I don't do as many chins, but I did twenty at age eighty-two and I could not do that many in my twenties.

Best wishes to all the "Old Timers." I love everyone of them. Keep healthy and happy and above all study the Bible so we all meet in heaven as this life is only a vapor,

**Curd Edmunds**  
Glascow, KY