

# PHYSICAL CULTURE FROLICS IN THE OLD DOMINION: BILL COLONNA'S PICNICS, 1953-1961

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Among the many blessings bestowed by Bob Hoffman during the half century he dominated America's iron game, the sense of community he fostered among weightlifters ranks high. Whether the concept originated with the social amenities provided by early German-American athletic clubs in major cities (as an extension of earlier Old World traditions), the fraternal spirit embedded in George Jowett's American Continental Weight-Lifting Association and his Strength and Health League, or Bob's own experiences with his comrades in France and on board ship during the Great War cannot be determined.<sup>1</sup> But it becomes evident by the late 1920s in the camaraderie of Hoffman's lifter/employees (the nucleus of the York gang) as they competed and performed strength feats with each other on a platform located in the middle of his oil burner plant on Broad Street. The intense rivalry and bonding spurred by these mini-competitions no doubt had much to do

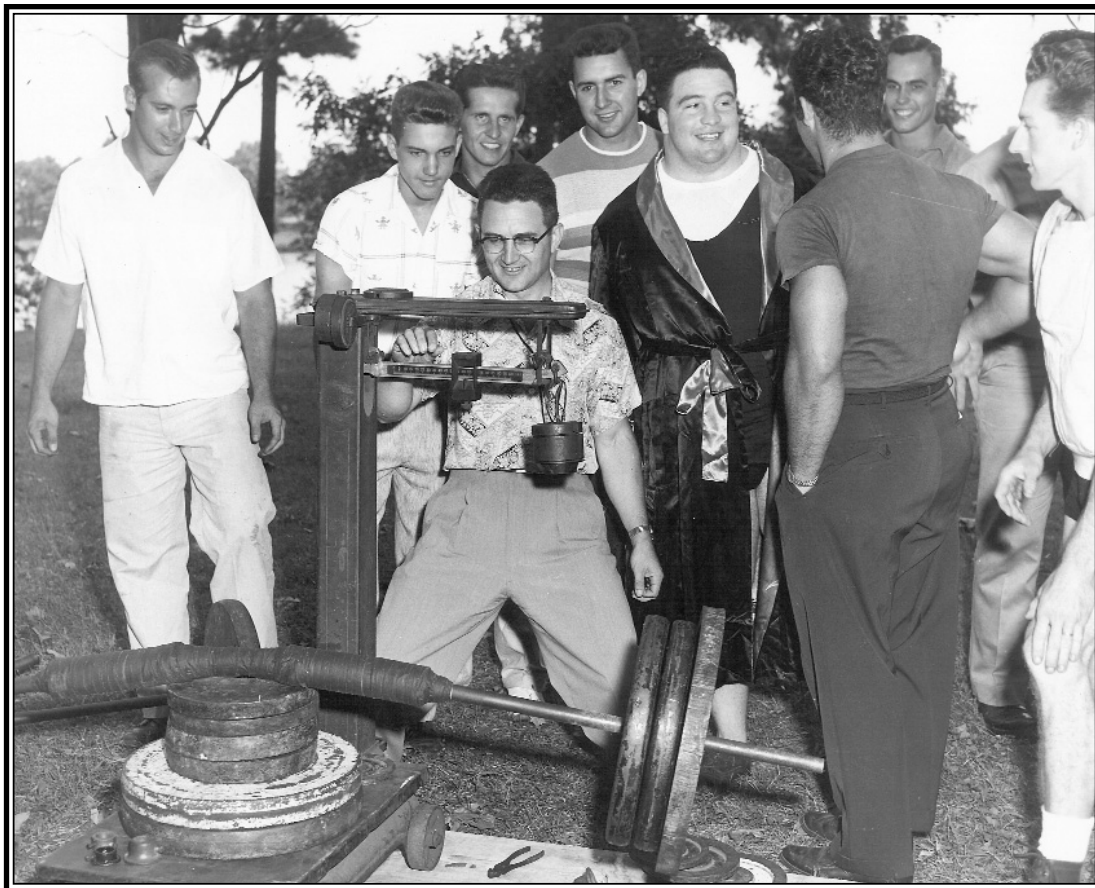
with the early success of the York Oil Burner Athletic Club in its encounters with other regional teams. But these socialization practices also extended to other activities such as festive meals, weekend outings, and trips to meets (often including women) where Bob's boys extended their fellowship to a broader circle of strength athletes.

As a result of these friendships and the heightened level of consciousness they infused in the sport, Hoffman conceived the idea of holding periodic strengthfests, some with food and drink, by the mid-1930s. One of the most notable was held at the York clubhouse on Lightner's Hill in December 1934. "What a wonderful time, what fun," reported *Strength & Health*. "Good fellowship, records smashed galore, plenty of eats, visits with old friends, meeting with new ones. A day of days."<sup>2</sup> Most of these displays of strength and fitness (including annual celebrations of Bob's



**Bill Colonna, who grew up around boats and water, was as skilled on water skis and he was with the barbells. This photo was taken in 1955.**

*All photos courtesy Bill Colonna*



In 1953, Paul Anderson created a sensation at Colonna's picnic by squatting a world record 762 1/4 pounds. As was the custom in those early days of lifting, the barbell and all the plates were immediately weighed to ascertain the correct weight of a new record. Long-time York Barbell general manager John Terpak is shown in the center, weighing the bar and plates. Left to right around him are Bill Colonna, unidentified man, Paul Anderson, Jim Park (back to camera) and Frank Stevens. Behind, in the second row are Steve Klasinin, Bob Crist and Arnold Pope.

birthday) took place at the York YMCA in the fall and winter months.<sup>3</sup> In 1937, however, Hoffman staged a picnic at Lightner's in August, designed in part to show that weightlifting was not just a cool-weather indoor sport. Dubbed a "convention," he called it "the greatest event of its kind ever staged."<sup>4</sup> Bob's acquisition in 1940 of Brookside Park on 32 acres of woodland near Dover set the stage for the first so-called Strength & Health Picnic on June 23 of that year. It was a gala event which included, according to Hoffman, "the usual strength show, consisting of weight lifting, strength feats, hand balancing, tumbling, contortion and muscle control, and the races, rope climbing, archery and other contests." What made the picnic so special were the extras he provided. "The ladies who live near Brookside Park were handling the food concession and those present made good use of the chicken corn soup, the 25 cent

platters of salad and sandwiches, the ice cream and lemonade and other delicacies." An orchestra started playing at six o'clock and dancing, including a jitterbug contest, went on till nearly midnight. So pleased was Bob with the conviviality displayed by all who attended this affair that he intended to stage a similar gathering in September.<sup>5</sup>

Such plans never materialized, and the next Strength & Health Picnic did not occur until June of 1945, after a five year hiatus attributable largely to the war.<sup>6</sup> But for the next 27 years it became a festive centerpiece

of York culture, attracting hundreds of visitors—young and old, male and female, novices and world champions—from all over the region to experience the joy of each other's company. Al Thomas, in his 1991 article in *Iron Game History*, provides a nostalgic glimpse of this socialization ritual and an indication of how vital this seemingly frivolous activity was to the health of the sport during the post-war era. It was "a community of people . . . gathered to celebrate strength and health, but more importantly, to celebrate each other as celebrants."<sup>7</sup> Amidst the friendliness and goodwill displayed by the participants in the largely spontaneous and impromptu competitions, there developed a greater love for lifting and a desire to excel. Notwithstanding any commercial or political advantages that might accrue to Bob as a result of these yearly rituals, they were both functional and fun, and it is hardly coincidental that their rise and

demise corresponded with the so-called golden age of American weightlifting.

While physical culture activities at York and most other pre-war centers were seriously hampered by the war effort, interest in weightlifting and bodybuilding actually intensified in the Norfolk area. Heretofore competitive events in Virginia were largely limited to Roanoke and Winchester. In 1936 Ken McCorkindale staged the state's first meet at the Roanoke YMCA, and in 1939 the first Virginia Weightlifting Championships was held at the health club of Dr. Howard James in Winchester with John Grimek, Tony Terlazzo, Steve Stanko, Hoffman, and other members of the York gang treating the audience of 350 to exhibition feats. At the second state championships in 1940 teams from Winchester and Roanoke dominated the competition.<sup>8</sup> The first weightlifting meet in Norfolk, featuring seven lifters, was held in early 1938 at the Central Gym, but it was not until the formation of the Apollo Athletic Club in 1940 by George Greenfield at the Navy YMCA and the onset of World War II that the city became a hotbed of lifting.<sup>9</sup>

They first took the form of occasional team competitions between City Park, Edgewater, and Portsmouth YMCA weightlifters. Later in the war they incorporated other physical culture displays, such as chinning, hand-balancing, tumbling, bent pressing, and muscle control in regular outings at the Navy YMCA.<sup>10</sup> Bob Crist, an early Apollo member, explains that "the Navy Y was right down the street from the Colonial Theater. There would be vaudeville acts there on weekends, and the guys would get inspired from them, and the performers would show them the moves."<sup>11</sup> By 1944 physical culture frolics at the Navy Y were occurring monthly. On several occasions the audience was treated to a hand-balancing act by Hank and Evelyn Hamilton. Hank, a machinist at the Norfolk Navy Yard, once bent-pressed 240 pounds at 190 bodyweight, and Evelyn, weighing only 124, deadlifted 300 pounds.<sup>12</sup> But this concentration of interest and activity owed mainly to the leadership of Greenfield, who lifted in virtually all of the meets, and the interest generated by the presence of so many young servicemen in the Norfolk area.

After the war the Navy Y remained the major center for Virginia weightlifters and contests, replete with hand-balancing, tumbling, and muscle control exhibitions. In 1947 one of the leading spirits of the Apollo Club, Herb Bradley, was featured in *Strength & Health* for performing two 285 pound floor presses at 123 body-

weight.<sup>13</sup> By 1949 a Mr. Virginia Contest and a Most Muscular Man title were added to the annual weightlifting championships, but in the 1950s it was evident that the Navy Y was no longer paramount and that lifters and bodybuilders were gravitating to other locations.<sup>14</sup> These new centers were not only filling a void but were providing opportunities for innovative physical culture activities in other parts of the metropolitan area.

By this time too Hoffman's strengthfests, including Strength & Health picnics, were thriving again and providing a model and inspiration for similar strongman gatherings throughout the country. As much as the feats of strength and displays of muscular development and proficiency, it was the spirit of camaraderie engendered at York that was admired and imitated.<sup>15</sup> Bill Colonna, Jr. of Chesapeake, Virginia, who was nurtured in the friendly competitive environment created by Greenfield and others in Norfolk seemed susceptible to Bob's gospel of socialization. Born 1 February 1929, the son of Will and Esther Colonna, Bill grew up along the Indian River, an estuary of Hampton Roads, in the shadows of the family shipyard, which was founded in 1875 by his grandfather, Charles Colonna. After attending the College of William and Mary for a year, he resigned to enroll in shipbuilding apprentice school in Newport News and then entered the family business. In the meantime, Colonna, as a skinny (137 pound) teenager, had seen a picture of 1946 Mr. America Alan Stephan and started to think about toning his muscles and improving his strength and appearance. Although lifting weights was at that time widely frowned upon and well outside the social norm, Colonna's curiosity grew. His first hands-on experience occurred when a friend who lived nearby invited him to work out with the 150-pound set in his garage. Such was the appeal of weight training and Colonna's personal improvement from it that in 1947 he set up a modest workout facility in the basement of a clapboard structure on his family's property where local lifters converged. It was affectionately called "the dungeon."<sup>16</sup> That he was pursuing the right course was confirmed by an incident Colonna witnessed at his high school where the football coach, like so many coaches of that era, prohibited his players from lifting weights and even threatened expulsion from the team. The coach's attitude changed, however, when he realized that the losses his team had incurred came from those rivals who had gained superior strength and speed by employing weights in their training regimen. Imagine Colonna's



At the 1954 picnic, Bob Crist's wife, Yolanda, dips out ice cream made with Hoffman Hi-Proteen powder under the watchful gaze of the president of the York Barbell Company, Bob Hoffman. The protein-laced ice cream was, according to Colonna, a "pleasant surprise for Bob Hoffman, and made him very happy."

surprise when the coach showed up at his front door one day asking where he could buy a set of weights!<sup>17</sup>

Colonna knew exactly where the coach could get weights, for by this time he had been bitten by the iron bug from reading *Strength & Health* and was thoroughly familiar with the York system and the personalities associated with it. He also gained inspiration from visiting "Mecca," where he was surprised to discover that the old Broad Street gym was just as dilapidated as his own meager facility, yet it was producing world champions and Mr. Americas. Like the York gym and a later "dungeon" in Santa Monica, there was a certain mystique attached to Colonna's creation. Upon its demolition in 1982, an article in the *Tidewater Physique* reminisced:

This foreboding place has had the uncanny and unnatural ability to turn out an impressive product. It holds court with a select few and a visitor has the choice of negotiating terms with his lower extremities to keep from being inundated by massive poundages of weights. Or gracefully

pushing aside mounds of cobwebs arched from the ceiling, while attempting to step over rain-soaked sections of flooring which could possibly be sweat. Once inside you can actually feel a certain electricity. A particular atmosphere or quality that seems to arise from the worn concrete floor. You are enveloped with that 'feel' and only the die-hard bodybuilders who have chosen America's least popular and most misunderstood sport, know what that 'feel' is.<sup>18</sup>

Contrary to conventional wisdom, it seems almost axiomatic in the annals of American weightlifting and bodybuilding that the dingiest workout facilities usually produce the greatest results. Perhaps it has something to do with the counter-culture nature of the sport. But Colonna's was truly a "sweat gym" and such was the intensity of interest and its proximity to York (and the beach!) that Hoffman actually came to Norfolk several times. It would be hard to imagine a greater thrill for an aspiring bodybuilder than to be seated in the backseat of

Bob's Cadillac on the way to Virginia Beach with multiple Mr. America John Grimek demonstrating how to bend bars. Colonna eventually got to know Hoffman and others of the York gang "pretty well" and also attended at least one of the annual picnics at Brookside Park which seemed to exude the same kind of camaraderie that existed in his gym.<sup>19</sup>

By the early 1950s Colonna started staging some picnics and shows, albeit on a much smaller scale, on the grounds outside his gym. Through the insistence of Buck Cowling, physical director of the Portsmouth YMCA, these affairs included a Miss Virginia Contest, a feeder event for the nascent Miss USA and Miss Universe pageants in California.<sup>20</sup> It was not until 1953 that Colonna felt sufficiently confident to organize his own picnic on a much broader scale. In addition to his inspiration from York, several other factors influenced his decision. He was not only a serious bodybuilder but had always (like Hoffman) had an interest in water sports, especially water skiing, and the land owned by his father, called "The Point," on the banks of the Indian River seemed an ideal venue for indulging in both activities within the context of a picnic. Colonna's close friend Bob Crist thinks the picnic started because George Greenfield convinced Bill that the land was there and also the weights.<sup>21</sup> "When you start these things," Colonna observes, "you don't really know how much work is involved in putting them on. Publicizing, getting judges, emceeing, ordering trophies, etc." But Colonna had assistance from Greenfield, who organized the lifting contest, while Colonna handled the physique competition and other events, including the aquatics. Colonna's wife, Earlene, also a lifter, assisted as an organizer and participant, and there was no shortage of pals from the gym to help out in all phases of the picnic.<sup>22</sup> Like Hoffman, Colonna would charge no entrance fees and would provide free food and drink—soft drinks, no alcohol. In the promotional brochure, he issued an invitation to his picnic which would be held on Saturday and Sunday, June 25-26, 1953, emphasizing that it was open to "everyone" and that "anyone is eligible to compete." The main events would be held on Sunday afternoon, "rain or shine," and would consist of all seven divisions of Olympic weightlifting, a "Mr. Health" physique contest (with sub-divisions), and so-called "odd events" consisting of the bench press, squats, curl, standing broad jump (always a York favorite), best balancer, and a freestyle swimming race. "We plan on hav-

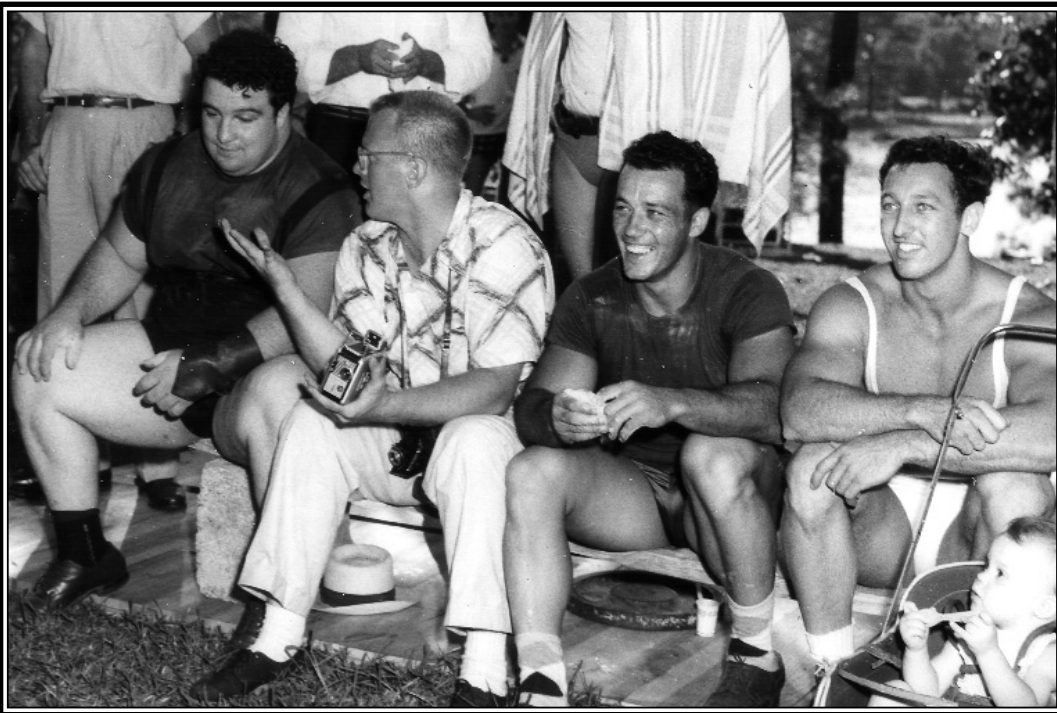
ing a great time and expect you there."<sup>23</sup>

Hoffman did not attend, but he did send John Terpak, his chief lieutenant and general manager; Jim Murray, managing editor of *Strength & Health*; and Jim Park, 1952 Mr. America, who put on a special posing exhibition. What made the event a resounding success, however, was the presence of a strength phenomenon, arguably the greatest in American weightlifting history—the legendary Paul Anderson. Exactly who "discovered" Anderson has never been a matter of dispute, it being safely assumed that it was done by legendary deadlifter Bob Peoples of Johnson City, Tennessee, in the summer of 1952.<sup>24</sup> Colonna, however, relates another story of Paul's early prowess, possibly predating that of Peoples.

It occurred by happenstance through an experience by one of Colonna's closest friends. At 6' 1", 210 pounds, with a 48½" chest and 27" thighs, Ray Tipton was one of the strongest men in the South.<sup>25</sup> His family home was in East Tennessee where an early Tipton was largely responsible for squashing John Sevier's attempt to carve the free state of Franklin out of Western Carolina lands in the late eighteenth century. While Tipton was visiting his parents in Elizabethton, he asked around for a place to work out. Although there was no gym in the area, he was told that there was a large man in the neighborhood who worked out with weights and various other objects in his garage. After checking out the story, Tipton returned to tell his mother that there was a big fat man down the street who exercises, and that the man invited him to train. Upon entering Anderson's garage he saw squat racks and other equipment he had never seen before. It was obvious that Anderson had been lifting heavy poundages. Tipton also noticed that one side of the garage was bowed out, the result, Paul explained, of his having hit it once after losing his balance. Ray started warming up in the clean and press with an Olympic bar and kept increasing the weight. Paul said he would join him when he got to a level where he could start, but when Tipton got to 300 pounds, his limit, he turned around and asked, "Are you ready now?" Paul said "no, but I'll start anyway." He then pressed the bar multiple times and set it down like it was nothing. Ray asked, "Who in the hell are you. I know of practically every strong man in the country, and no one can do this. It must be a world record." But Anderson seemed unaware of how much he had just pressed or what it meant. Tipton came back and told his friends at the gym

what he had just seen but admitted that a lot of the weights were not marked and included some "odd things." Colonna then called York, and both Terpak and Grimek were interested, knowing Tipton was a "straight shooter." Bill said he would bring him over from Tennessee and put him up at the picnic he was planning.<sup>26</sup>

By the time Paul arrived in Norfolk he was hardly an unknown, since he had already performed a 714¾ pound squat and totaled 940 pounds in the Olympic lifts.<sup>27</sup> He stayed with his mother



**One could brush shoulders with many notables at the 1955 Picnic. In this photograph Paul Anderson talks with Strength & Health editor Jim Murray while Jim Park of Mr. World and Mr. Universe fame (wearing a t-shirt) and Ray Tipton smile as they watch the action on the platform.**

and eight or ten other guys in Colonna's spacious house adjacent to the lifting site. Colonna observed that "when the Andersons' car pulled into the driveway, it leaned to Paul's side. When Paul got out, it leaned less." Ethel Anderson, who was very protective of her 315-pound son, immediately had two questions for Colonna. First, she wanted to know if blocks could be placed under Paul's bed because he would otherwise likely break it. Unfortunately, whatever support was placed there was insufficient. In the middle of the night the other weightlifters were awakened by the sound of Paul crashing through his bed. Mrs. Anderson also wanted to know if there was a nearby store that sold milk. The logic of this question soon became apparent by 11:30 the next morning when others noticed that Paul had already drunk eleven quarts of milk, and his mother was headed to the store for more.<sup>28</sup> Another curiosity of this oversized athlete stemmed from his consumption of an unidentified viscous liquid from a jar. When asked about it, Anderson said that the others might not want to know what it really was. When pressed by Colonna, however, Paul revealed that it was beef blood and that he had worked out an agreement with the butcher in Elizabethton to get it as often as he could because he drank it

routinely for health purposes.<sup>29</sup>

Anderson was the sensation of the picnic and fulfilled everyone's expectations, especially with his squatting ability. After easily raising 700 pounds from a low position, all the weights available were loaded on the bar, and that too presented no difficulty. Afterwards Terpak weighed the assorted collection of iron at 762¼ pounds, a new unofficial world record. Anderson also won the best lifter award with a 975 pound total in the Olympic lifts and did an impromptu push-jerk with 420 pounds. Other odd event winners were Ronnie Ledas (Curl and Bench Press), Don Hollingsworth (broad jump), Marvin Byrum (best balancer), and Nolly Simpson (swimming). Future Mr. America Steve Klisanin from Pittsburgh won the Mr. Health physique contest, followed by Nolly Simpson, Ray Tipton, Ronnie Ledas, and Jack Reardon. It had been a beautiful sunny weekend, and everyone seemed equally sunny about the festivities and grateful to Colonna for his hospitality.<sup>30</sup> Only later did the organizers realize that four bars, including the one Anderson squatted with and three exercise bars had been bent in the process, but Colonna candidly observed, "I'll tell you right now, this was a small price to pay just for the privilege of having met



this man.”<sup>31</sup> What Jim Murray remembers most about Anderson was the shaky and slanted platform on which he had to perform, requiring him to readjust his balance to keep from falling over with his push-jerk.<sup>32</sup> So impressed was the York contingent that Anderson was invited to Bob’s birthday show in November where he totaled 1,065 pounds and officially launched his Olympic lifting career. Also on the program were Buck Harris, Apollo AC’s heavyweight champion, performing a burlesque lifting and posing routine, as well as Earlene Colonna and Bill’s future wife, Betty Jean Woodhouse, in an act billed as the Southern Barbelles.<sup>33</sup> Henceforth *Strength & Health* would frequently feature news, notes, articles, and pictures of Colonna, his friends, and his picnic.

The success of Colonna’s first picnic set a high standard for subsequent gatherings, but enthusiasm was running high among Norfolk’s lifters and bodybuilders. In April 1954 Colonna’s Gym took the team trophy over ten other clubs at the All South Championships in High Point, North Carolina, and Greenfield, as Virginia AAU Chairman, brought increased attention to the area by his successful staging of the 1954 version of the Junior Nationals (Eastern section) at the Norfolk City Arena in May.<sup>34</sup> Although there would still be no entry fees and a completely open competition at the picnic two months later, Bill found he could no longer provide free food for 600 physical culture enthusiasts, some with hefty appetites.<sup>35</sup> Instead, Hoffman agreed to donate a large quantity of Hi-Proteen powder, and Colonna arranged for a nearby dairy to manufacture some hard ice cream with it in five gallon vats to serve in dishes or as shakes. “Everyone seemed to like it,” Bill recalls, “and Hoffman was very pleased.” He also introduced Bob as the man with the biggest chest in the nation, at which point Hoffman (aged 56) took off his shirt and stuck out his chest as if to show that this was no idle compliment.<sup>36</sup> Other iron game celebrities included Jim Park and Harry Johnson, 1954 Jr. Mr. America from Atlanta, both of whom gave posing exhibitions, and national lightweight champion Yaz Kuzuhara, another one of Bob’s boys. Frank “Yan” Stevens, arguably the finest weightlifter Virginia ever produced, won the best lifter award with a 715 pound total, via a 200 press, 225 snatch, and 290 clean and jerk, as a lightweight. Ronnie Leda bench pressed 380 and curled 175 at a bodyweight of 170, and Buck Harris, weighing 217, won the squat contest with 465 pounds—a far cry from Anderson’s 762 the previous

year but quite respectable considering the innocence of the era—when body suits, wraps, and steroids were unheard of. The Mr. Health contest was won by Gene Bohaty of Chicago, who had won several major titles and, most notably, was runner-up in the 1954 Mr. America Contest. Other placements went to Don Hollingsworth, Jack King, Ray Tipton, and Dan Godfrey. Bohaty and King shared all the subdivisions. Rounding out the festivities were lots of acrobatic displays and water skiing, and an amazing handstand by Marvin Byrum atop two tables and four chairs.<sup>37</sup>

The 1955 picnic, held on July 31, was climactic, attracting a crowd of 1,000, the largest of any Colonna event. Some favorable local publicity ensued earlier from Betty Woodhouse winning the Miss Norfolk Contest and crediting her victory to the weight training she did at Colonna’s Gym.<sup>38</sup> Hoffman again supplied free Hi-Proteen drinks, and Jim Murray was present with his family. Anderson too was back, and while he did not do any squatting, he posted a 1,095 pound total (via 390, 305, and 400) in the weightlifting competition, using it as a training meet for the world championships in Munich in the fall. Virtually without competition, Paul beat his next nearest opponent by 315 pounds. Still, the diminutive Chuck Vinci (the 1956 and 1960 Olympic champion) won the best lifter award with a 220 pound press and snatch and a 270 pound clean and jerk at 128 bodyweight. He also performed a strict curl with 155 pounds. Other notables included former national bantamweight champion Jack Hughes from Akron; North Carolina star Joe Grantham, who made a 730 total as a middleweight; and Jim Park (with Mr. World and Mr. Universe now added to his list of titles), who not only posed but won the middle-heavyweight class with a creditable 785 pound total. The caliber of the lifting was the highest of any Colonna picnic. Local favorite Jack King won the Mr. Health title, taking best arms, best chest, and most muscular man subdivisions in the process. Added extras included an appearance by Mooney Williamson, the human kite, propelled from the back of a motor boat, and a one leg broad jump competition won by heavyweight Gerald Tideman. Although the whole affair cost him a total of \$670, it was probably the most satisfying picnic yet for Colonna, especially since the November 1955 issue of *Strength & Health* not only included extensive coverage of it but featured full length pictures of Colonna and Ray Tipton, the latter for winning the photo of the month contest over such nota-

bles as Roger Servin of Pennsylvania and future Mr. America Ronald Lacy.<sup>39</sup>

That no picnic was held during the next two years, particularly in light of the socialization and goodwill engendered by Colonna, seems disconcerting in retrospect. It owes chiefly to a scheme contrived by Buck Cowling, who sought to exploit the increased attention being drawn to the Norfolk area as a hotbed of physical culture by staging a Mr. Universe Contest. Bob Crist recalls that Cowling was originally from West Virginia and was probably a college graduate, about 5' 6" and 160 pounds. He was a "wheeler-dealer type of promoter" who "could hustle tickets and get things done." Cowling also had "quite a temper, and if he didn't like you, he would tell you in a minute. In his life saving classes he would sit on the bottom of the pool and you would have to dive down and retrieve him." In athletics, Cowling was best known as an accomplished diver and acrobat. Although his experience in bodybuilding was limited, he had done some research and discovered that the Mr. Universe title, staged annually in London since 1948, was unprotected legally, and "he thought he could commercialize on it." To this end, he secured the cooperation and support of the Junior Chamber of Commerce of Virginia Beach, then only a small town of about 7,000 population. Crist believes Cowling chose Virginia Beach in part because it had a big outdoor stage that was erected in 1952 for a Sand Festival where such entertainers as Patti Page and Jimmy Dorsey (a Petersburg native) performed over several days to raise money to restore the beach after a nor'easter had passed through. It also included a posing display by John Grimek, who was mobbed by the audience as he tried to go on stage. In 1956 the city was celebrating its golden jubilee, and the Mr. Universe Contest would be one of many festive events from April to October. Another factor influencing the choice of venue was Cowling's enlistment of George Greenfield, whose cooperation was necessary to secure an AAU sanction. According to Crist, Greenfield had a special affinity for Virginia Beach where he had a girlfriend, led a double life, and spent most of his weekends.<sup>40</sup> With two dynamic promoters at the helm, civic financial support, and a seaside setting, physical culture frolics in the Norfolk area seemed destined to reach a new level of recognition.

Clearly any attempt by Colonna to hold his annual picnic in 1956 would be upstaged by the planned extravaganza and appear anti-climactic. "This was

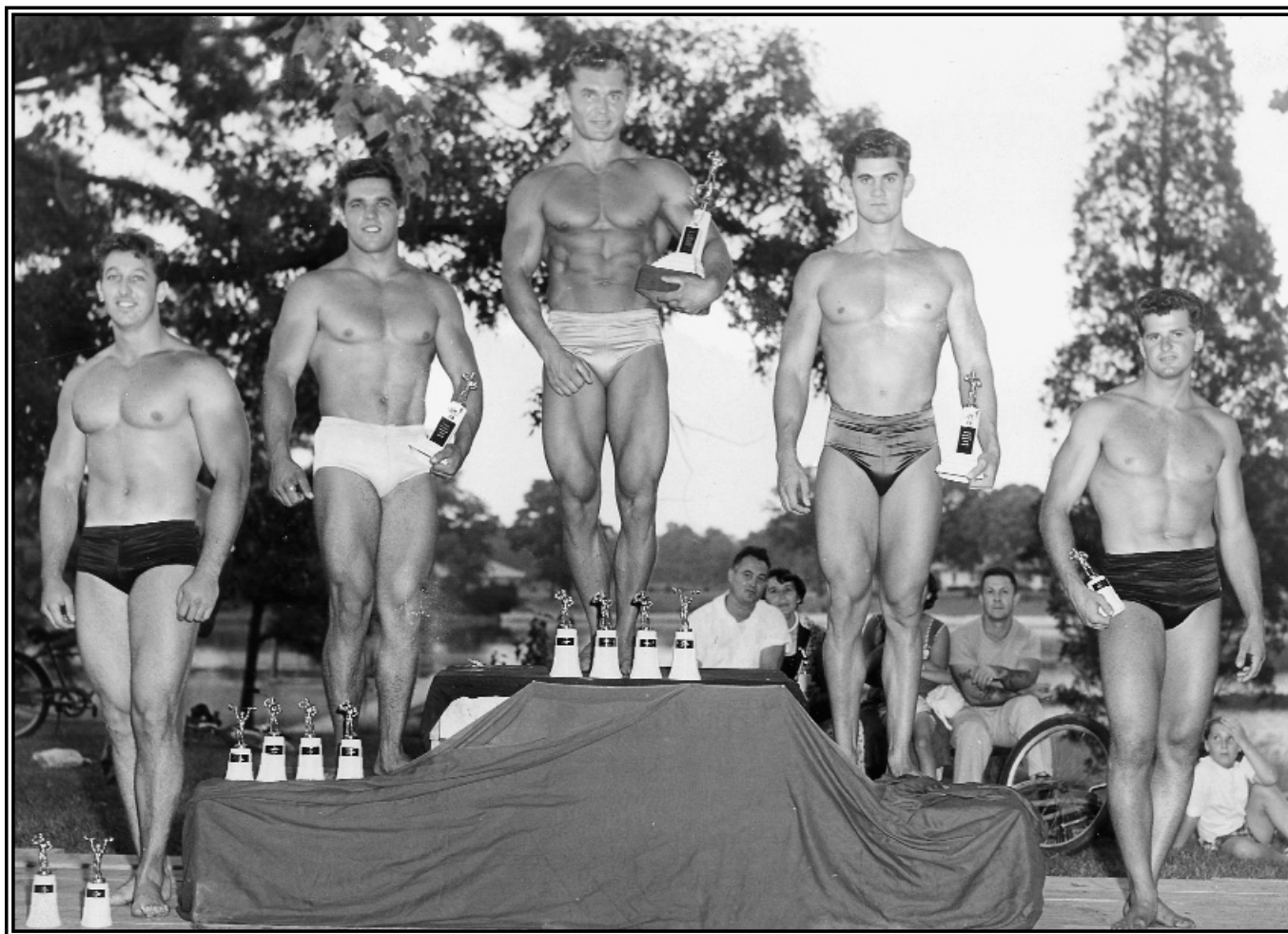
Buck's thing," Colonna recalls.<sup>41</sup> So he judiciously stepped aside and offered his cooperation in the best interest of the sport. Although dubbed a "promotional stunt" by Peary Rader in his *Iron Man* report, even he wrote that it turned out to be a grand affair.

No one can deny that the Jr. Chamber did a marvelous job of publicity and preparation for one of the finest physique and variety shows we have ever seen. Thousands of dollars were spent in preparation and presentation. The room and board for competitors and officials was paid for a week at the Beach if they were there that long, and every effort was put forth to be sure that they enjoyed every minute of their stay there. I'm sure they all did, for I heard many comments from them that this was the way a contest should be run.

The three day event (June 8-10) included a Mr. Universe Ball that included a "nice floor show and dancing," a Mr. Universe parade featuring all of the contestants along with 32 units and branches of the armed services, and many acrobatic, balance, contortion, posing, lifting, and clown acts that were interspersed with the physique competition. "The show ran smoothly throughout, without the lags and dead spots so often encountered in physique shows. There was something entertaining taking place all the time," according to Rader. Colonna assumed a subsidiary role, offering his gym and grounds for the contestants to work out, catch crabs, and "sun bathe to their hearts content" during the preceding week. "It is the nicest place we have seen for a barbell man in a long time." Rader also took advantage of the natural setting to secure photos of some of the leading contenders for future use in his journal.<sup>42</sup>

The two evenings of actual competition attracted some of the leading national lights, including the likes of Bohaty and Johnson, and newcomer Bob Hinds of Norwalk, Connecticut. But attention was focused mainly on 1955 Mr. America Steve Klisanin, a long-time favorite of Hoffman who was originally from McKeesport, Pennsylvania, and Ray Schaefer of Michigan City, Indiana, who had just won the 1956 Mr. America Contest.<sup>43</sup> As Vice President of the national AAU weightlifting committee, Hoffman took charge of the officiating. Other judges included Rader, Barton Hor-





The Mr. Health winners at Colonna's 1954 Picnic (left to right): Ray Tipton, Jack King, Gene Bohaty, Don Hollingsworth and Dan Godfrey. Bohaty was the runner-up in the 1954 Mr. America contest.

vath, Doug Biller, Dr. Howard James, Greenfield, and Colonna. At the outset, according to Rader, there was some confusion over height classifications and neither he nor Hoffman seemed to know "what we were judging. As a consequence, we just went ahead and judged for a straight Mr. Universe. . . . No one seemed to care a great deal, though, for they expected the second night's judging to be final. During the first evening Schaefer placed first with 70.5 points, followed by Hinds (68), Bohaty (68), and Klisanin (66.5).

By the second night of judging Hoffman, not liking this preliminary ranking, decided to replace Horvath (an editor for rival Weider publications) and Dr. James with Paul Anderson and Ottley Coulter, who might be more pliable, and also ruled that there would be no height divisions. Rader reported that both decisions were opposed by the contest organizers and "created a terrific disturbance back stage among both the officials

and the contestants. Many hard words were exchanged and considerable strain was placed on all relations from here on out." Colonna recalls that Cowling got up on the bleachers and scolded Hoffman for what he had done. "You big son of a bitch, you rigged my contest, and I'm going to fix your ass." Nevertheless Hoffman had his way and Klisanin became the winner with 69.5 points, while Schaefer took second with 68, and Bohaty and Johnson tied for third with 65 each.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps to gloss over what appeared to be a flagrant attempt to manipulate the results, Hoffman agreed to pay Schaefer's way to the far more prestigious NABBA Mr. Universe Contest in London the following weekend, reasoning that it would be pointless to send Klisanin since he was already a Mr. Universe. There Schaefer won the amateur title over a distinguished field that included such international stars as John Lees of England and Paul Winter of Antigua.

Poetic justice, however, was insufficient to appease the Weider organization, which seized on the contretemps at Virginia Beach as an opportunity to launch an assault on Hoffman and the AAU. A blast from Hoffman's old *bete noir* Dan Parker of the New York *Daily Mirror* was followed by a full expose by Barton Horvath in the October 1956 issue of Weider's *Muscle Builder*. "For far too long," claimed Horvath, Hoffman had bellowed his way into the limelight of AAU bodybuilding contests, usurping powers never officially delegated to him in a series of ludicrous attempts to establish himself as the czar of the muscle world." He pointed out that Buck Cowling refused to accept the decision of the judges and was instituting legal proceedings against Hoffman as "a liar" and "a fraud" and "an incompetent official." As further proof that Hoffman had "rigged" and "manipulated" the outcome, Horvath provided pictures comparing the physiques of Klisanin and Schaefer with other contestants and copies of actual score sheets (made available by contest promoters) showing how closely those of Coulter and Hoffman (seated side by side) coincided and how Doug Biller was allegedly pressured to rate Schaefer lower and Klisanin higher on the second night. Most damning, however, were Bob's remarks to the local *Virginian-Pilot*, that he had removed Horvath, a physical culturist for 25 years, "because I don't consider him a qualified AAU official....I only put Horvath in there the first night to try to educate him around the right line." Hoffman also expressed disdain for bodybuilding. "I'm interested in getting rid of these physique contests anyway. They are sissified things."<sup>45</sup>

Not surprisingly, Hoffman's seemingly outrageous actions and remarks triggered a firestorm of controversy within the bodybuilding world. Soon Schaefer's pictures, articles, and testimonials were appearing regularly in Weider magazines. "During my entire training career I have used Weider methods entirely," he is quoted as saying. "My victories in the 'Mr. Junior America'—'Mr. Universe' and 'America's Most Muscular Man' contests prove how effective they are." Letters from readers of Weider magazines indicate that Schaefer's treatment at Virginia Beach was becoming a *cause celebre* and that many bodybuilders heretofore supportive of York and the AAU were being swayed by the evidence provided in Horvath's expose. "Each day," observed Joe Weider, "we receive letters, telephone calls and bits of information from many sources which point

to a Hoffman dynasty and a dictatorial rule."<sup>46</sup> Weider kept the pot boiling over the next year by publishing more score cards and sending letters (via Horvath) to National Weightlifting Chairman Clarence Johnson and National AAU President Carl Hansen requesting a full investigation of Hoffman's conduct. The fiasco at Virginia Beach proved to be an important step that influenced Joe and his brother Ben in 1958 to break their 1951 accord with the AAU, to revive the IFBB as a sanctioning body, and to renew their ultimately successful thrust for hegemony in the bodybuilding world.<sup>47</sup>

In the more parochial setting of eastern Virginia, Hoffman's actions were no less damaging. Greenfield, according to Crist, "lost a lot of respect for Hoffman and stopped going to the York picnics." Characteristically, Colonna's response to Bob's untimely interventions was less overt, but like many others in the iron game community he was stunned and gained the impression that Hoffman often predetermined the winners of physique contests, especially Mr. America. "Why Bob did it I'll never know. He didn't have to do it, but it did permanent damage to his reputation," he concludes. Bill admitted to Crist that he began to lose interest in staging any more picnics because of Hoffman's behavior. He also came to the realization that they were becoming a lot of work. "I guess I got other things on my mind," he recalls, including the shipyard, bodybuilding, waterskiing, and the complicated extra-marital relationship he was cultivating with Betty Woodhouse, now married to his teammate and close friend Herman McCloud. "My father and uncle started asking, 'when are you going to get serious at the shipyard.'"<sup>48</sup> A no less serious setback to future physical culture frolics in the Old Dominion was the attitude at York where the Mr. Universe Contest was stigmatized by Editor Harry Paschall as a "garbled deal" and Cowling as a "goofy press agent." It was obvious that Hoffman and the York gang would no longer be available to promote any future Colonna strengthfests.<sup>49</sup> Thus there was no picnic for a second year. Still, teams from Colonna's Gym, as a sort of afterglow, continued to place well at various regional competitions, and Colonna won the Mr. Virginia title for 1957.<sup>50</sup>

Then, at the urgings of his friends, Bill decided to initiate an outdoor event called Athletic Days in 1958. "They were not as big a deal as the picnics," Crist recalls. "The picnics were built more around the York model, but these other contests were structured around lifting and a bodybuilding contest." No record remains

of the lifting at the 1958 version, but Colon McMath won a most-improved weightlifter award for increasing his total from 650 pounds (195-200-255) to 760 (220-240-300) over the previous five months at a bodyweight of 193. Cable Reese of Lynchburg won the Mr. Health title and Betty Woodhouse McCloud won the Miss Health contest. However lackluster this gathering may have been compared to Bill's previous offerings, it was well-received and helped keep the iron game alive in the Norfolk area.<sup>51</sup> In 1959 and 1960 the contests associated with Athletic Days were likewise little more than local competitions. At the former, Richie Augelli of Norfolk and Sarah Farrow of Portsmouth won the Mr. and Miss Health titles respectively, and 16-year-old John Callis won the most-improved weightlifter award by raising his total by 55 pounds to 565 (170-175-220) at a bodyweight of 196.5. In 1960 Tommy Johnson of Greensboro, North Carolina, won the Mr. Heath title and Allen Phenister of Portsmouth won the Jr. Mr. Norfolk contest. Although it was "a beautiful day," according to Colonna, "not many people" showed up, "just the ones interested in the lifting and physique."<sup>52</sup> In 1961 some attempt was made to upgrade the annual event by expanding the number of competitions, holding it for two days, and moving it to Labor Day weekend. Dave Updike of Roanoke became Mr. Health, Faye King (Jack's wife) became Miss Health, and Richard Wolters of Norfolk won the Jr. Mr. Norfolk title. This gathering, reminiscent of previous picnics, also featured a burlap bag race, won by Glen Crockett of Newport News, but attendance remained small (about 250 for both days), and food, drink, and Hi-Proteen shakes were no longer available.<sup>53</sup>

Although Colonna discontinued his strengthfests after 1961, his socialization initiatives long lingered in



**John Grimek visited Nags Head, North Carolina with Bill Colonna and Betty Townsend Woodhouse while the Grimeks were on vacation in 1958. Good days.**

their impact on events in eastern Virginia and the nation. Critical to these later developments was a mending of fences between the York gang and the Norfolk lifters. Although Greenfield might not have attended any subsequent Strength and Health picnics, he showed up at Hoffman's annual birthday show in the fall of 1957 where he narrated the performance of Buck Harris who "kept the audience howling with his antics on the posing platform as "The Great Sputnik." Some months later Greenfield was pictured in *Strength & Health* at Colonna's first Athletic Days entertaining guests on a rolly polly with his kids, Linda and George Jr., on his shoulders. In the February 1958 issue Colonna was featured with fellow water-skier Wilma Mahaffey, Miss Salisbury, North Carolina, and "a real 'Barbelle.'" The March 1959 issue featured a cheesecake-type photo of Betty Woodhouse McCloud adjacent to coverage of her appearance on the popular "I've Got A Secret" television show in New York City with Gary Moore and Keenan Wynn. The

frustration of Moore in trying to raise a 205-pound barbell that had been easily lifted by the fit and shapely trainee from Colonna's gym presented a striking image to TV viewers and a boost for women's lifting.<sup>54</sup>

What most contributed to improved relations with York, however, was a visit to Norfolk by John Grimek on a vacation with his family in the summer of 1958. "The GRIMEKS," reported *Strength & Health*, "all seven of 'em, took the night boat to Norfolk and are tearing up the sands at Virginia Beach as this is being hacked out in sweltering York. No doubt JOHN is enjoying visits with BILL COLONNA, GEORGE GREENFIELD, BUCKY HARRIS, JACK KING and all the rest of the gang down that way. Wonder if JCG got around to trying them there water skis this time?" According to the next month's report the Grimeks, in addition to frolicking in the surf and sand at Virginia Beach, went on a fishing expedition with the Colonnas to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, which included a short "safari" to Kitty Hawk, the site of the first airplane flight. There, in front of the monument honoring the Wright brothers, Reggie Grimek took a picture that included John and Angela, their other children (Pat, Stevie, Bobby, and Bonnie), Bill Colonna, Bill's wife Earlene, Bill's future wife Betty McCloud, and Betty's soon-to-be ex-husband Herman McCloud—all as one big happy family!<sup>55</sup>

Such amicable relations helped pave the way for an even greater outpouring of energy from across the bay in the 1960s. As Colonna's active participation as a bodybuilder and involvement as a promoter diminished, Bob Crist of Hampton, an early member of the Apollo AC who had worked closely with Colonna in staging his picnics, began to organize his Lower Peninsula Weightlifting Club, which soon became a regional power.<sup>56</sup> By 1968 it had won more team titles than any other Virginia club and produced two teen-age national champions. In 1962 Crist organized the first annual Chesapeake Bay Invitational Meet which quickly became one of the finest contests on the East Coast, reaching the stature perhaps of the Philadelphia Open, the Cincinnati Open, or the YMCA Nationals. The 1968 version, according to *Strength & Health*, attained a new level of excellence.

Bob does the best job of any promoter in the nation on publicizing a contest, TV, radio, and newspaper—the works. He

arranged a special rate with an extra-fine motel and the out-of-town athletes and officials had the opportunity to stay in one compound. Bob invited Morris Weissbrot, Rudy Sablo, Adam Swirz, and Al Conde down from New York to add their status to the contest. Morris and Rudy conducted a well-received clinic prior to the contest. The wives and girl friends of the lifters from the Lower Peninsula Weightlifting Club provided the finishing touch to a very nice meet as they served a buffet dinner for all the lifters (free, fellows!). Mrs. Yolanda Crist and her committee really outdid themselves this year. A terrific job by all concerned. The physical lay-out at Benjamin Syms Junior High School in Hampton was in perfect order.

The 1969 meet was perhaps even better, featuring the likes of Fernando Baez, Mike Karchut, Phil Grippaldi, and Bill March as lifters; Bill St. John as Mr. Chesapeake Bay; Mr. America Jim Haislop as guest poser; and Bob Hoffman who by his presence bestowed his blessing on the proceedings.<sup>57</sup> It was obvious that much of what proved so successful for Crist in staging his Chesapeake Invitational was an extension of the socialization practices at Colonna's picnics. Furthermore Crist used his prominence as a regional promoter as a base for his elevation in 1971 to the post of chairman of the national weightlifting committee, the most powerful position in the sport at that time. During his five year tenure in office and also as first president of the International Powerlifting Federation and later as director of the North American Sports Federation, he infused a new spirit of professionalism into the administration of amateur athletics.<sup>58</sup>

Strengthfests staged as picnics, however, were hardly a thing of the past. During the 1960s those at York reached a new level of popularity as Hoffman reached the height of his powers as a promoter. In 1965 the annual picnic was linked with the first Senior National Powerlifting Championships and the Mr. United States Physique Contest during Labor Day weekend. According to the *Strength & Health* report, "many hundreds of enthusiasts" descended upon Muscletown to witness "tons of iron" being hoisted and "many impressive lumps" on display. "The 1965 Strength and Health

Picnic will go down in history as one of the greatest ever held. Old timers who have attended all the shows said that it was the biggest crowd they could remember.”<sup>59</sup> Not unlike its picnics of previous decades, York provided a model for similar physical culture gatherings throughout the nation.<sup>60</sup>

Although these affairs were discontinued after 1972, the new management of York Barbell twenty-six years later, then headed by Paul Stombaugh, decided to bring back its legendary summer picnic, repackaged as The Spirit of York Strength Spectacular. Over the next four years it featured feats of strength, impromptu contests, a powerlifting championship, strongman challenges, arm wrestling contests, an Olympic lifting demonstration, hall of fame inductions, children’s games, and food. The company’s “aim in bringing back this magic event,” as stated in the 1999 program, “is to bring together all generations of the Iron Game. In this way, the rich heritage of the fraternity of fitness and strength can be experienced and shared among a broader segment of the grassroots. At the same time, we want to provide a day of fun and camaraderie.”<sup>61</sup> Such physical culture frolics, however, could no longer be sustained after 2001, especially as York struggled to survive in the marketplace. Yet echoes of York picnics can still be heard in the three Night of Strength exhibitions staged by Roger LaPointe, a former York Barbell employee, from 2003 to 2005 at the Arnold Classic in Columbus, Ohio, and at his Atomic Athletic Great Black Swamp Olde Time Strongman Picnic held in Bowling Green, Ohio, in April 2006 and May 2007.<sup>62</sup>

That such nostalgic endeavors still engage the attention of promoters may be attributed to the continued need for socialization in sport. The success of Colonna’s picnics during the 1950s, like their predecessors at York, not only presumed a degree of fellowship among athletes involved in similar (iron-related) activities but spurred them on to higher levels of achievement.

They were consciousness-raising experiences, unencumbered by any commercial or political motives, thereby fostering a spirit of brotherhood and mutual assistance. In more specific terms, they were also innovative of several major changes in the iron game that transpired over ensuing decades. More than any previous outing, the 1953 event raised (for both the public and the moguls at York) the credibility of Paul Anderson, whose size and strength would set a new standard in weightlifting. They also provided an entrée and a template for

Bob Crist, whose iron game involvement led to major changes in the organization of weightlifting, bodybuilding, and powerlifting during the 1970s. Most importantly, Colonna’s picnics set the stage for the Mr. Universe Contest in Virginia Beach which, through Hoffman’s authoritarian ways, provided a *casus belli* for a renewal of York’s feud with the Weider organization which reached a new and more intense level in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It also emboldened the Weiders to revive their International Federation of Bodybuilders, which dominated American and world bodybuilding for the rest of the century. Indeed more than frolics were at stake in these picnics. But their greatest impact was perhaps not so palpable. In a broader sense they indicated that weightlifting and bodybuilding are not isolated endeavors to be pursued just for their own sake but, as Hoffman and Colonna recognized, are intimately related to other physical culture activities, such as acrobatics, water-skiing, swimming, running, and the sporting world at large. Above all, the picnics were a social and cultural experience, incorporating elements that are most basic to human existence—food, drink, friendship, families, and fun. More than any other iron game endeavor, they were emblematic of life itself.

#### Notes:

1. Hoffman’s socialization ideas are also reminiscent of the exhibitions that Alan Calvert originated and Jowett continued into the 1920s at the old Milo Barbell headquarters in Philadelphia. “The A.C.W.L.A. Will Hold Lifting Contests,” *Strength* 9 (November 1924): 19; and John Bradford, “American Continental Weight Lifters’ Association Notes,” *Strength* 10 (January 1925): 10.
2. Bob Hoffman, “Reports of Lifting Shows and Events,” *Strength & Health* 3 (February 1935): 31.
3. See “Reports of Lifting,” *Strength & Health* 4 (January 1936): 29; “Reports of Lifting,” *Strength & Health* 4 (February 1936): 29; and “Lifting News, Shows and Events,” *Strength & Health* 5 (February 1937): 8-9.
4. “Reports of Lifting,” *Strength & Health* 5 (October 1937): 8, 10.
5. Wib Scharzberger, “The June 23rd Strength and Health Picnic at Brookside,” “Reports of Lifting,” *Strength & Health* 8 (August 1940): 6, 24-25.
6. Arthur F. Gay, “Strength & Health Picnic,” *Strength & Health* 13 (September 1945): 20-21.
7. Al Thomas, “Remembered Pleasures of Another World and Time: The Great Strength & Health Picnics,” *Iron Game History* 1 (March 1991): 17.
8. “Lifting News,” *Strength & Health* 5 (January 1937): 9; “Weightlifting News,” *Strength & Health* 7 (August 1939): 5; “Weightlifting News,” *Strength & Health* (November 1939): 4; and “Weightlifting News,” *Strength & Health* 8 (September 1940): 5.
9. “Shows and Lifting Events News,” *Strength & Health* 6 (April 1938): 5; and “Members of Apollo AC—since 1940, Active in Weightlifting and Physique Shows,” Bill Colonna Papers, Chesapeake, Virginia.
10. “Meet at Norfolk, VA,” *Strength & Health* 10 (January 1942): 11; “Weightlifting News,” *Strength & Health* 10 (February, 1942): 11; and

- "Weightlifting News," *Strength & Health* 10 (March 1942): 10.
11. Interview with Bob Crist by John Fair, August 3, 2005, Hampton, Va; and Gord Venables, "Incredible But True," *Strength & Health* 12 (March 1944): 15.
12. "Weightlifting News," *Strength & Health* 11 (March 1943): 11; "Weightlifting Reports," *Strength & Health* 12 (May 1944): 6; and "Letters From Our Readers," *Strength & Health* 11 (November 1943): 5.
13. "Weightlifting Announcements," *Strength & Health* 15 (January 1947): 5; and Gord Venables, "Incredible But True," *Strength & Health* 15 (May 1947): 20.
14. Walt Marcyan, "This N' That," *Iron Man* 9 (January 1949): 45; and Jim Murray, "Barbell Bits," *Strength & Health* 20 (April 1952): 14.
15. See "Iron Game News," *Iron Man* 7 (October 1946): 39; and "Readers' Round-Up," *Iron Man* 11 (December 1951): 34.
16. Interview with Bill Colonna by John Fair, August 2, 2005, Chesapeake, Va.
17. Interview with Bill Colonna by Jeffery Wells, July 24, 2006.
18. "Colonna's Gym, Moving to a New Building Ends the Era of the Dungeon," *Tidewater Physique* 1 (March 1982): 32.
19. Interview with Colonna by Fair.
20. Interview with Colonna by Fair.
21. Interview with Crist.
22. Interviews with Colonna by Wells and Fair.
23. "Colonna's Picnic," July 25-26, 1953, Colonna Papers.
24. Paul Anderson, *The World's Strongest Man* (Wheaton, Ill.: by the author, 1975), 40.
25. Bill Wilson, "What's Your Best?" *Strength & Health* 22 (November 1954): 17.
26. Interview with Colonna by Fair.
27. Bill Wilson, "What's Your Best?" *Strength & Health* 21 (September 1953): 17.
28. "The Bent Bar," typescript in the Colonna Papers.
29. Interview with Colonna by Wells.
30. *Strength & Health* 21 (November 1953): 43, and "Colonna's Picnic 1953," holograph copy of results, Colonna Papers.
31. "The Bent Bar," Colonna Papers.
32. Interview with Jim Murray by Fair, October 23, 2006, Morrisville, Pa. Murray also recalls that Colonna had a replica of a coiled rattlesnake that he would "slide along the porch floor in the evening and wait for someone to notice the snake. A husky 220-pounder from New England . . . saw it and took off like a scalded cat!" Murray to Fair, November 7, 2006, letter in author's possession.
33. Bob Motter, "Anderson Sets Record Total of 1,065 at York Fall Show," *Strength & Health* 22 (February 1954): 12-13.
34. "Weightlifting News," *Strength & Health* 22 (October 1954): 60; and "Weightlifting News," *Strength & Health* 22 (June 1954): 7.
35. "Colonna's Picnic 1954," holograph copy of results, Colonna Papers.
36. Interview with Colonna by Fair.
37. "Colonna's Picnic 1954," holograph copy of results, Colonna Papers.
38. "Weight Lifting News," *Strength & Health* 23 (October 1955): 6. According to Colonna, Betty "had every opportunity to go into show business," particularly since the Miss Norfolk Contest was a feeder event for the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City which required talent. Her local voice teacher thought she had potential to be a Broadway star and even contacted her close friend in New York City, Oscar Hammerstein, who wanted to audition her. But Betty did not follow up, preferring to remain a secretary in the Navy yard. Interview with Colonna by Fair.
39. "Colonna's Picnic 1955," holograph copy of results, Colonna Papers; and "Weight Lifting News," *Strength & Health* 23 (November 1955): 6-7, 31-33.
40. Interview with Crist, August 3, 2005; and "Official Sanction of the Virginia Association, Amateur Athletic Union of the United States, June 7, 1956," Hoffman Papers, document in possession of Fair.
41. Interview with Colonna by Fair, October 16, 2006.
42. Peary Rader, "Mr. Universe of U.S.A.," *Iron Man* 16 (September 1956): 22-24; and "Readers' Round-Up," *Iron Man* 16 (September 1956): 42. See also Peary Rader, "Sensational Bob Hinds and How He Trains," *Iron Man* 17 (January 1957): 8-11; and Dr. Richard You, "Applied Nutrition for Lifters and Bodybuilders," *Iron Man* 17 (January 1957): 34.
43. Interestingly Klisanin later denied knowledge of any such favoritism on his behalf by Hoffman. Interview with Klisanin by Fair, March 18, 2005.
44. *Iron Man* 16 (September 1956): 52-53; and Interview with Colonna by Fair, October 16, 2006.
45. Quoted in *Muscle Builder* 6 (October 1956): 22-25, 46.
46. *Muscle Builder* 8 (March 1957): 53; *Muscle Builder* 8 (May 1957): 45. For Hoffman's side of the story see "Steve Klisanin ... Mr. Universe Winner," *Strength & Health* 24 (October 1956): 28; and Bob Hoffman, "What Kind of Muscle Do You Want?" *Strength & Health* 25 (June 1957): 10.
47. See *Your Physique* 12 (January 1950): 16-17, 39.
48. Interviews with Colonna, August 2, 2005, and October 16, 2006, and Crist, August 3, 2005, by Fair.
49. Harry Paschall, "Behind the Scenes," *Strength & Health* 25 (October 1957): 58.
50. See "Weight Lifting News," *Strength & Health* 24 (November 1956): 6; *Strength & Health* 26 (December 1957): 42; *Strength & Health* (June 1958): 11; *Strength & Health* 28 (December 1959): 12; and *Strength & Health* 30 (September 1962): 60.
51. "Mr. Health 1958," holograph copy of results, Colonna Papers.
52. "Mr. Health 1959" and "Mr. Health 1960," *ibid*.
53. "Mr. Health 1961" *ibid*.
54. "Bob Hoffman's Birthday Show," *Strength & Health* 26 (March 1958): 28; "The Iron Grapevine," *Strength & Health* 27 (April 1959): 26; and *Strength & Health* 26 (February 1958): 24; and *Strength & Health* 27 (March 1959): 27.
55. *Strength & Health* 26 (November 1958): 59-60; and *Strength & Health* 27 (December 1958): 26.
56. *Strength & Health* 32 (March 1964): 14; *Strength & Health* 33 (July 1965): 10; *Strength & Health* 34 (April 1966): 79-80.
57. "Hats Off To Bob Crist," *Strength & Health* 36 (August 1968): 56; "The Iron Grapevine," *Strength & Health* 36 (August 1968): 30; and "The Eighth Annual Chesapeake Bay Invitational Meet," *Strength & Health* 37 (July 1969): 54.
58. "Bob Crist Appointed National Director for the Iron Sports & Body Building Program," *NASF Amateur Recreation* 6 (Winter 1999): 2.
59. "The Iron Grapevine," *Strength & Health* 33 (December 1965): 22-23.
60. "Mr. America Has a Picnic" *Strength & Health* 26 (December 1957): 34-35; "Greensboro S&H Picnic," *Strength & Health* 26 (December 1957): 42; "The Iron Grapevine," *Strength & Health* 34 (February 1966): 73; and *Strength & Health* 35 (January 1967): 72.
61. Program Book, 1999 *Spirit of York Strength Spectacular*, June 25-27 (York, Pa.: York Barbell Co., 1999), 3.
62. Roger LaPointe to Fair, August 11, 2006, letter in the author's possession. The tradition was also carried on through outings conducted during the 1960s and 1970s by Joe Mills and his Central Falls Weightlifting Club in Rhode Island and in the competitions staged by David Lussier, past president of the New England Weightlifting Association, in Salem, Massachusetts. Here from about 1997 to 2004 about seventy lifters and guests feasted on steak and lobster at a seaside park. Interview with Denis Reno, October 30, 2006, West Newton, Mass.