IRON GAME HISTORY

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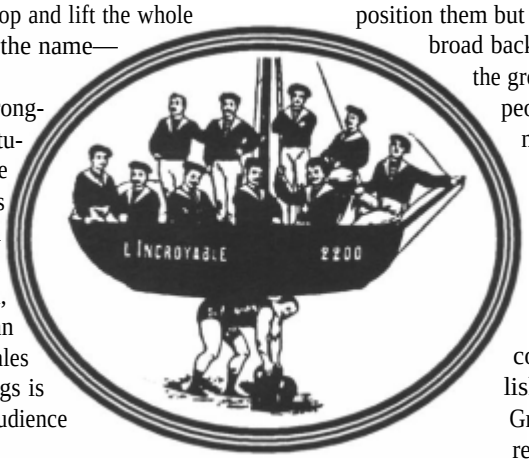
GREGG ERNST: BRINGING BACK THE BACKLIFT

Late one afternoon this past summer, Jan and I left our cozy island home off the coast of Nova Scotia for the three mile trip to the mainland. There was rain falling and more rain forecast, and it was "thickafog," too, as the islanders say—just the sort of night to stay indoors with a good book. But we had to make the trip. History beckoned, in the form of a long-haired, short-coupled dairy farmer from just across the bay in Lunenburg—Gregg Ernst by name—who planned to lift more weight at one time than any man had ever lifted in a fully documented manner.

More specifically, Gregg intended to crawl under a massive wooden platform with two small cars on top and lift the whole thing off the ground across his back. Thus the name—backlift.



Since the heyday of professional strongmen and strongwomen at the turn of the century, the backlit has been a popular stunt because it allows a performer to lift thousands of pounds at one time. A hundred years ago, William Kennedy backlifted three large horses, and in later years Josephine Blatt lifted twenty men, Jack Walsh elevated an elephant, and a Texan known as Stout Jackson shouldered several bales of cotton. Obviously, the lifting of such things is much more visually impressive to an average audience than the lifting of iron weights would be.

By specializing in the backlift, Gregg Ernst is continuing a tradition. Physically, Gregg fits the oldtime strongman image. At five eleven and three hundred fifteen pounds, he's round and burly—like a small bear. With his proportions and flowing hair, he is an almost exact replica of another potent Canadian-the phenomenal Louis Cyr of Quebec. Even Gregg's training harkens back to earlier times. In these days of stairmasters, spandex and selectorized weight machines, Gregg works out on his hilltop farm by hoisting boulders, driving fenceposts with an applewood maul, pushing his wagon up hills, lifting thick-handled dumbells and practicing the backlift.

Thirty-one years old, Gregg is a quiet, modest man, much admired in the community, all of which helps to account for the size and staying power of the crowd that came and sat through a wet, blowy night to watch him attempt his historic lift. The occasion was a big local fair—the Bridgewater Exhibition. The exhibition features a midway, of course, along with hundreds of agricultural exhibits, and such things as ox pulls and the tug of war, but the talk of the show this year was whether Gregg could lift the cars. It took a good deal of time to get the platform ready and to drive the cars onto the top and position them but finally the moment came and he bent his broad back under the platform and lifted it clear of the ground to the delight of the several thousand people who stayed through the rain to see a new world record.

Afterward, the entire load was carefully reweighed under the supervision of several officials and the grand total was five thousand, three hundred and forty pounds. In the big picture, of course, such an accomplishment has little consequence—just as all athletic accomlishments have little consequence. Even Gregg understands this. In fact, when he was reporter what his next goal was, he smiled and said, "Puttin' away the rest of my hay." Even so, seen in the context of the history of human performance, what Gregg has done is to walk with the giants of the past and then, when he came to the place where the footsteps of others ended, to continue, alone, walking where no footsteps were.

We want to lend our support to Gregg and to other young people who attempt in one way or another to honor the past by attempting to recreate some of the strength feats which used to be a large pan of the repertoire of any genuine strongman or strongwoman. What we like most to see is a modern lifter who honors the past—as Gregg

apparently does—by abstaining from the use of anabolic steroids, so that he approaches the old records with only his natural talent and training to sustain him.

Gregg has been fascinated by the backlift since his mid-teens, and has spent years refining the platform he uses and training to increase his strength in this demanding lift. It is, of course, impossible for any advanced strength performer to do a backlift (or any other lift, for that matter) with a weight which represents his true physiological potential in a feat with which he is totally unfamiliar. The truth of this can be seen in the experience of Anthony Clark of Houston. Anthony holds the current record in the bench press with 725 pounds and he has squatted in the neighborhood of 1000 pounds. But when this remarkable young man tried the backlift for the first time in a strongman contest recently, he was only able to hoist seventeen hundred pounds. Obviously, if Anthony spent even half as much time training the backlift as Gregg has done, he would do a great deal more than seventeen hundred pounds. Whether he would reach beyond Gregg's record is, of course, impossible to say. The point here is that one does not reach truly great weights in any lift unless that lift is practiced regularly so that the strength and technique it requires can be brought to their maximum level.

We also want to applaud Gregg for doing everything he could to see that the lift was carefully documented. He contacted the Guinness people and he arranged for several high-ranking local elected officials to be present when the reweighing was done. He also saw to it that photographs and videotapes were made of his performance and he asked us to be there to make our own judgement as to the genuineness of his lift.

As students of the iron game know, several claims have been made which are in excess of Gregg's recent record. It has been reported in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not" column that Thomas "Stout" Jackson lifted 6,472 pounds and in the ***Guinness Book of Records*** that Paul Anderson raised 6,270 pounds. Possibly, one or both of these men performed a backlift with the claimed weights, but since adequate documentation is lacking in either case the "official" record must rest in the thick, calloused hands of the young farmer who trained so hard for so long to add his name to the list of history's giants.

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"Strength is Health": George Barker Windship and the First American Weight Training Boom

Dr. George Barker Windship, The "'American Samson" as he appeared in The Phrenological Almanac.

Bryan Hall filled up quickly that chilly February night in 1861 as Chicago's sporting crowd gathered to see the strongman contest.[1] Dr. George Barker Windship, the health reformer known throughout the United States as the "American Samson" and the "Roxbury Hercules" was scheduled to lecture that evening, and he had agreed to pit his strength against all comers in a public contest following his lecture.[2] Windship normally gave an exhibition of his strength at the end of the lectures he'd been delivering for the past two years, but this night was different. Following the lecture, any man could come on stage, try the weights, and vie for the two hundred dollars in prize money put up by the local promoter. A buzz of speculation filled the hall. How many men would try? Was it true that Windship weighed less than 150 pounds? Wasn't it dangerous for him to lift such big weights?

As the crowd settled into their seats, Windship strode on stage and began the evening's entertainment with his standard lecture about the rules of health and the special benefits of systematic weight training. It was a lecture Windship had given dozens of times in New England, and his active mind shifted quickly through his mental filing cards as he gracefully explained his beliefs about diet, bathing, ventilation and the proper methods of training.[3] Dressed in a black business suit, the five foot seven inch Windship looked every bit the blue-blooded, Harvard-trained physician he actually was.[4] His black hair was combed back to accentuate his piercing eyes, high forehead and sharp features; his shoulders, though broad, gave no hint of unusual strength or power.[5] Some in the crowd had attended lectures by other health reformers, and were surprised by what Windship told them that evening. Here was not another expert arguing for light exercise, vegetarianism and moderation. Windship's message was diametrically different. The body should be made as strong as possible, he contended, with no weak points. It should be balanced and symmetrical with the muscles full and round and strong, like those of the "Farnesian" Hercules.[6] The Chicagoans listened closely as he explained that heavy weights and short workouts were the secret to health and longevity. Training should be systematic, he argued with the intensity of the exercise gradually increasing over time. He maintained that workout sessions should never last more than an hour and that proper rest must be obtained before the next day's training. As for nutrition, meat and a mixed diet helped build his strength, he explained, while his experiment with vegetarianism resulted in a diminution of his vitality. Drawing to a close, he fielded questions for a few minutes before retiring backstage. There, while mentally preparing himself, he quickly changed into his lifting costume, which revealed the large muscles in his arms and shoulders and the heavy straps throughout his legs and back.[7] He was understandably nervous about the contest. More than the two hundred dollars in prize money was at stake. Windship's reputation as the strongest man in the world was also on the line. What he and the Chicago audience didn't realize, however, was that the evening held far greater significance. The contest held that February evening in 1861 was the first true weightlifting competition ever held in the United States. George Barker Windship and his challenger were about to become America's first competitive weightlifters.

Weight Training Before Windship

Although Windship was an innovator in many ways, his advocacy of resistance exercise was not as much of an anomaly in the mid-Nineteenth Century as we might immediately assume. In fact, the road to his appearance on the stage of Bryan Hall had been paved by a number of exercise experts who advocated resistance exercise. In Europe, in the late 1780s, for instance, schoolmaster Johann Jacob Du Toit had his young students at the influential, experimental school called the Philanthropinum hold sand-bags out to the sides of their bodies while he walked among them and counted the time as their arms fell.[8] In 1802, one of the most famous of the early Ger-

In this detail from the title page of the 1672 edition of De Arte Gymnastica, note the dumbell and what appear to be circular barbell plates. The rectangular implement next to the small dumbell is a lead plate with which Mercurialis demonstrated twisting exercises for the torso.

man exercise textbooks, C. G. Salzmann's ***Gymnastics for Youth,*** was translated into English and published in Philadelphia. Though the book was aimed at school children, it discussed the necessity of strength training for both boys and girls and recommended using a leverage device similar to the modern Weaver-stick to strengthen the arms, hands and shoulders.[9]

As for dumbell training, it had been known for several centuries before Windship appeared in Chicago. Following the publication in 1672 of a new edition of Mercurialis' enormously influential exercise text, ***De Arte Gymnastica,*** references to dumbell training appeared in the writing of several prominent eighteenth-century men[10] Essayist Joseph Addison, for example, wrote in the British ***Spectator,*** "When, I was some years younger than I am at present, I used to employ myself in a more laborious diversion, which I learned from a Latin treatise of exercises, that is written with great erudition; it is there called fighting with a man's own shadow; and consists in the brandishing [of] two short sticks, grasped in each hand, and loaded with plugs of lead at either end. This opens the chest, exercises the limbs and gives a man all the pleasure of boxing, without the blows."[11] In the United States, Benjamin Franklin trained at certain periods of his life on a regular basis with dumbells and believed the hand weights to be an efficient way to get a vigorous workout in a relatively short period of time. In a letter written in 1772, Franklin recommended dumbell training because it contained "a great quantity of exercise in a handful of minutes," and, on another occasion, he attributed his continued health and vigor when past eighty years of age to the fact that "I live temperately, drink no wine, and use daily the exercise of the dumbbell. . ."[12]

References to training with dumbells, Indian Clubs and other forms of resistance apparati escalated in the early Nineteenth Century. Widespread concern that city-dwellers were becoming sedentary and soft grew in the antebellum period. Gymnastics and resistance exercise were touted repeatedly as urban man's best defense against this moral and physical decline.[13] Sir John Sinclair discussed dumbell training and described an exercise similar to the modern squat in Volume One of his monumental work, ***Code of Health and Longevity,*** published in 1807.[14] In 1828, Charles Beck told the readers of his English translation of F. L. Jahn's ***Gymnastics*** that he had added a chapter on dumbell exercises because the implements were so well known in America.[15] An anonymous book aimed at women entitled ***A Course of Calisthenics for Young Ladies in Schools and Families With Some Remarks on Physical Education,*** published in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1831, recommended using weights of four to five pounds made from iron or tin and filled with sand.[16] ***Walker's Manly Exercises, the*** gentleman's guide to health and exercise first published in the early 1830s contained a lengthy chapter on Indian Club training.[17]

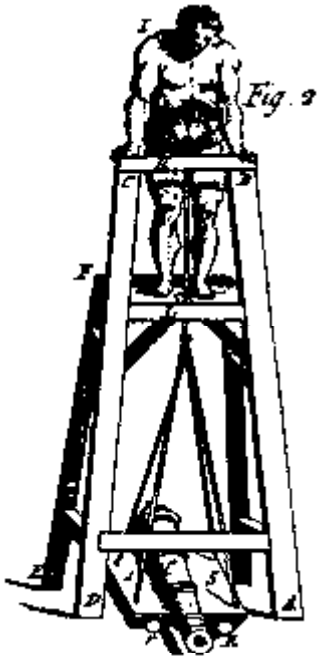
Though these, and the literally dozens of other references to resistance training, undoubtedly helped Windship's cause, they were not his chief inspiration. What fired Windship's imagination, and paved the way for the wide acceptance of his method of heavy weightlifting, was the sudden explosion of interest in human strength which occurred in the middle decades of the Nineteenth Century. This groundswell of interest in the limits of human performance was fed by several sources.[18] Historically, it was fostered by the publication of J. T. Desaguliers' analysis of the acts of such pioneering strongmen as England's William Joy and Thomas Topham, and Germany's Johann Karl Von Eckenberg.[19] Desaguliers was fascinated by these men's attempts to lift great weights for very short distances. ***In*** his ***book,*** entitled ***A Course of Experimental Philosophy,*** Desaguliers described the mechanical and physiological advantages inherent in certain of the heavy partial movements these strongmen favored. Desaguliers further revealed that he had personally experimented with various methods of heavy lifting, and that he subsequently gave an exhibition of strength feats to the British Royal Society, a scientific body.[20]

Desaguliers was especially interested in trying to find ways to scientifically compare the strength of men. He developed several strength testing machines, one of which mimicked the hip and harness lifting done by Topham and Von Eckenberg. Using a steelyard scale to measure the amount of their pull, Desaguliers' subjects put a harness around their hips, climbed onto a raised platform and hooked the harness to a chain attached to the arm of the scale. As they pulled upward, the strength of their pull could be measured by adjusting the weights on the steelyard. Desaguliers understood, of course, that a harness lift such as this could only test the strength of a man's hips, back, and thighs. Consequently, he also developed machines to

This rare eighteenth-century illustration shows the method by which William Joy, "The English Samson," supposedly lifted 2240 pounds.

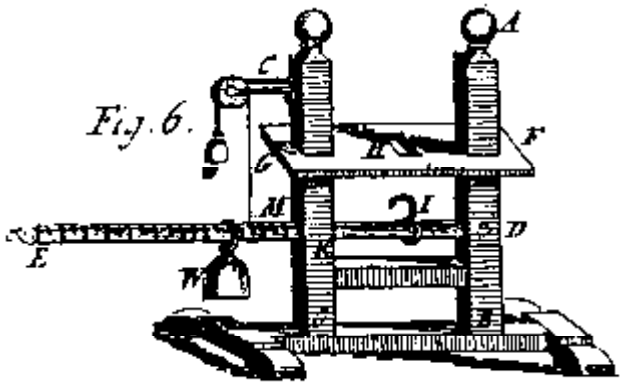
measure arm strength and gripping power.[21]

Windship's interest in heavy weightlifting was no doubt also piqued by the growing number of professional strongmen who were his contemporaries. In the early Nineteenth Century, as touring circuses criss-crossed Europe and America, and as variety theaters opened in the newly industrialized cities of both continents, public displays of strength became common. Furthermore, just as television and films are today, the circus in antebellum America was an important, and influential, transmitter of ideals and images about the body and human potential. In small towns, the circus was often the only popular entertainment seen in an entire year. In large cities, the coming of the circus was an important cultural event, and several shows a day were held to accommodate the crowds. In 1847, for instance, over seventeen thousand people attended a circus in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in one day.[22] Some of these early strength professionals, such as J. A. J. Bihin, known as the Belgian Giant, and Giovanni Belzoni, the so-called Patagonian Giant, were famous on both sides of the Atlantic.[23] Belzoni, in fact, was even described by one of the most prominent physiologists of the 1830s and 1840s as an example of an "ideal" male because of his harmonious muscular development, his amazing strength and his agility.[24] Though there was more professional strongman activity in Europe than there was in America at least one professional strongman attached to the Rockwell and Stone Circus toured throughout the Eastern United States in the late 1840s and early 1850s. On one occasion in New York, this French strongman withstood the pull of four horses, a feat which amazed the audience and newspaper reporters, and would later be copied by strongman Louis Cyr.[25]



This illustration from Desaguliers' book-A Course of Experimental Philosophy—depicts the method by which Karl Von Eckenberg could reportedly lift two thousand pound cannon in the mid-Eighteenth Century.

In the mid-Nineteenth Century, interest in specifically training to increase one's strength became a big business.[26] Hippolyte Triat's elegant and spacious Parisian gymnasium where French aristocrats trained with heavy dumbells and what were probably the first true barbells contributed significantly to the newfound enthusiasm for greater muscular size and the incremental measurement of strength.[27] In America private gymnasiums for men opened. in many large urban centers prior to the Civil War and dumbell training played an important role in the physical transformation of the gyms' customers. Following the great influx of German immigrants to the United States in 1848, the lifting of heavy dumbells and heavy Indian Clubs became increasingly common, and records began to be established in certain lifts.[28] James Montgomery, for instance, operated a gymnasium in New York City in the 1850s and regularly trained using a one hundred pound dumbell.[29] "Professor" Harrison was considered the club-swinging champion of England in this same era, and was frequently mentioned in American books and magazines for his muscular physique, as well as his finesse with a pair of forty-seven pound Indian C1ubs.[30] Several new resistance exercise machines appeared on the market before 1860, the most notable of which was James Chiosso's Gymnastic Polymachinon, a forerunner of all the selectorized weight machines now available.[31] Furthermore, strength testing machines, probably modeled on Desaguliers' original plans, appeared in many towns on street corners, in circus sideshows, and at local fairs. On these machines any man could test his "main strength"—the strength of his back, hips, legs and hands—by moving a large weight a very short distance and thus see how he stood in comparison to his neighbors. It was, in fact, a lifting machine of this type which inspired Windship to become a serious weightlifter in 1854.



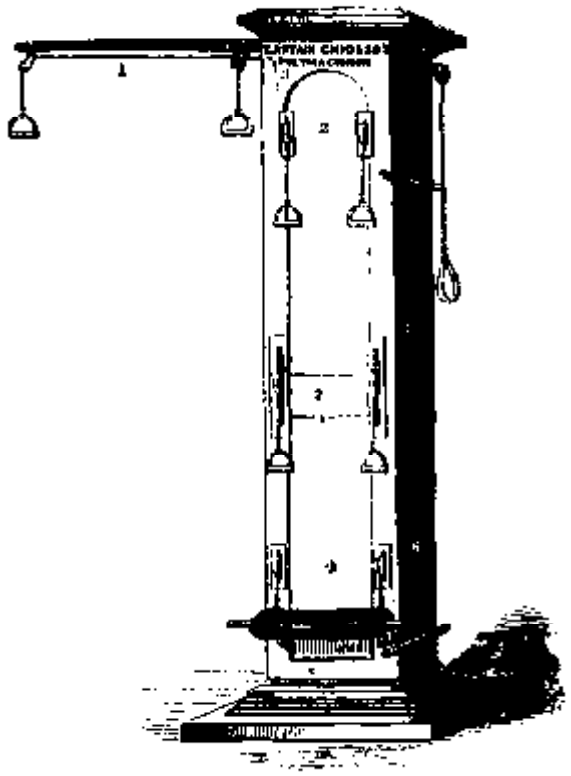
This drawing of Desaguliers' leg and hip machine shows how sophisticated man's understanding of strength was by the mid-Eighteenth Century. The subject to be tested stood on the platform, wearing a hip harness. Attached to the harness was a chain which then ran through the hole labeled "H" and attached to the arm of the scale at "I." The strength of a man's pull could then be measured by moving the weights along the steelyard.

George Barker Windship Discovers Weightlifting

Windship entered Harvard University in 1850, as a sixteen year old freshman standing five feet tall and weighing only one hundred pounds. Though not quite a ninety-seven pound weakling, he was not far off the mark, until he resolved after tiring of the jeers and sneers of his classmates, to build himself up by doing gymnastic training. According to his own account, "Autobiographical Sketches of a Strength-Seeker," published in the ***Atlantic Monthly*** in 1862, he spent part of every evening training in the Harvard gym, working on the bars and rings, performing chins and dips, until, by graduation time, he was known as the strongest man at Harvard.[32] In the sum-

mer of 1854, on a trip to Rochester, New York, to find work as an actor, Windship discovered a crowd surrounding a lifting machine on the town's main street. Windship managed to lift 420 pounds, in what we would today describe as a partial deadlift, or hand-and-thigh lift, but he failed to impress the crowd, a fact which ate at his young male ego. Upon his return to Boston, he devised a lifting machine in his backyard by sinking a hogshead in the ground and placing inside it a barrel, filled with rocks and sand, to which he attached a rope and handle. Then, standing on a platform he constructed above the barrel, he mimicked the partial movements of the lifting machine he had tried in Rochester. Windship became fascinated with the great weights he could hoist in this partial movement. Though the weight moved no more than a few inches, he found the exercise both physically and emotionally satisfying as his strength grow in measured increments. Abandoning his gymnastic training, and his aspirations to be an actor, Windship became a dedicated weightlifter and resolved to study medicine so that he could understand as much as possible about the human body. He graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1857.[33]

In his workouts with the crude hand-and-thigh apparatus, Windship gradually increased the weights he used over the next several years. On January 29,1856, he lifted seven hundred pounds at Bailey's Gymnasium in Boston. By April of the next year he could move 840 pounds, and by the spring of 1860, he had increased his strength in this lift to 1208 pounds.[34] Having reached the limits of his grip strength, Windship began experimenting with other methods of lifting. At first, he used a padded rope passed over his shoulders and attached to the weights below. He next tried a leather harness which fit over his shoulders but found that there was too much "give" in the leather. Finally, he had a wooden yoke carved to fit his shoulders and to the ends of this yoke he attached two iron chains. "With this contrivance," Windship reported, "my lifting-power has advanced with mathematical certainty, slowly but surely, to two thousand and seven pounds, up to this third day of November, 1861."[35] ("Mathematical certainty" has its limits, of course, and Windship's best lift using the yoke was twenty-two hundred pounds.)



Chiosso built his first, crude weightlifting machine in 1829. Over the next several decades he continued to refine his machine, enclosing the weights and pulleys in a column, and building interior compartments so that the weights could move up and down smoothly. With this model, marketed in 1855, Chiosso demonstrated curling movements, squats, and a wide variety of resistance exercises. One of his early machines used two eight foot columns, attached to the floor like our modern cross-chest cable machines.

Windship added heavy dumbell training to his regular routine of heavy partial lifting in June of 1858. He began with a pair of fifty pound dumbells, which he could not press overhead at first. By the end of 1861, however, he could simultaneously press a pair of one hundred pound dumbells, a considerable feat for a man who never weighed over 150 pounds.[36] At roughly the same time, Windship began training with what he described as a "dumbell" of 141 pounds. This dumbell, which was actually a barbell, consisted of a bar and two round, sixty-eight pound spheres. By unscrewing the handle, Windship could add lead shot to the spheres, bringing the total weight of the bar to around 180 pounds. In April 1860 he gave a public demonstration of his ability to jerk this barbell overhead.[37]

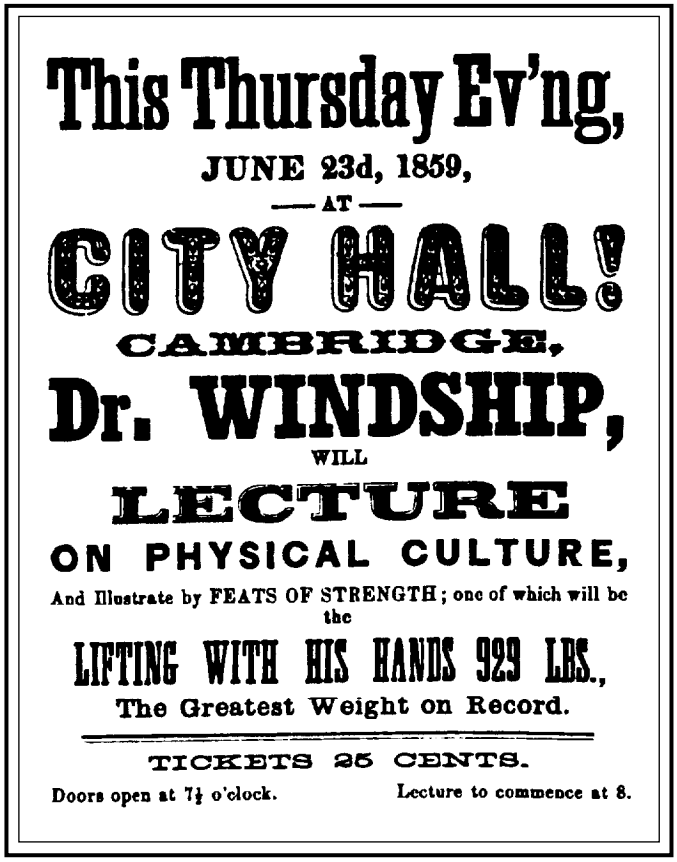
Evidence that Windship was as strong as he claimed to be can be found in the remarks of famous physical educator Dudley Allen Sargent. Sargent watched him train in the early 1860s at the Park Street Church Building where Windship had put together a crude gymnasium next to his medical office. Sargent reported that Windship was "exceedingly strong" and that he applied the heavy weight principle to all of his exercises. He further claimed that Windship moved heavy weights from a number of different angles on several machines of his own invention. Besides the heavy platform apparatus Windship used for his partial movements, he also developed an early type of chest-weight machine in which he could brace his back against a wall "and see how much he could pull this way, and that way." Sargent reported that Windship used heavy dumbells for overhead lifting, and that he demonstrated his ability to chin himself with one arm while holding on with only his little finger.[38] Another indication of the validity of the stories surrounding Windship's training methods can be found in an 1863 newspaper article which reported that Windship trained with dumbells as heavy as 180 pounds, that he had a large Indian club weighing 137 pounds and that his gym contained several novel lifting machines.[39]

The First American Weightlifting Contest

Windship was thus well prepared for the contest at Bryan Hall. Walking back onto the stage,

he was greeted by only one competitor, a Mr. Thompson of the local Metropolitan Athletic Club. Thompson was noticeably larger than Windship, but the Chicagoan was no match for the doctor in the first event of the contest, the partial deadlift. The weights used were kegs of nails, each one hundred pounds in weight, and they were held together by a sling of ropes and then suspended from a high platform. Starting with nine kegs, each men grasped the attached handle and strained to pull the weight clear of the floor. Both succeeded on the first round and so another barrel was added to the sling, bringing the total weight to eleven hundred pounds. (The apparatus holding the barrels weighed approximately one hundred pounds.) Windship went first and lifted the weight "with apparent ease." Thompson, to his surprise and consternation, could not budge the weight. Though he tried several more times, he finally had to concede: the first round was Windship's.

Windship then got out his yoke and chains and requested that 1500 pounds be loaded. Prior to this contest, Windship's personal best in the lift was 1934 pounds, a lift he made in a public exhibition in Charlestown, Massachusetts, when he lifted a platform full of people as the grand finale to one of his lectures.[40] For him, the 1500 pounds was supposed to be simply a warm-up, and it did look light as he straightened his knees and asked for more barrels to be added. Thompson, meanwhile, had stood aside, letting the famous strongman take the first lift alone. As Windship began attaching himself to the chains of the sling for his second attempt, however, he discovered that the hook which connected his harness to the sling had broken on his first attempt. He had no replacement. Understandably depressed Windship watched with dismay as Thompson brought out not a yoke apparatus, but a leather harness made to fit around the hips. As Thompson warmed up with his hip harness, Windship quickly grasped that it gave the challenger a considerable mechanical advantage. By bearing the strain on the large bones and heavy muscles of the hips, rather than on the smaller and more bony shoulders, the body could withstand more pressure, and greater weights could be lifted, especially since the load did not have to be suspended down the spine in a hip lift. As Windship watched from the sidelines, Thompson finally ended his exhibition with a lift of 2106 pounds, breaking Windship's record by nearly two hundred pounds.[41] Though Windship tried to use Thompson's harness, it was simply too big for him and he had to concede round two, and the contest, to the Chicagoan.



An early handbill for what was probably Windship's second public lecture.

—COURTESY MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Though the contest did little to help his image, the evening wasn't a total loss for Windship. At the risk of sounding like a poor loser, he explained the mechanical advantage inherent in Thompson's technique to the journalists who interviewed him in the days after the match, and announced that with a similar hip harness he believed that he could lift twenty-five hundred pounds. Returning to his hometown of Roxbury after this Midwestern lecture tour, he found a leathersmith and ordered a hip harness. Using this new piece of equipment, he made good on his boast and eventually raised twenty-six hundred pounds.[42]

"Strength is Health": The Strongman Reformer

Windship began lecturing on the subject of weightlifting on 30 May 1859 though his first try at the lectern was a total disaster. On the evening he was scheduled to speak, Windship had an acute case of stage fright and fainted about ten minutes into his speech. Though he soon regained consciousness and tried to continue, his light-headedness retuned and he left the stage abruptly, fearing he would faint again. Hugely embarrassed, Windship rescheduled his lecture and, on 9 June 1859, he conquered his fright delivered a stunning lecture to another packed house, and received rave reviews from the local newspapers. In the exhibition which concluded the show, he lifted 929 pounds on his lifting machine, shouldered a barrel of flour weighing 229 pounds, and did a chin-up with only the little finger of one hand. According to Windship, "Invitations and liberal offers poured in upon me from all directions; and during the ensuing seasons I lectured in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Cincinatti, Albany, and many of the principal cities throughout the Northern States and Canada."[43] Surviving newspaper reports of these engagements are uniformly warm in their praise of Windship's lecture style and impressive physique. The ***Philadelphia Inquirer*** reported after one of his shows on "the volume of muscle which swelled and trembled in his full arm."[44]

Windship's lectures, and his own on-going interest in this

new type of heavy training, went beyond his interest in muscular growth. Windship believed, and preached, that heavy lifting was an efficacious form of medical therapy. "I discovered that with every day's development of my strength," he wrote in 1861, "there was an increase of my ability to resist and overcome all fleshly ailments, pains and infirmities,—a discovery which subsequent experience has so amply confirmed, that, if I were called on to condense the proposition which sums it up into a formula, it would be in these words: ***Strength is Health.***"[45] If weightlifting could cure his nervousness, headache, dyspepsia and weak circulation, Windship argued, it could cure other people's ailments too. As he explained his theory in an article for ***The Massachusetts Teacher*** in 1860, "lifting, if properly practiced, was the surest and quickest method of producing harmonious development; while it was also the most strengthening of all exercises, and consequently the most healthful."[46]

For the remainder of his short life, Windship's mind, and his medical practice, seem to have centered around his advocacy of heavy weightlifting. Though his travels as a lecturer were curtailed during the Civil War, he continued to experiment with lifting in his medical practice. In 1863, he moved his practice from Roxbury to the Park Street Church Building in Boston. There he combined his medical and athletic interests and built a successful practice using exercise as a form of therapy. An 1863 newspaper article described this early facility in detail: "His office.. .is daily thronged with the curious as well as those who are desirous of learning the art of how to be strong. In one comer of the room stands his famous lifting machine. This consists of a solid frame-work of wood, about seven feet in height, with a platform about halfway up upon which the doctor stands to go through his daily exercise. A shoulder bar and two heavy chains form the connection between himself and the weights, which by the way are suspended directly under the platform and consist of iron disks of a circular form, resting one upon the other and held together. . .Surrounding these disks are long, slim bars of iron, running transversely, and made to be detached or joined to the main body. They are arranged in this manner so as to graduate the weight. . .They are each of twenty-five pounds weight. . . Among the objects of interest in his apartment are an iron club of one hundred and thirty-seven pounds, a dumbell of one hundred and eighty, a lifting apparatus for patients, &c., &c."[47]

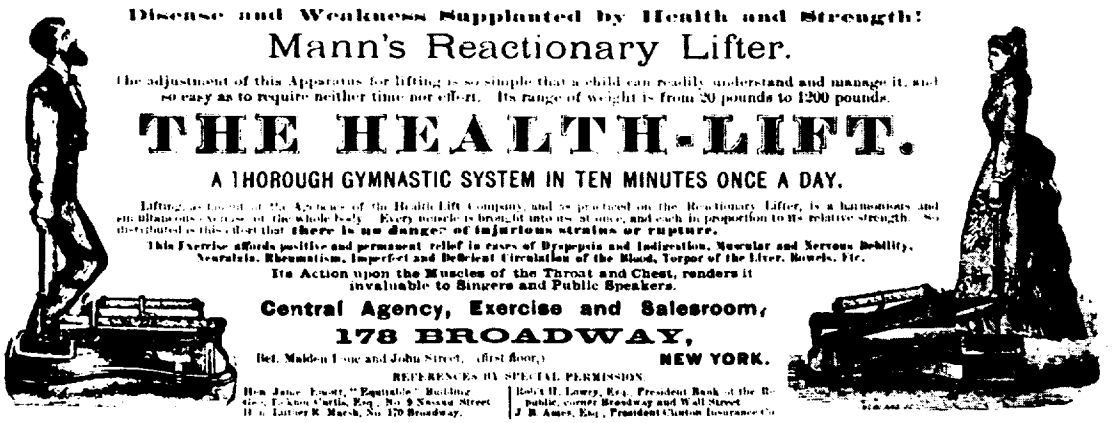
Windship opened a combination gymnasium and medical office in a larger and more advantageously situated building on Washington Street in late 1866.[48] This facility, which may have been America's first sports medicine facility, was equipped with a "separate apartment for ladies," but no evidence has been found to suggest precisely what women did at Windship's gym or how many women were members.[49]

The Health Lift

Windship's lectures and exhibitions, his impressive physique, and the considerable publicity he received, created many converts to the principle of heavy exercise. Not surprisingly, a few of those who watched and read about Windship tried to capitalize on the new popularity of heavy lifting. Though Windship continued to preach that the entire body needed to be trained with resistance exercise, most of the entrepreneurs who followed on his coat-tails fixed their efforts on the heavy partial lift which became known, generically, as the Health Lift.

The health reformer and phrenologist, Orson S. Fowler, who heartily endorsed the new interest in heavy training, offered his readers the cheapest method for partaking of the new fad. Fowler suggested taking about thirty feet of cod line, or other cotton cord which slightly stretched, and then "twist and double, then twist and double again, tie the ends, and attach two sections of a broom-handle, or any round stick adapted to lift by. . . adjusting its length to your height." Once these handles are attached, Fowler instructed, the person should stand on the bottom handle and pull upward as hard as they could on the top handle, holding the pull for several seconds. Fowler promised that just five minutes, during which several of these primarily isometric contractions could be performed, "will yield more and better exercise than an hour in any other form,"[50]

Other exercise advocates offered far more expensive alternatives, however. Lifting machines aimed at home and institutional use were rushed onto the market in the 1860s, and found instant popularity. In major cities, a number of Health Lift studios or gyms opened, catering to busy office workers who were promised a total workout in only minutes per day. Dudley Allen Sargent later report-



Mann's Health Lift Machine, in an advertisement from the 1860s. Note the placement of the handles which made it unnecessary for women to change their clothes before training.

ed of this era, "lifting machines sprang up in parla and offices and schools everywhere."[51]

Mann's Reactionary Lifter, for instance, was a cast iron lifting machine sold through the offices of the Health-Lift Company of New York city. This company's main exercise salon and salesroom was located at 178 Broadway. Mann's advertising promised that disease and weakness in men and women would be replaced by vigorous strength through just ten minutes a day of "harmonious and simultaneous exercise of the whole body" on one of his lifting machines. Relatively small, the Mann Reactionary Lifter still adjusted from twenty to twelve hundred pounds. Two handles attached to the weighted lever arm so that by standing on the machine's base, with a handle in each hand and the knees slightly bent, the lifter would simply straighten the legs to move the weighted arm a few inches. Prominently displayed in the advertising for this machine was a fashionably dressed young woman complete with bustle and corset.[52] "Side-lifting" machines, such as Mann's, were partly designed with women in mind. The idea was that the two side handles made it unnecessary for women to change their clothes for a workout. Besides Mann's New York studio, side-lifting salons also opened in Cincinatti and Chicago. Though men *and* women patronized these establishments, competitors frequently criticized these gyms far allowing women to engage in the "dangerous"practice of training without loosening their corsets.[53]

Another approach to the Health Lift was developed by Dr. Barnett, one of the early pioneers of the home equipment industry. Barnett advertised a health lifting machine using rubber "wands" on each side of a platform. Like Orson Fowler's isometric exercises, people using Barnett's machine pulled on the rubber cables until they were fatigued, then rested and tried again. No weights were lifted at all.[54] Other instructors were also active during this period. J. Fletcher Paul advocated "center-lifting" and ran a Health Lift gymnasium in Boston. Paul claimed that a man could double his strength in just three months by training at his health studio.[55]

FIG. 2.
POSITION—WEIGHT AT REST.

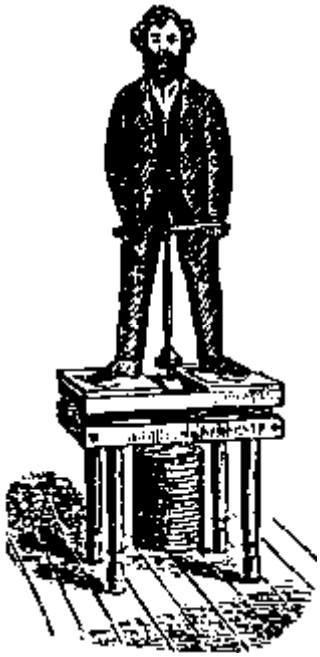


FIG. 3.
POSITION—WEIGHT RAISED.

THE WOODEN MACHINE.

Butler called this technique "center-lifting," and argued, incorrectly, that it was safer for the spinal column than other versions of the Health Lift Butler sold wooden machines such as this one for $250. Note the elliptical springs separating the two layers of the platform.

David P. Butler

Windship's major rival in the field of heavy training was David P. Butler, who, unlike windship, had a true entrepreneurial bent. A fellow Bostonian, Butler claimed to be "broken down in health and given up by physicians to die," when he decided to search for a cure to his "moribund debility."[56] For Butler, that cure was heavy lifting, and he apparently began experimenting with the system in 1857. Butler opened a gymnasium in Boston at 19 Temple Place in 1867, although it is likely he had an earlier studio elsewhere in the city. He patented his first lifting machine on 6 June 1865, another on 19 June 1866, and he claimed two more patents in 1869.[57] By 1870, Butler manufactured several expensive models of Health Lift machines, and had franchised his system, offering health lift converts a chance to open gyms using his equipment and system of exercise.[58] His Standard Iron Machine, with six hundred pounds of weight, sold for $300. If a gym owner purchased three, at the same time, the price dropped to $250 per machine. A simpler, wooden version of the Butler machine sold for $250 or, $225 for three. Second-hand versions of the wooden machine still cost $200. A spring machine, preferred for home use, because it required no additional iron weights, was still a considerable investment at $100.

Butler published a detailed account of his methods and training philosophy in ***Butler's System of Physical Training. The Lifting Cure: Original Scientific Application of the Laws of Motion or Mechanical Action to Physical Culture and the Cure of Disease.***[59] Butler believed that his system had beneficial effects on both the body and the brain and that it created harmonious development both internally and externally.[60] Lewis Janes, Butler's New York partner who wrote frequently about the Health Lift, went well beyond Butler's modest claims and avowed that men under five feet six inches would discover they were growing taller from the lifting program while excessively tall people would be shortened.[61]

Like Windship, Butler centered his system on heavy, partial movements, arguing that "Perfect lifting, is perfect exercise."[62]

Where the two men differed, however, was in Butler's insistence that his lifting machines have springs underneath the platform so that as the weight was being pulled upward, the floor gave way slightly. He believed that these springs softened the force, allowed the strain to be gradually absorbed by the body, and stimulated the internal organs. It brought "the whole body: into action," Butler wrote, and not just the muscles themselves.[63] Although he argued that lifting on his machines was the most beneficial exercise known to man, Butler's training manual suggests that a full workout at his studio consisted of four distinct types of exercise. Men and women began their exercise sessions with pulley work On the back edge of a small wooden platform, Butler installed a number of upright posts with attached pulleys. In the center of the platform, he secured another post against which the person would press his back and hips while performing exercises. Then, reaching behind himself, the lifter grasped the wooden handles attached to the ropes over the pulleys and, beginning with relatively light weights, pushed his arms horizontally forward, while simultaneously executing a partial squatting motion. Four attempts, with successively heavier weights, were to be made each day on this machine as a warm-up exercise. The maximum weight used should be slightly increased each day.

The second exercise in the series was the Health Lift itself. At Butler's studios, the machine consisted of a substantial table, through the center of which passed an upright rod, upon which the weights rested. This rod could be adjusted for height and was set so that the knees were just slightly bent. The lifter grasped the handle with one hand in front of the body and the other behind the body as in a "Jefferson lift." Butler believed, incorrectly, that the spine thus remained absolutely upright and protected from strain.[64] Again, beginning with a light weight, Butler recommended four attempts, with rests of up to five minutes between exertions. Butler recommended that those exercising should gradually increase the total weight lifted by five or ten pounds a day. When it seemed as if they had reached their physiological limit, they should reduce the weight by fifty to one hundred pounds and begin the ascent again. As a variation, Butler suggested that a shorter rod could be used, making for a longer pull. He also recognized that truly heavy weights should not be approached during every workout. He advised taking some workouts that were below one's absolute limits, and trying the heaviest weights only every couple of weeks.[65] It is worth noting that at no place in his exercise manual does he suggest that there should be any limits on the amount of weight lifted in this method by women.

Following the completion of the four health lifts, the Butler pupil engaged in heavy dumbbell exercises. Butler warned that dumbbell work should be approached carefully, as it could be dangerous. The only dumbell exercise for which he gave instructions was the one-hand overhead "jerk," the most common dumbell exercise of this era. Perhaps the speed of the lift concerned him. In his instructions, he suggests lifting the bell slowly to the shoulder, and lowering it slowly back to the floor by a squatting motion. However, he contends that the overhead phase of the lift should be performed with a "thorough motion of the whole body, moving upon the hips and ankles," a statement which suggests a sudden, explosive movement.[66] In any case, four attempts were to be made with each arm with gradual weight increases over time.

The final exercises of the session were a series of light dumbbell movements. Women's dumbells, Butler notes, should weigh between two and six pounds—which was considerably heavier than most other exercise advocates of this era recommended for women—while men and boys should use weights from six to fourteen pounds. With these dumbells, Butler had his pupils do squats while simultaneously pressing the weights overhead, a series of limb extensions, and several circular motions reminiscent of Indian Club work.[67] This light dumbbell work Butler considered "of least importance," and warned that in many cases it was injurious instead of beneficial. He makes the interesting argument that invalids, women, and children rarely needed such light exercises unless they were phlegmatic or stout.[68]

By 1871, the Butler Health-Lift Company had five different branches in New York City, four of them on Broadway.[69] Lewis G. Janes headed up the New York arm of the company from its main offices on the second floor of the Park Bank

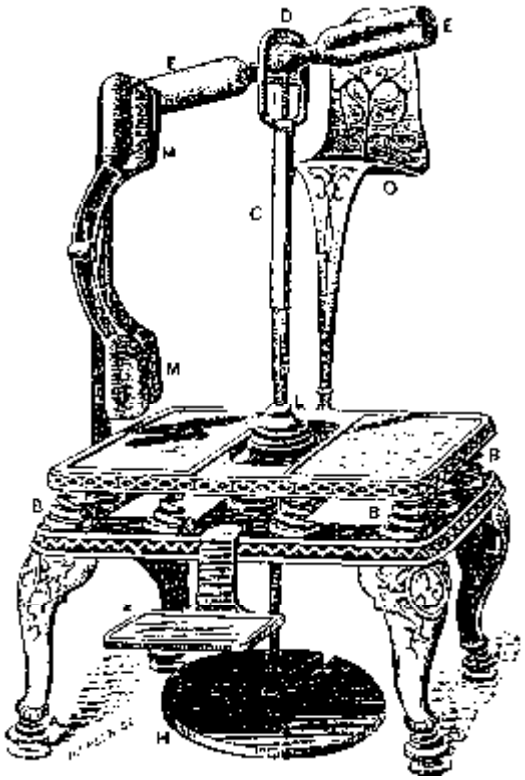
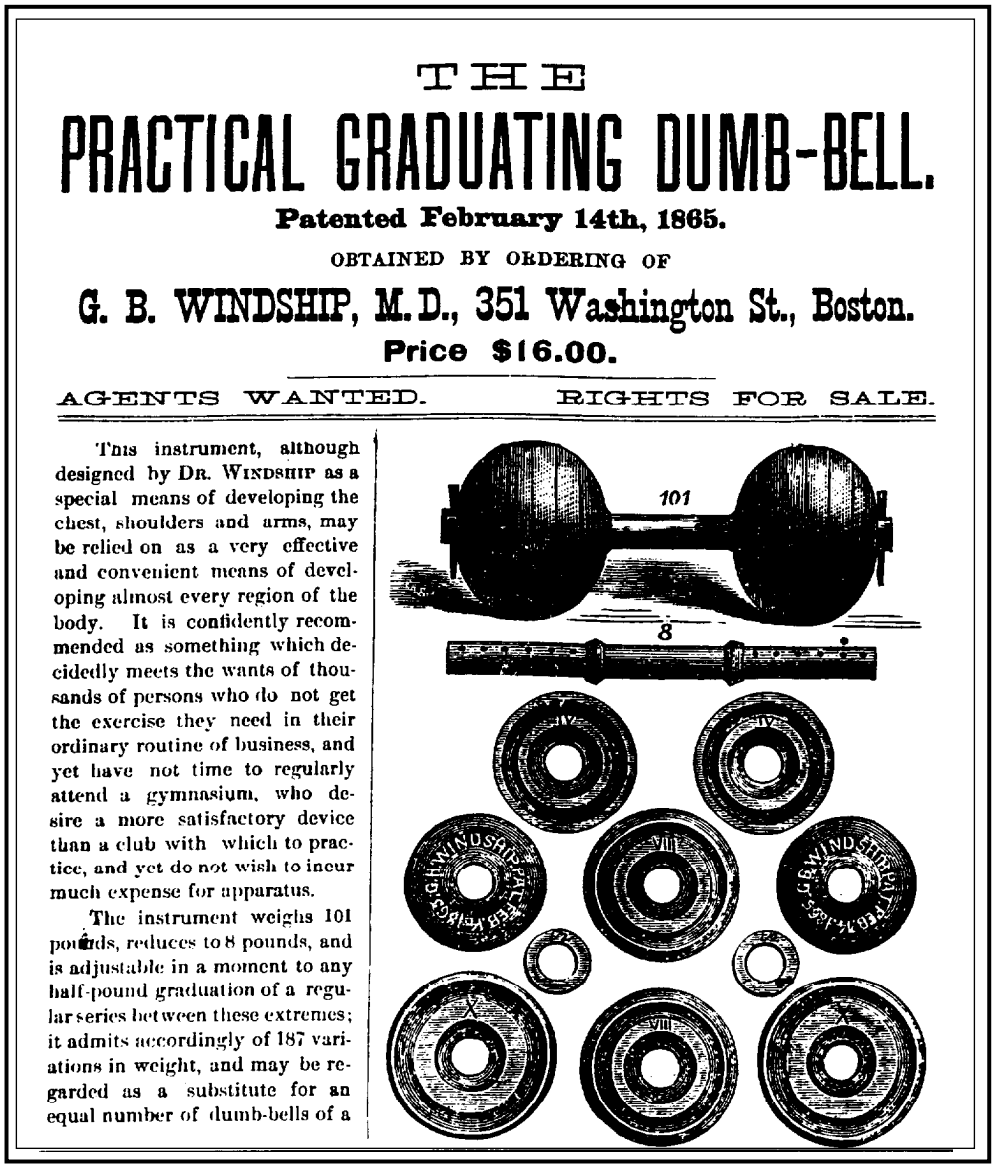


FIG. 1.

THE STANDARD IRON MACHINE.

Butler's most expensive machine was this cast iron contraption with springs located between the layers of the platform and at the end of the four legs. Its platform measured 26"by 32" and it stood 26" from the floor. The machine, alone, weighed seven hundred pounds. Fifty pound iron weights were added to the rod underneath the platform. The seat on the back of the platform was used to rest between attempts.

Building at 120 Broadway. Women could partake of Butler's version of the Health Lift at all the locations, but special accommodations were made for women at 830 Broadway, where Caroline E. Young oversaw their training sessions; and at 158 Remsen Street, in Brooklyn, where Caroline Branson taught. "Low-Rate" Health Lift rooms also operated at 348 Broadway, in the New York Life Insurance Building and on the second floor of the Equitable Insurance Building at 214 Broadway. Additionally, John W. Leavitt operated a Health Lift studio at 113 Broadway in the heart of Wall Street.[70] Leavitt and Janes began as partners and introduced the system to New York City in 1868 after studying with Butler in Boston. Leavitt then left the firm and opened his own franchise in which he continued to utilize Butler's machines.[71] In Boston, women could take lessons at Butler's original studio on West Street and at physician Elizabeth Branson's gymnasium at 784 Washington Street. Men had access to the Butler machines at his main studio and at the "low rate rooms" at 53 Temple Place. Butler Health Lift studios also operated in San Francisco, under the direction of Dr. Swain, and in Providence, Rhode Island.[72]



THE

PRACTICAL GRADUATING DUMB-BELL.

Patented February 14th, 1865.

OBTAINED BY ORDERING OF

G. B. WINDSHIP, M.D., 351 Washington St., Boston.

Price $16.00.

AGENTS WANTED. RIGHTS FOR SALE.

This instrument, although designed by DR. WINDSHIP as a special means of developing the chest, shoulders and arms, may be relied on as a very effective and convenient means of developing almost every region of the body. It is confidently recommended as something which decidedly meets the wants of thousands of persons who do not get the exercise they need in their ordinary routine of business, and yet have not time to regularly attend a gymnasium, who desire a more satisfactory device than a club with which to practice, and yet do not wish to incur much expense for apparatus.

The instrument weighs 101 pounds, reduces to 8 pounds, and is adjustable in a moment to any half-pound graduation of a regular series between these extremes; it admits accordingly of 187 variations in weight, and may be regarded as a substitute for an equal number of dumb-bells of a

Windship's plate loading dumbell adjusted from eight to one hundred and one pounds in half pound increments It consisted of an eight pound, cast iron shaft; four four pound plntes; four eight pound plates; four ten-pound plates; ten half-pound plates; and two steel pins. It sold for sixteen dollars.

The Death of the Health Lift

Windship also sold equipment, but there his entrepreneurial spirit seems to have ended. In 1865 he patented, and offered for sale, a plate-loading graduated dumbell which could quickly be adjusted in weight from eight to one hundred and one pounds. That same year, he received patent approval for a lifting device called the "Exercising Machine," which could be used for both yoke- and handle-lifting.[73] In the early 1870s Windship patented a hydraulic lifting machine which used air, captured in a piston-like arrangement, for resistance.[74] His final patent was for an invention called the "Apparatus for Physical Culture" which contained a lifting platform, cables for chest work, a rowing machine and a chinning bar.[75] Like Chiosso's Polymachinon, this piece of apparatus attempted to contain an entire gym in one machine, Unfortunately, no records exist to indicate how many of these machines were sold. Beyond these entrepreneurial efforts, however, Windship did not venture. He did not franchise his name, as Butler did, nor, apparently, did he publish a training manual or printed course.

It is impossible, of course, to know how many men and women practiced the type of heavy lifting advocated by Windship and Butler. That it was a popular system can be ascertained by the large number of Health Lift studios that opened, especially in New York City, by the favorable references to Windship's and Butler's systems in newspapers and magazines of that era and by the fact that Lewis Janes' book on the Health Lift, released in 1869, went through six editions by 1871.[76] When Windship died unexpectedly at his home on 12 September 1876 the Health Lift, and weight training in general, was struck a severe blow. Only forty-two years of age, Windship apparently suffered a massive stroke and died instantaneously. Those opposed to his theories on heavy lifting were quick to blame his death on his training methods.[77] Weightlifters everywhere were suddenly concerned. If "strength is health," the journalists and physicians argued, then why was Windship dead at forty-two? Didn't his

death prove that lifting was dangerous? In the years after his death, weight training slid into a decline. Butler's studios gradually closed, his machines relegated to scrap metal. The men and women who sought health through lifting turned to new fads–especiallly cycling and baseball–as outlets for their healthful impulses.[78]

But not everyone turned away from heavy weightlifting simply because Windship had died of a stroke. As competitive athletics grew in popularity in the late-Nineteenth Century, the benefits of systematic weight training continued to be touted for athletes. Two years after his death, a lengthy discussion of Windship's training methods turned up in Ed James, ***How to Acquire Health, Strength and Muscle,*** one of the earliest books aimed at improving competitive athletic performance.[79] In that same hook is a section entitled "Remarkable Feats of Muscular Strength," in which James lists a number of weightlifting records in hand- and harness-lifting made after Windship's death, as well as records in overhead lifts with dumbells.[80] In 1888, health reform physician John Harvey Kellogg recommended the Health Lift to his readers, telling them, "We have carefully tested this form of exercise, and believe it to be an exceedingly valuable measure for those whose employments are sedentary and whose time for exercise is limited."[81] Likewise, historian Joan Paul has documented that Robert J. Roberts, one of the most influential figures in the early development of the YMCA, was a Windship protégé who began lifting at at the doctor' s gym in 1866. According to Paul, Robert's love for heavy lifting carried over to his work in the physical training program of the YMCA.[82]

On 23 June 1859 Harvard alumnus John Langdon Sibley wrote in his private diary: "Heard George Barker Windship, a graduate in 1855, deliver a lecture in Cambridgeport on physical culture. He lifted 929 pounds and is thought though rather small to be the strongest man living."[83] Though Windship was, admittedly, small in physical stature, his efforts on behalf of resistance exercise make him a titan in the pantheon of weight training pioneers.

Notes:

[1]"Physical Culture: Roxbury vs. Chicago," n.p. unidentified newspaper clipping, Commonplace Book of George Barker Windship. May-Windship Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA. [A "commonplace book" would today be called a scrapbook.]

[2]In 1861, Roxbury was a small town just outside Boston, Massachusetts.

[3]"Roxbury vs. Chicago," n.p. Commonplace Book.

[4]George Barker Windship was the son, grandson and great-grandson of Harvard-educated physicians. George graduated from Harvard Medical school on 7 July 1857. ***Records of the College Faculty,*** Vol. 15: 1855-1860. Harvard College Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[5]An interesting physical and temperamental description of Windship occurs in: "Dr. George B. Windship," ***The Phrenological Almanac*** (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1859): 12-14.

[6]Windship discusses his fascination with the Farnese Hercules in: "Autobiographical Sketches of a Strength-Seeker," ***Atlantic Monthly*** 9(January 1862): 108.

[7]This description of Windship's lecture is based on a composite of reports of his public appearances included in a promotional pamphlet, circulated by Windship, entitled: "To Lecture Committees," included in the Commonplace Book of George Barker Windship, May-Windship Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts. See also: "Roxbury versus Chicago," and "Autobiographical Sketches" for other details of his public exhibitions.

[8]Fred Eugene Leonard, "The Beginnings of Modern Physical Training," ***Mind and Body*** 11(October 1904): 187. The Philanthropinum was one of the first schools to require physical education of its students. It became a model for many other eighteenth-century schools and was visited by dozens of liberal-minded educators. Du Toit was the physical education teacher at the Philanthropinum between 1788 and 1793.

[9]C. G. Salzmann, ***Gymnastics for Youth: Or, A Practical Guide to Healthful and Amusing Exercises for the Use of Schools. An Essay Toward the Necessary Improvement of Education, Chiefly as it Relates to the Body*** (Philadelphia: William Duane, 1802), 315-319.

[10]In ***De Arte Gymnastica,*** Mercurialis reviewed the ancient Greek writings on exercise and health and then added his own suggestions for physical training. The first edition of ***De Arte Gymnastica*** appeared in 1569. It stayed in print for more than a century, with subsequent editions released in 1573, 1587, 1600, 1614, and 1672. Historians agree that for the next several centuries, ***De Arte Gymnastica*** was the inspiration for nearly all exercise texts. The title page of the Springfield College Library edition examined by this author reads: Hieronymi Mercurialis, Foroliviensis, ***De Arte Gymnastica*** **Libri Sex: In quibus exercitationum omnium vetustarum genera, loca, mosi, facultates, & quidquid denique ad corporis humani exercitationes pertinet diligenter explicatur.** Editio novissima, aucta, emendata, & figuris authenticis, Chrisophori Coriolani exornata, Amstelodami, Sumptibus, ANDREÆ FRISII (1672).

[11]L. H. Joseph, "Medical Gymnastics in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," ***Ciba Symposia*** 10(March-April l949): 1041-42.

[12]Joseph Addison, ***The Spectator*** No. 115. Quoted in: ***Sure Methods of Improving Health and Prolonging Life or, a Treatise on the Art of Living Long and Comfortably*** (London: by "A Physician", 1827), 238-239.

[13]Franklin to his son, 19 August 1772. Quoted in: Albert Henry Smyth, ***The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*** (New York: 1905), 411-412. Franklin to Le Veillard, 22 April 1786. Quoted in: Carl Van Doren, ***Benjamin Franklin*** (New York: The Viking Press, 1938). 743. Both letters are quoted at length in: Terry Todd, "The History of Resistance Exercise and Its Role in United States Education," (Ph.D. Diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1966), 39-40.

[14]See Jan Todd, "The Classical Ideal and Its Impact on the Search for Suitable Exercise: 1774-1830," ***Iron Game History*** 2(November 1992): 6-16, for a discussion of some of these early nineteenth-century exercise texts.

[15]Sir John Sinclair, The Code ***of Health and Longevity; Or, A Concise View of the Principles Calculated for The Preservation of Health, and The Attainment of Long Life. Being an Attempt to Prove the Practicability of Condensing, Within a Narrow Compass, The Most Material Information Hitherto Accumulated Regarding The Most Useful Arts and Sciences, Or Any Particular Branch Thereof.*** Vol. 1, 2d ed., (Edinburgh: printed for Arch. Constable & Co., 1807), 503-504.

[16]Charles A. Beck, ***A Treating*** **[sic]** ***on Gymnastics Taken Chiefly From the German of F. L. Jahn*** (Northampton: Simeon Butler, 1828), 3.

[17] ***A Course of Calisthenics for Young Ladies in Schools and Families with Some Remarks on Physical Education*** (Hartford: F. J. Huntington, 1831), 36-38.

[18] [Donald Walker] ***Walker's Manly Exercises: Containing Rowing, Sailing, Riding, Driving, Racing Hunting, Shooting, and other Manly Sports. The Whole Carefully Revised or Written, by "Craven"*** 11th ed. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1888). The first edition of this work appeared in 1832.

[19] Space does not permit a discussion of the other social, technological and ethnic forces which helped shape the athletic revival of the mid-Nineteenth Century. See Steven A. Riess, ***City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports*** (Urbana University of Illinois Press, 1989).

[20] J. T. Desaguliers, ***A Course of Experimental Philosophy*** (London: 1762). Joy, also referred to as William Joyce, is discussed on page 265, Topham on pages 289-291, and Von Eckenberg on pages 265-273. David P. Willoughby's, ***The Super Athletes*** (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1970) also contains information on these men. See pages 38 and 40-46.

[21] Desaguliers, ***Course,*** 265.

[22] Ibid. The lengthy descriptions accompanying these illustrations can be found on pages 291 and 292.

[23] [Horace Mann], "Circus," ***The Common School Journal*** 9(October 1847): 18.

[24] For information on Belzoni, see David Webster, "Giovanni Belzoni: Strongman Archaeologist" ***Iron Game History*** l(April 1990). J. A. J. Bihin is described in: Orson Fowler, ***Hereditary Descent*** (New York: Fowler &Wells, 1848), 37. According to Fowler, Bihin weighed 300 pounds, stood 7'6", measured fifty inches around the chest, twenty-eight inches around the thigh and twenty-two inches around the calf. Fowler claims Bihin could lift eight hundred pounds, though he does not say how the giant performed this lift Fowler also claims Bihin "could straighten himself when stooping under two tons."

[25] Andrew Combe, M.D., ***The Principles of Physiology, Applied to the Preservation of Health, and to the Improvement of Physical and Mental Education*** (New York: Fowler &Wells, 1838). 104. Combe was not the only physiologist to hold up strongmen as exemplars of manhood. See: John Lee Comstock, M.D., ***Outlines of Physiology: Also the Application of these Principles to Muscular Exercise*** (New York: Harper & Brothem, 1836), 228-263.

[26] 0rson Fowler, ***Physiology: Animal and Mental: Applied to the Preservation and Restoration of Health of Body and Power of Mind,*** 6th ed. (New York Fowler & Wells, 1851), 228.

[27] For insight into the growing popularity of heavy weightlifting see: Ed. James, ***How to Acquire Health Strength and Muscle, Including Treatment for Free Livers and Sedentary People, About Air, Clothing, Food and Stimulants; Also Best Mode of Exercise for all Ages, Cures and Preventives for Various Diseases, Proportions of a Perfect Human Figure; Sketches of Dr. G. B. Windship's and R. A. Pennell's Methods, Remarkable Feats of Strength, Measurements of Noted Athletes, The Muscular System, Tables of Nutrition and Digestion,*** 12th ed. (New York: Ed James, 1878).

[28] Information on Triat and his gymnasium may be found in: Edmund Desbonnet, ***Les Rois de la Force: Histoire de tous les Hommes Forts depuis les temps anciens jusqu'a nos jours*** (Paris: Librairie Berger-Levrault, 1911): 58-78.

[29] See James, ***How to Acquire,*** 60-63 for details of early weightlifting accomplishments. Most exercise texts from this era warn against using heavy implements, a fact which suggests that some individuals, besides the professional strongmen, practiced what we would today refer to as resistance exercise or true weight training. For instance, Dio Lewis, a popular exercise author of the 1860s, warned his readers to use only light dumbells for his rhythmic drills but conceded that if people wished to use dumbells as the Germans did, then heavy weights were needed. Dio Lewis, ***The New Gymnastics for Men, Women and Children*** (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1862), 123.

[30] Montgomery was part owner of Ottignon and Montgomery's Gym, located at 159 and 161 Crosby Streets in New York City. According to their ad in the ***Water Cure Journal*** the gymnasium offered classes for men and boys in gymnastics and boxing, and they sold dumbells and Indian Clubs. See: "Bodily Exercise the Best Medicine," ***Water Cure Journal and Herald of Reforms*** 25(August 1857): 46.

[31] A description of Harrison and his measurements is reprinted in Russell Trall's ***Illustrated Family Gymnasium*** (New York: Samuel R. Wells, 1857): 57-58. It originally appeared in the ***Illustrated London News.*** See also: Siegmund Klein, "American Pioneers of Weightlifting," ***Strength*** & ***Health*** (November 1942): 15 and 40-41, for information on other early weight trainers.

[32] Captain James Chiosso, ***The Gymnastic Polymachinon: Instructions for Performing a Systematic Series of Exercises on the Gymnastic and Calisthenic Polymachinon*** (London: Walton and Maberly, 1855).

[33] Windship, "Autobiographical Sketches," 102-103. For other information on Windship see Joan Paul, "The Health Reformers: George Barker Windship and Boston's Strength Seekers," ***Journal of Sports History*** l0(Winter 1983): 41-57. See also: Todd, "History of Resistance Exercise," 40-48.

[34] Details of Windship's strength training methods and his personal best lifts can be found in James, ***How to Acquire,*** 54-57.

[35] Windship, "Autobiographical Sketches," 108-109 and 114.

[36] Ibid., 114.

[37] 1bid., 108-109.

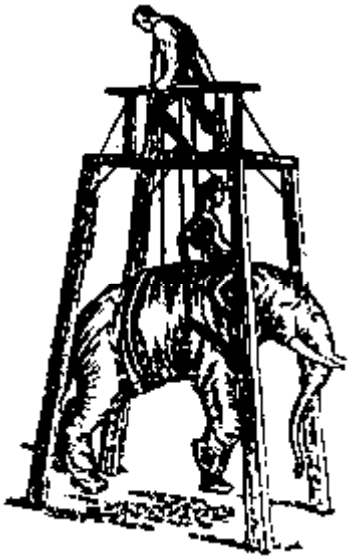
[38] 1bid., 109. See also: James, ***How to Acquire,*** 56. By today's standards a jerk of 180 pounds is not a significant strength feat for a man of Windship's size. However, it must be remembered that that the most difficult part of a clean and jerk was the cleaning of the thick-handled, non-revolving bar.

[39] Dudley Allen Sargent, "The Achievements of the Century in Gymnastics and Athletics, Together with Notes and Questions," Typescript of an address delivered at Springfield College. Sargent's comments about Windship appear on pages 2-3 of the interview notes attached to this speech. Springfield College Manuscript Collection, Springfield, Massachusetts. References to Windship's ability to chin himself using only one finger also appear in several newspaper articles quoted in: 'To Lecture Committees, " n.p.

[40] "Dr. Windship Raises Twenty-Six Hundred Pounds," ***Evening Express*** (21 November 1863). Clipping in Commonplace Book of G. B. Windship. See also Joan Paul, "Health Reformers," 50-52, for information on Win&hip's machines and patents.

[41] Windship, "Autobiographical Sketches," 115.

[42] See: "Roxbury vs Chicago,"n.p., and Ed. James, ***How to Acquire,*** 56 57.
[43] "Windship Raises," n.p.
[44] Windship, "Autobiographical Sketches," 113.
[45] Quote included in 'To Lecture Committees," n.p.
[46] Ibid., 105.
[47] George Barker Windship, "Physical Culture," ***The Masschussetts Teacher*** 13(April l860): 128.
[48] "Windship Raises," n.p.
[49] According to historian Joan Paul, the Washington Street building is still standing and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings. It is presently used as a restaurant Windship's Boston patients included such distinguished men as the actor Edwin Forrest. "George Barker Windship," obituary notice, newspaper clipping in the Commonplace Book of G. B. Windship, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.
[50] References to the "women's apartment" can be found in the Advertising Section, ***Boston Directory*** (Boston: Sampson & Davenport 1870).
[51] 0rson S. Fowler, ***Human Science: or Phrenology; its Principles, Proofs, Faculties, Organs, Temperaments, Combinations, Conditions, Teachings, Philosophies, etc. etc. as Applied to Health, its Value, Laws, Functions, Organs, Means, Preservation Restoration, etc., Mental Philosophy, Human and Self Improvement, Civilization, Home, Country, Commerce, Rights, Duties, Ethics, etc., God, His Existence, Attributes, Laws, Worship, Natural Theology, etc., Immorality, its Evidences, Conditions, Relations to Time, Rewards, Punishments, Sin, Faith, Prayer, etc., Intellect, Memory, Juvenile and Self Education, Literature, Mental Discipline, the Senses, Sciences, Arts, Avocations, A Perfect Life, etc. etc. etc.*** (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, n.d.), 579.
[52] Dudley Allen Sargent, ***An Autobiography*** (Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger, 1927), 98.
[53] Harvey Green, ***Fit for America: Health, Fitness, Sport and American Society*** (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986) 199.
[54] See Lewis G. Janes, ***Health-Exercise: The Rationale and Practice of the Lifting-Cure or Health Lift,*** 6th rev. ed. (New York: Lewis G. Janes, 1871) 44.
[55] Barnett also sold a rowing machine and a "parlor gymnasium'-a rubberized cable with attached handles which we would today call an expander Barnett's small book on the Parlor Gymnasium showed both men and women using his device for stretching exercises, arm curls and presses and for chest expansion work. See: S. M. Barnett, ***Barnett's Patent Parlor Gymnasium*** (New York: J. Becker and Co., 1871).
[56] ***Boston Directory,*** Reel 8 (1875) 1363.
[57] David P. Butler, ***Butler's System of Physical Training. The Lifting Cure: Original, Scientific Application of the Laws of Motion or Mechanical Action to Physical Culture and the Cure of Disease. with a Discussion of True and Fake Methods of Physical Training*** (Boston: D. P. Butler, 1868): 81.
[58] John W. Leavitt, ***Exercise a Medicine; or, Muscular Action as Related to Organic Life*** (New York: J. W. Leavitt, 1870), 7.
[59] Janes, ***Health-Exercise,*** 37-38.
[60] Butler, ***Butler's System.*** Historian Fred Eugene Leonard reports that a book by Windship was scheduled for release by Ticknor and Fields in 1862. However, no copies of this book are known to exist. Fred Eugene Leonard, ***A Guide to the History of Physical Education*** (Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger, 1923), 258.
[61] Butler, ***Butler's System,*** 75-77.
[62] Janes, ***Health--Exercise,*** 24.
[63] Ibid., 88.
[64] Ibid., 89.
[65] In actuality, such a position slightly twists the spine and makes it more susceptible to back injuries. A similar lift, using a barbell, is known as the Jefferson Lift.
[66] Ibid., 95-96.
[67] Ibid., 97.
[68] Ibid., 99-100.
[69] Ibid., 100.
[70] Leavitt, ***Exercise a Medicine,*** iii-vi.
[71] Ibid., iv. Leavitt claimed to have seventy-five prominent bankers, brokers, lawyers and merchants from the Wall Street area among his clients.
[72] Ibid., iii-iv; and 10.
[73] Janes, ***Health-Exercise,*** i.
[74] See Paul, "The Health Reformers," 51.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] "Physical Training," ***Harper's Weekly*** 4(22 September 1860): 594, and: Janes, ***Health-Exercise,*** i.
[78] In fact, for some years afterward, Windship's unexpected death was mentioned negatively in exercise books.
[79] Windship Biographical File, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
[80] James, ***How to Acquire,*** 55-57
[81] Ibid., 60-62.
[82] J. H. Kellogg, M. D., ***Ladies Guide in Heath and Disease, Girlhood, Maidenhood, Wifehood, Motherhood*** (Des Moines, Iowa: W. D. Condit & Co., 1888): 240.
[83] Paul, "Health Reformers," 55.
[84] John Langdon Sibley, ***The Private Journal of John Langdon Sibley, Volume 1: 1846-1845.*** Typed quotation from this book, included in George Barker Windship Biography File, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

GEORGE REDPATH; A LIFE IN THE BALANCE

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In the words of Curd Edmunds, the pull-up champion,[1] "George Redpath is a gold mine of information on health and fitness, as well as handbalancers and strongmen of the past. He lives a very modest life and in a quiet way, is very religious. Though he rarely talks about it, he enjoys helping people, especially the elderly. On his seventy-fifth birthday, for instance, he walked about twenty-four miles to pay a visit to the old Olympic lifter, Bob Mitchell, now in very poor health. Although he's seventy-six, he still manages to help his neighbors with their repair problems and such things. He is well-read on nutrition and is generous in providing needed information on diet and supplement programs to his friends when they're in need."[2]

It happens so often that I don't know why I'm still surprised when I discover the genuine, giving side to the lives of the men whom I've admired for their exploits chronicled in the strength magazines. About George Redpath, I had read since the earliest days of my interest in lifting and handbalancing; for me, his name had become synonymous with the legendary strength and acrobatic feats associated with the fabulous strip of the Pacific which has come to be better known by its descriptive designation, Muscle Beach, than by its official one, Santa Monica Beach.

I had always thought of George along with the remarkable assemblage of strongman-acrobats so familiar to Muscle Beach lore: Bert Goodrich, Russ Saunders, Les and Pudgy Stockton, Harold Zinkin, Glenn Sundby, Bruce Connor, Jim and Kay Starkey, Jack LaLanne, JackNelson, Jimmy Payne, Walt Marcyan, Terry Robinson, Babe Stansbury, Al Beck, John Ryan, and all the others: all that remarkable crew so defiant of gravity and its demands. I'd known and admired George, also, of course, for his excellent articles in ***Iron Man*** on healthful eating, nutrition, and supplementation, long before such articles had achieved their current vogue. He was one of the first and best in nutrition writing, and I know that many more, besides Curd, are in debt to him for what he taught all of us about the health-giving properties of food and food supplements.

George was born on a farm in Illinois on 18 April 1915, and moved at twelve, with his family to San Diego. In those years, football was his favorite sport, but his small stature meant that his high school football career was played-out in "Class B" ball (the version for boys of smaller size), in which he lettered, along with Amby Schindler, who went on to become an All-American at U.S.C. His interests soon turned to gymnastics, which became his first athletic love, one that was heightened in 1932 by the Los Angeles Olympics, which provided the youngster with his first real glimpse of high-level gymnastics. His first gymnastics teacher was Bob Leonard (later a U.C.L.A. professor) who, as a San Diego State student, held records in the discus, shot, and hammer. Despite his size (over 200 pounds), Leonard was an excellent tumbler and handbalancer, able to do a hollowback press to a handstand on his fmgertips, having toured with acrobatic troupes. It was Leonard who taught George his first hand-to-hand work, including a "flag" to hand-to-hand and introduced him to the trampoline, a home-made piece upon which George's oversized teacher was an expert.

"Back in 1939, '40, and '41, a group of acro-enthusiasts used to get together on Sundays in a grassy park overlooking the Ocean at La Jolla," reminisces George. "There were often observers of these get-togethers, so we grew accustomed to them but one in particular was destined to play apart in my life: a gentleman in flannel slacks who often showed-up with a camera to record our tricks. On occasion, he'd request that we repeat a particular trick because he had missed it or wanted a different angle. On one occasion, when the guys were teasing me because I was due to be drafted, the gentleman called me aside and asked why I hadn't thought of volunteering for the Navy. When I explained that Army enlistments were only 28 months, whereas Navy enlistments were four years, he assured me that in wartime, all service enlistments were 'for the duration.'

"I agreed to meet him a few days later at the destroyer base, and when I arrived, I was shocked to discover that the man in flannel slacks was in reality a Commander in the Navy. Surprised, I followed him to his office, where he handed me a written test, which I hurriedly finished. He checked it, and then handed it to his office mate, also a Commander, who glanced over it, cheered, and said 'O.K.' With that, I was in the Navy, with no boot camp, and was, or had become, a third-class petty officer. I was very bewildered."[3]

After the attack of Pearl Harbor, George was sent to Hawaii to clean up the battleship West Virginia, but after a few weeks, he "was called on to start a physical training facility. My duties were those of a master-at-arms, plus doing what I could with the limited training facilities. For instance, some machine shop buddies turned-out a bar and some barbell plates. We set-up a boxing gym, and I rigged-up a wall pulley and a chinning bar. Before long, we had lots of guys 'pumping iron' for the first time. A visit by ex-heavyweight champion Gene Tunney was a highlight for us, and he succeeded in getting some speed bags and gloves sent to us."

In 1942, moving in the direction of their later fame, George and his partners formed a handbalancing troupe under the auspices of the U.S.C., playing Army and Navy installations, air bases, and jungle camps. (These, it must be remembered, were the salad days of American handbalancing, a time when some of the finest strength athletes in the land shaped the sport and took it to its heights. George and the troupe brought to our fighting men in the South Pacific the caliber of handbalancing that was bringing top-dollar in theaters and clubs throughout America.)

George Redpath was an outstanding handbalancer. At Muscle Beach, with partner Bert Goodrich providing support, Redpath performs a difficult "flag" variation.

During this time, George worked with men who would leave their mark upon post-war handbalancing, such men as Jack Brick, a well-known professional; Loren Brown, a Hollywood stunt man; and Al Motter, a marvelous balancer. (When I was transferred back to the mainland," George remembers, "Joe Schabacker, a Marine, took my place in the act with Al Motter, and today Joe is the President of the U.S. Sports Acrobatics Federation, the branch of gymnastics that is reviving interest in handbalancing, which should be accepted, in time, as an Olympic sport") Al Motter, along with another of his partners, Dwight Davis, had been featured on a ***Strength & Health*** cover." [4]

In 1944, George was ordered to Treasure Island for reassignment. There, of course, he met Sam and Joe Loprinzi,[5] who were in charge of the base gym, that, as a result of their "gym-know-how," was very sophisticated and well-equipped by the standards of that time. George's final assignment was to San Diego, and while stationed there, he met and trained with Bert Goodrich, who was a Chief Athletic Specialist at North Island. Together, they fashioned a hand-to-hand act which they "took out" professionally. When Bert was discharged from the Navy, having refused a knee operation, he moved to the Los Angeles area and found a location for a bodybuilding gym. Later, after his discharge, George followed his partner, and the two of them, along with Karris Keirn (who later helped Walt Marcyan set-up his famous gym), built the famed "Gym to the Stars" on Hollywood Boulevard; the Goodrich Gym and Health Club. This was, in the words of the August, 1989, ***Stuntman's Hall of Fame Newsletter,*** the first "glamour gym, with leatherette walls and chrome equipment. Most of the stars showed up to pump their bodies into shape, including Fess Parker (Davy Crockett), Steve Reeves, Bob Mathias (decathlon champion), and James Arness (Gunsmoke)."[6] In that financially precarious time in their lives, George and Bert played club dates with their hand-to-hand act in order to underwrite the setting-up of their new gym.

In 1949, along with his former wife, Peggy, George opened his own gym: "We had a co-ed gym which was a very rare thing at that time. Peggy was an admirer of Pudgy Stockton and trained with weights at a time when resistance training was rare for women. The gym was an instant success: people loved the idea of coed train ing. At that time, I invented a leg extension and curl apparatus. As they say, 'Necessity is the mother of invention.' Since I didn't have enough time to provide hand resistance for the leg curls that I always included in the workouts that I set-up, I came up with the idea of this device. I also made the first seated calf machine at that time. Needless to say, it was crude by today's standards, but it worked.[7]

"I later leased my gym to John Bazacas, who now runs one of the finest gyms anywhere down in Newport Beach. When John decided to move South, he sold the gym to Bill Pearl. In the meantime, I had a form-fitting t-shirt on the market and worked at that. I sold the business in 1958. My last gym was in Spring Valley, just east of San Diego. I eventually sold it to Gene Fisher, who still has it and builds some of the finest exercise equipment and uses nutrition to help people who have sustained injuries or are experiencing ill-health." George adds that he has had "some very good results," a too-modest claim, according to Curd Edmunds and many others.

George's current training regimen includes biking, walking, running, and Heavy-hands training, along with conventional

weight work including dips with weight, floor presses, incline and flat bench pressing, and chinning with weight, supplemented with neck and cable work and gripper work. This formidable program, along with his gardening and concern for nutrition keeps him in excellent condition. He recommends natural foods, including some meat, eggs, fish, vegetables, whole grains, and modest amounts of fruit, seeds, and nuts from the shell.

"I've watched the diet fads come and go, but I'm convinced that raw food is essential to health and that overeating is our number one health problem. For those with food allergies, I believe that the four-day rotation diet is the answer: this gives the body time to clear any allergic reactions before it is stressed again, with the offending food." A life member of the National Health Federation, George is very much concerned with the dangers to our "health freedoms" and to our right to choose and buy health foods and supplements, posed by the intervention of, and totalitarian powers possessed by, the government and governmental bodies, such as the F.D.A.[8]

The reminiscence of a man who knows what he's talking about is always instructive to eavesdrop on: the "good talk" that we in the Game love—the numbers, the anecdotes, the remembered confrontations, the ventured opinions about the best, the most memorable. When George Redpath talks about the denizens of Muscle Beach, we listen: 'When it comes to Muscle Beach, Glenn Sundby is a better historian than I. Of course, he and the late Wayne Long were A-l among handbalancers (comprising the great Wayne-Marlin Trio, an acrobatic-adagio act in which Sundby took the name Marlin.) Another tine team was 'The Titans' (Al Beck, top; John Ryan, understander). Renauld and Rudy made it to the Beach at times, but I failed to see them there. Harold Zinkin and Bruce Connor did great work Harold also worked with Jim Starkey, and they are seen on one of the Muscle Beach calendars, doing a high one-to-one balance. Jim's wife, Kay, was also a tine balancer. Harold and Walt Marcyan were among the best all-round athletes on the Beach.

"The best all-round guy, in my view, was Russ Saunders, who was tops in so many skills. He was a stunt man in Hollywood, and he could do it all: diving, balancing, tumbling, adagio; you name it. I saw him kick to a one-hand stand on pedestals, which is very difficult Jack LaLanne was a strong balancer, he did a nice routine on pedestals, along with Jim Drinkward, a good gymnast despite his height."

Bert Goodrich, the first A.A.U. Mr. America, was a marvel as a runner, jumper, ice skater, tumbler, trapeze performer, overall gymnast, and handbalancer, not even to mention his accomplishments as a boxer and stunt man, good enough in the latter category to be voted into the Stuntman's Hall of Fame. As a handbalancer, according to David Willoughby, he worked with various partners, but "principally with George Redpath (163 lbs.)." **[Ed. Note:** 150 pounds, in George's correction of Willoughby.] The performances in hand-to-hand balancing that Goodrich gave with Redpath during the 1940s proved both men to be masters of the art. Especially noteworthy were their single hand-to-hands. In one variation of these, Goodrich would support Redpath on one hand "while sitting in a chair and smiling!"[9] "When I worked with Bert,"George continues, "the 'flag' was our best feat. Many teams do this trick, of course, but we were able to 'repeat': to lower down into a 'flag' again and then back up. At first, even Bert didn't think it possible when I suggested it, but with work and a variation in grip, it all worked out. I remember, at the time of the Mr. U.S.A. show, we borrowed a table from 'The Titans' and did our routine on it. That presented a problem, but we worked it out.

"Not to be forgotten, of course, were Les and Pudgy Stockton, and the interesting thing is that either one could act as the top person. Jimmy Payne was one of the strongest balancers, and some years ago, he went on to become, as I recall, the oldest man to win a national arm wrestling title. When I think back to those days, I remember Babe Stansbury and Terry Robinson, not as balancers, but as memorable people along the Beach. Babe was a super strong gym owner, who had been stricken with polio. He'd been an excellent football player, one who would have been a big-time star. Terry was a good physique-man, Mr. New York, and a Golden Gloves champion. He was the trainer and confidant of Mario Lanza, the great tenor, of course. I remember Mario training in our gym before he made it big in the movies.

The strange thing is that, although handbalancing reached a very high level of skill in those days, coaching was almost nonexistent. We learned by trial and error and from each other. I was inspired, and many others too, by the '32 Olympics. In matters of our sport, generally, I've been inspired by John Grimek, Jack LaLanne, Bert Goodrich, and some others, including Earle Liederman, who trained in our Hollywood gym and wrote about Bert and, now and then, about me. My first article was written for Earle. Later, I wrote many for ***Iron Man,*** mostly on nutrition, which received far less attention in those days than today."[10]

Though George calls himself "one of the little guys," his modesty shouldn't be allowed to blur the tremendous impact that he has had upon so many in our Game, from his days in the Pacific, during World War II, until now. Curd Edmunds has caught the flavor of the man and his contribution to those who have come into contact with him: "George is a modest man who lives a most modest life. He can't do enough to help his friends and neighbors, from helping them repair their houses to helping them with their health problems. In addition to his knowledge about the Iron Game and about balancing and its history, he's an expert on nutrition. In fact, his knowledge of supplements may have saved my life."[11]

Of "little guys" such as George Redpath — our Game needs many more.

Notes

[1]Al Thomas, "John Curd Edmunds: Master of the Pull-Up," ***Iron Game History*** l(February 1990): 7-9.

[2] Curd Edmunds to Al Thomas, 21 October 1991. Author's Collection.

[3] George Redpath to Al Thomas, 15 October 1991 and n.d. Author's Collection.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Al Thomas, "Sam Loprinzi," ***Iron Game History*** l(August 1991): 8-10.

[6] Dave Tuttle, "Bert Goodrich—The First Mr. America," ***Stuntman's Hall of Fume Newsletter*** **(August 1989):** 1.

[7]Redpath to Thomas, 15 October 1991 and n.d.

[8] Ibid.

[9] David P. Willoughby, ***The Super Athletes*** (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1970), 271.

[10]George Redpath to Al Thomas, 30 October 1991. Author's Collection.

[11]Curd Edmunds to Al Thomas, 6 October 1991. Author's Collection.

Remembering Bob Hoffman

Terry Todd, Ph.D. The University of Texas at Austin

I first met Bob Hoffman in the summer of 1958, a few days after I'd competed in the national intercollegiate tennis championships in Annapolis, Maryland. I was traveling home with a couple of my University of Texas teammates and, on our way to visit New York City, I talked them into a side trip to York, Pennsylvania, which I described as being the center of world weightlifting—a "Mecca for lifters everywhere" was how I put it, much to my later regret.

What happened in York was that after driving a couple of times along the street on which the famous York Barbell Club gymnasium was supposedly located, I knew that something must be wrong. All the buildings in the area looked so woebegone and mangy, so unlike the way I absolutely *knew* the York gym would look Having read Bob Hoffman's articles in his magazine, ***Strength*** & ***Health,*** for years, I had a clear image of a spacious, even majestic, building filled with purposeful, muscular young men either exercising with a variety of modern weight training equipment or packaging similar equipment for shipment to other purposeful, muscular young men throughout the world. Finally, unable to reconcile this image with any of the buildings on that section of Broad Street, I asked a passerby where I might find the York Barbell Company. "Hoffman's place?" he said, "sure, that's it over there," and pointed to a building straight out of Upton Sinclair. My friends looked at me and smiled.

But we were there, so we parked walked in, found a flight of dimly lit stairs and climbed to the second floor, which consisted of a large, unkempt room tilled with a seemingly haphazard clutter of barbells, dumbells and exercise equipment, most of which seemed in bad need of a major overhaul. A skinny boy in a dirty T-shirt was over in the comer doing a set of curls and flies buzzed in and out of the screenless windows. "Welcome to Mecca," said one of my teammates.

The other, laughing, finally managed to say, "Hey, let's leave the old pilgrim to his prayers and see if we can find us a hamburger joint," and down the stairs they went, still laughing. Feeling somewhat down in the mouth, I wandered over to a wall with photographs of old-time strongmen and tried to forget how long the drive back to Texas was going to be.

After a few minutes, even the teenager left, and gradually I became lost in the wonderful old photos. Thus it was that I didn't hear the man come up behind me until he tapped me on the shoulder and said, as I turned, "Hello, my name is Bob Hoffman. I'm the coach of the U.S. Olympic team, and I just might be the world's healthiest man."

He shook my hand and asked, "Where are you from?"—then went on before I could answer. "I can tell from the way your right tennis shoe is wearing that you drag your foot when you serve. And by the way, did you know that no finer way exists to improve your ability in your chosen sport—including tennis—than to train with weights? Did you know that Harry Hopman has all his Davis Cup athletes on a heavy program of barbell and dumbell training? Sedgman, Hartwig, Hoad and Rosewall all use the weights religiously. I've been all over the world and it's a wonderful thing to see so many young men everywhere using barbells, eating properly and following the Bob Hoffman rules of healthful living. I've dedicated my life to earning the title of World's Healthiest Man so that I can use that title to build a stronger, a healthier and a better America."

He continued, awash in words, and as he continued, I looked at the big man in front of me, who was familiar to me before that day only through photos in his magazine. Full-chested, he stood at least as high my own 6'2" and his small blue eyes were set deep in a thin-lipped face with skin pulled so tightly up and over his virtually hairless head that he reminded me vaguely with his rapid yet soft delivery of a hyperactive turtle. He went on, "I'm sorry you weren't here a couple of days ago. Most of the men on the U.S. Olympic Lifting team were here—Berger, Vinci, Kono—everyone, and they had quite a session. World record after world record. I brought over a new stress-proof York Olympic Bar from the machine shop and they really gave it a workout. We make the finest bar on the market, and the finest weights and equipment for the money. But our men couldn't handle the weights they do without regular use of Hoffman's Hi-Proteen. It might surprise you to learn that at the last Olympic Games I had hundreds of pounds of Hoffman products flown to Australia so that I could distribute them to all our athletes—not just the lifters. Do you think Al Oerter would have done as well as he did, or Parry O'Brien, or Harold Connolly, or our whole team, without Hoffman's Hi-Proteen? York Barbells and Hoffman's Hi-Proteen. They're hard to beat."

By that time in what, for want of a better word, I'll call our conservation, I had forgotten all about the grime, the disarray and the generally beat-up nature of the gym. I was a twenty-year-old lifting fanatic, overwhelmed and amazed to find that Hoffman talked *exactly* as he wrote in his countless articles in ***Strength & Health,*** most of which I had read. He seemed somehow surreal as he leaned toward me, talking not so much with me as talking in my presence, sweeping me along with his rhetorical broom, ending at last with, "Well, I'd better be going now, I have to go home and get ready for a trip to Harrisburg tonight for a talk to a civic group there. I'll break a few chains and do an abdominal vacuum. I'll try my best to sell them all on the idea of following the Bob Hoffman Rules of Healthful Living. Nice talking with you, and remember what I said about weight training helping your tennis game. And don't forget your Hi-Proteen."

As he walked away—head up, chest out, striding straight

on into the future—I wasn't sure whether five minutes had passed or fifty, but I was sure of one thing—the "Mecca for lifters everywhere" might be a little on the grubby side, but the number one prophet was alive and, well, unbelievable.

I was still shaking my head a few moments later when my buddies came in smelling of meat grease, burnt cheese and onions—heads down, palms pressed to palms, chanting. But I had met Bob Hoffman: they didn't bother me a bit.

That was thirty-five years ago. Now I'm almost as old as Bob was when I first met him. I've spent some of the intervening years humping iron, swilling such nostrums as Hi-Proteen and even working, for a time, for the York Barbell Company as an editor of ***Strength & Health.*** As for Bob, for more than twenty more years he maintained the position he had held since the Thirties—as one of the main men of muscle in the English-speaking world.

Over the last twenty-five years of his life, I saw a good deal of Bob, and I grew even more amazed by him as time went by than I had been that summer afternoon in York when he tapped me on the shoulder and made me feel as if I were already in the spacious, tidy gym, in the spacious, tidy building his promotional ability later provided the funds to create.

This photo was taken in November 1978, several days before Bob Hoffman's eightieth birthday. Bob, in his trademark bemedaled coat, stands with Terry Todd outside the offices of the York Barbell Company. At their feet is the legendary dumbell of Louis Cyr.

PHOTO: TODD-MCLEAN COLLECTION

I remember an afternoon almost thirty years ago when I rode with Bob over to the Blue Rock Mountains in Pennsylvania, where he had recently built a small plant to bottle water from a flowing spring. We were to meet a man from the water quality control department and to see what needed to be done to comply with their standards. When we arrived, we could see the government man over by the main building, so Bob walked over and reached out his big hand to shake the smaller hand of the guardian of pure waters. "It's about your washing procedure, Mr. Hoffman," the little man began. "It just isn't up to snuff. Now I know you made some changes, but we still found a few soap suds downstream and we have to put a stop to it. What's more, we. . ." At this point Bob stepped a little closer to the other man, accentuating the ten inches or so of height difference between them, and unlimbered his most awesome muscle—his tongue. "A fine thing it is when a man sacrifices tens of thousands of dollars to provide crystal clear Blue Rock Mountain Springwater to the people of Pennsylvania and surrounding states, and then the government threatens to throw the handcuffs on him. You may not be aware of it, sir, but I have dedicated my life to building a stronger, a healthier, a better America, and that can't be done without good water. Do you know what's actually in the city water where you live? Well let me tell you, it would amaze, startle and frighten you. So what if there is a soapsud or two downstream from my plant? Tell me, what do you use when you clean your hands, your face, your body or your clothes? *Soap.* You use *soap.* What, I ask you, could be cleaner than *soap?* A man who has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to improve the physical condition of the youth of America finds it hard to believe that a representative of the government would try to drive him out of business for putting a little clean soap into a creek when a half mile downstream from where we're standing right now a big herd of Holstein cows are out in the middle of the same stream and *unloading.* And what they're unloading is several times worse than any soap, let me tell you. Go arrest those cows and leave a man in peace whose only goal is to improve the strength and health of our nation. Go and check the quality of the water in Philadelphia or Pittsburgh and quit badgering a man whose

only aim is to convince the public of the need for pure water and then to supply it. If you took your job seriously, sir, you would spend what time you have left before retirement trying to alert people to the dangers of city water and spreading the good word about Bob Hoffman's Blue Rock Mountain Springwater ."

During the entire diatribe I noticed that the man from the government seemed to struggle to remain upright. He appeared to be physically buffeted, even though Bob never touched him It was as if the man stood in the teeth of a heavy gale. Finally, he shook his head, retreated several steps, held up his hands and said, "Okay, Mr. Hoffman, okay. We'll get back to you." He then got into his dark green Chevrolet sedan and drove slowly away.

Chutzpah, apparently, can reach world class levels in rural Pennsylvania quite as well as in Manhattan. Attend for further evidence to the following story. Returning to York one evening after a trip out of town in 1965, Bob and I were talking about our various relationships with women, and I asked him if he had ever had any real problems with Alda, his common-law wife of quite a few years. "Alda's a wonderful woman," he began. " In all our years together we've seldom had a cross word. The only thing she faults me for is what she calls being unfaithful. Unfaithful! Look at it this way.—I've been seeing the same four women—not counting Alda, of course-for over twenty-five years, at least once a week when I'm in town. At least once a week. *The same four women!* If that's not being faithful, I don't know what faithful means."

Knowing and being somewhat in awe of Alda myself, I could understand why he felt that she was a wonderful woman, and certainly why he tried to avoid cross words with her. Though possessed of a merry, expansive nature, she also had an explosive temper and, at around two hundred active pounds, the heft to back it up. During the time I lived in York she owned a big dancehall called the Thomasville Inn, where she did her own bouncing. On Saturday nights I usually went to the Inn to have a few beers and to watch Alda and Bob dance those spinning, heel-lifting polkas they loved and did so well.

Bob was smitten by Alda some fifty-five years ago at a lovely spot called Brookside Park, about eight miles outside York in the small town of Dover. She was then only nineteen, about twenty years younger than Bob. He loved her from the start, showing his love as only he would. "She was a wonderful looking young woman," he told me once, "so fresh and healthy. I used to do a lot of chain-breaking then, putting big chains around my chest and breaking them by expanding my ribcage, and when I first met Alda I wanted to show off a bit. I broke a bigger chain for her than I'd ever been able to break, and I was never able to break so large a one again."

As Bob was wont to do, he wove this episode into the warp and woof of his later life, citing it as the reason for the problems he had with his heart over the last years of his life, problems which began with a bit of arrhythmia, proceeded to auricular fibrillation, and culminated early in 1977 in heart bypass surgery. "Apparently," Bob said, "I must have nicked an artery near my heart in some way when I broke that heavy chain for Alda. Even the heart of the world's healthiest man isn't immune to the powers of love." The trauma of open heart surgery, and his ability to withstand it at the age of seventy-nine, were interpreted by Bob in a way quintessentially his own. "According to what my doctors said," he explained, warming to the subject of his health, "I was almost fifteen years older than any other man on whom the same operation had been performed. They told me that my remarkable physical condition was what convinced them that I could come through the surgery. It seems to me that if any further proof was needed that I am truly the world's healthiest man, my complete recovery from such a major operation at the age of seventy-nine would supply it. After all, not having had a cold or a headache, or missing a day of work due to illness since I was ten, are things of which I am justifiably proud. I've been able to live the physically, mentally, and sexually active life I've lived for the last forty years in spite of a nicked artery and then, in my eightieth year, I was able to withstand an operation that would have turned an ordinary older man into a vegetable. This is the best tribute I know to the Bob Hoffman Rules of Healthful Living."

As a matter of straight fact, leaving aside Bob's tendency to raise mythomania to an art form, his health and vigor were remarkable, especially for a person who pushed himself as hard and traveled as much as he did through the years. Those who knew him best, however, suspect that his secret resided less in his rules for healthful living than in his almost supernatural *will* to be healthy, his will to keep going, to fight the good fight and even, if necessary, the bad. Clearly, he was this way from childhood.

"At the age of four," he liked to tell, "I ran one hundred times around a double tennis court and it felt so easy that I kept running for distance, finally progressing to the point where I won, at the age of ten, a ten mile race—a modified marathon—for boys sixteen and under."

Whether he actually *did* run one hundred times around those courts, or won a race of ten miles at the age of ten is hardly important all these years later. What *is* important, it seems to me, is that Bob said and wrote so often that he did do these things that they assumed for him the aspects of truth. They were part of his idea of himself, part of the self-making of a man, part of the ladder he built as he climbed it. The law of adverse possession in many states works much the same way; if you possess a thing–"squat" on a piece of land, for instance–openly, notoriously, and continuously for seven years under "color of title" or for twenty-one years without, it becomes yours in law as well as in fact. Bob literally *possessed* his many stories by asserting them so often for so long.

Bob was born on 9 November 1898 in Tifton, Georgia, while his father was engineering the construction of a dam nearby, but Bob grew up in Pittsburgh. He lived near both sides of his family, and he always maintained that his athletic precocity was matched by his desire for self-improvement and financial success, which is saying a good deal. "Oh, I had lots of schemes to make money as a boy," he admitted, "from hauling water to washing windows to selling more peanuts at Forbes Field than any kid in the park. And I never neglected my mind. We lived fairly close to the Carnegie Library, and I remember reading sixty books one summer."

Off and running in more ways than one, Bob never stopped, and by the age of eighty, he headed an empire worth between twenty-five and thirty million dollars. He began to make his mark in the oil burner business, but in the Twenties he became deeply interested in the strength and fitness fields, and by the early Thirties he had gotten out of oil burners, founded the York Barbell Company and begun publication of ***Strength & Health*** magazine, the primary tract through

which he spread his particular gospel of exercise and nutrition.

He later diversified, and his business interests included not only the manufacture and sale of exercise equipment, health foods of all sorts, and the aforementioned springwater but also a precision equipment company, an automatic screw company, two foundries and a sizable chunk of York County real estate, both urban and rural. But the double core of it all was the making and selling of exercise equipment and health foods, which combined to bring in a gross annual income of around fifteen million dollars in 1977, according to the late John Terpak, the former general manager of the York Barbell company.

Terpak was with the company from the middle 1930s until he died suddenly this past summer, as was Mike Dietz, who was the company's treasurer until his death, and much speculation exists in the iron game about their often hostile relationship. There are some close students of Hoffman Behavior who say he fostered this animosity through the years in order to keep the two men from joining forces against him. According to this theory, Bob orchestrated the dissonance, refusing to make either of them the other's boss, even—perhaps especially—in minor matters. Whatever the strength or weakness of that theory, the fact remains that Terpak and Dietz did have many differences of opinion regarding the business.

Take the issue of softball, In the early Seventies, Bob's lifelong interest in watching both baseball and softball began to shift toward an interest in sponsoring teams in softball, which he correctly perceived to be a growing, family-oriented recreational activity. Gradually, his sponsorship grew to the point at which, in 1977, he was outfitting and covering all the expenses of no fewer than fourteen full teams, all but one in the York area. So committed did he become, in fact, that he built a complex of five softball fields and paid two hundred thousand dollars for the complete renovation of a former minor league baseball stadium—the centerpiece of the Bob Hoffman Softball Complex.

By conservative estimate, Bob's investment in softball during the Seventies amounted to a million dollars, far more than he put during the same period into the national and international lifting teams which for decades had been the main recipients of his largesse. But even to a man with Hoffman's cash flow, a million dollars was a great deal of money—far too much money, in the opinion of general manager Terpak, who felt that the million dollars had been more or less poured down a rathole. Treasurer Dietz, on the other hand, said, "It's Bob's money. Let him blow it any way he likes. Besides, he's been right before when most of us were wrong, so maybe he's right again."

As a philanthropy, of course, and not as an *investment,* the million can easily be seen to have been of great benefit to the sport and the community. The people at the American Amateur Softball Association, in fact, were so enamored of Bob that they installed him in their Hall of Honor. The question, though, is whether Bob cast this bread on the water with the hope of returns other than the predictable kudos from York township and softball officialdom.

As is often the case with Bob, his motives were complex, if transparent. "I've always loved watching ball games," he said in 1978, "and a few years ago I began to realize the enormous potential softball had to change people's lives. Do you realize that as many as thirty-seven million people in the U.S. alone participate in this activity? Think of that! Think how wonderful it would be if even a significant minority of those thirty seven million could be convinced that a little weight training would make them better players; that Hoffman's Hi-Proteen and other food supplements would do more for their games than hot dogs, beer and cigarettes, and that following my rules for healthful living could make them not only better athletes but better husbands, better wives, better workers, better lovers.

"As a nation, we're in pitiful condition," Bob added, really rolling by then. "We continue to fall further and further down the list of the healthiest countries in the world in terms of obesity, infant mortality, longevity, circulatory problems and in the physical fitness of our children, even though we're the wealthiest country in the world. The situation is desperate. We eat too much of many things and too little of others; we smoke, we drink, we either take no exercise or insufficient exercise and we try to make up for it by taking more pills-more life-sapping drugs-than any nation on the face of the earth. I've been around a long time now and I've seen a lot—I've been to 108 foreign countries—and what I see disturbs me deeply. I fear for our nation, both physically and morally. I love the United States and I always have. I fought for this country in the First World War, and ever since then I've been working eighteen hours a day to do my part to build a stronger, a healthier, a better America. If I can influence even a few of the millions of softball players to live wiser, healthier lives, I'll feel that whatever money I've put into the sport has been well invested."

Just how subject these thirty-seven million folks might have been to Bob's influence was interesting to consider on the occasion of the only one of his several eightieth birthday parties actually to be held on his birthday. Almost a thousand people—ninety-five percent of whom were softballers—crowded into Wisehaven Hall in York to say thanks to Bob for all he'd done for them, which included paying for the roast beef and chicken dinner. He had also paid for the eight-page pamphlets which graced each placesetting. The pamphlets were filled with photos and information on the highlights of Bob's life and, of course, they contained his rules for healthful living. As the softballers took their seats, loud chuckling could be heard as the guests began reading through the list of twelve rules.

"Avoid alcoholic beverages," a voice said.

"If that means beer, forget it," said another, to explosive laughter.

"If old Bob drank a six pack every few days, I'll bet he'd still have his hair." More laughter.

"Hey, look at rule number twelve—'Avoid sexual indiscretions'—what in hell's that supposed to mean?" someone questioned.

"I think it means don't get caught." came the answer.

"Old Bob write that? He must be slowing down some." More laughter. And so on.

Whatever eventual effect Bob's one million plus may have had on the strength and health of either the softball players of America or the balance sheets of the York Barbell Company, it did add to his growing reputation in the York area as a doer of good, and costly deeds. Famous for years in his hometown only for his exploits in lifting and for his recurrent violations of his own rule number twelve, Bob gave freely in the last decades, and his gifts have been appreciated.

Outside Carlisle, Pennsylvania, he purchased and developed an eleven hundred acre property as a YMCA campsite. Near

York, he donated several hundred prime acres for use as a public park. At York Hospital, he contributed one hundred thousand dollars toward the construction of a new physical therapy facility. In the city of York he bought a former bank building and had it restored and remodeled for the Y.M.C.A Through the foundation which bears his name, he sent many young people through college, as well as doing such small but thoughtful things as helping a local high school band make a long, expensive trip; sponsoring scholarships for excellence in journalism at York College; and donating a piece of land near his home in Dover for a regional police station and then outfitting the station with exercise equipment.

Bob not only became a philanthropist in his later years, but a collector as well. For some time he and Alda, who were always fascinated by bears, filled every nook and cranny of their huge home with an amazing assortment of carved, molded, cast, blown, poured, and mounted bears of every shape, size and price range, from one dollar plastic figurines a few inches high to a full-sized adult polar bear, stuffed and lurking in their hallway.

Surrounded by their bears, their other mementoes from Bob's international trips, and their many farms, which were managed by Alda, they seemed to have a good life in their later years. Alda could set a four star Pennsylvania Dutch table with all the trimmings and she always saw that when Bob was home he had full access to his favorite foods, which included dandelion greens and ice cream mixed with what else but Hoffman's Hi-Proteen. What he did not have full access to during some of those days, however, was his basement gym, which Alda padlocked following Bob's open heart surgery. "That fool would've been down there the minute he got home," Alda said, laughing, "I know him. He squeezed a pair of hand grip pers and kept tensing his muscles all the time he was in the hospital. I could've shot him."

"After my last examination," Bob countered, "the doctors told me that I was free to lift whatever I wanted but all Alda has gotten for me out of my gym so far is a pair of five pound dumbells, a pair of ten pounders and a pair of twenties. I use them in my bedroom at least three times each week, between thirty and forty-five minutes each time, and I do between three and five miles of fast walking every day. Alda's a wonderful woman but she's a bit on the conservative side where exercise is concerned."

Being on the conservative side where exercise is concerned, however, was never to be a thing of which Bob himself could have been accused, even at the age of eighty. At that age, he not only still enjoyed and practiced regular exercise but he loved to watch sports— particularly, of course, weightlifting and powerlifting—and it would be safe to say that no man ever saw as much international competition in these two branches of heavy athletics as Bob Hoffman saw. His affair with weightlifting began seventy years ago and every Olympic Games since 1932 found him serving the US team in some capacity. He was the coach of the US team in every Games from 1948 to 1968, and his York Barbell Club lifters won the team trophy in the US Weightlifting Championships an incredible forty-eight times.

In the younger but faster-growing sport of powerlifting, Bob had a hand on the helm at the beginning, sponsoring both the first nationwide championships (in 1964), the first official national championships (in 1965) and the first world championships (in 1971), as well as several subsequent national and world events. In November of 1978, in fact, he and Alda attended the world powerlifting championships in Turku, Finland.

"I've always believed in the powerlifts and I've advocated them as a form of competition and as a way for athletes to train for improvement in their chosen sport," Bob said at the national A.A.U. meet in San Antonio in 1978. "I supported them even when they were only done by men, but I'm doubly behind them now that the women are also deeply involved and I intend to stage and promote the World Championships for men in 1979 in such a way that it will be worth coming a long way to see. Not only will the audience get to see some of the strongest and best built men in the world they'll also get to see some of the world's strongest and most beautiful women. And while they're here they can tour our world famous Weightlifting Hall of Fame at the downtown headquarters of the York Barbell Company, or go out to our main manufacturing plant and see how we make the finest barbells and health foods in the world. Hard to beat a package deal like that."

Those of us who were around Bob often forget through familiarity the effects of this sort of continuous self-promotion on the almost reverential way he was regarded in some parts of the world. At the World Championships in Finland, however, those of us so forgetful had a chance to see this reverence displayed. The most extreme example occurred one afternoon before the competition began. The team from India had just arrived and were checking in at the hotel desk when Bob came into the lobby wearing his coat-of-many-medals. As he walked toward them, one of the Indians looked up, saw Bob and began saying over and over again—chanting, really— "Bob Hoffman, Bob Hoffman, Bob Hoffman." And as Bob walked up to them and extended his hand, half of the group actually knelt at his feet and—I may as well say it straight out-touched the hem of his garment as the mantra droned on, "Bob Hoffman, Bob Hoffman, Bob Hoffman."

Lest anyone imagine for a moment, however, that Bob was *embarrassed* by this display, or non-plused, nothing could be further from the easy, graceful way he accepted the veneration. The pope never drew breath who felt any more at home in the role of worshipee than Bob felt. He worked so hard and so long promoting himself, his business and his way of life that far him to hear his own words or sentiments on the tongues of others must surely have seemed part of the natural order of things.

This limitless capacity to promote, though it was the *sine qua non* of his business success, often produced acute embarrassment among those around him. I, for one, will never forget a day in 1965 when I and several other lifters were at the airport with Bob, waiting to check our luggage for a cross country trip. The line was rather long and was moving slowly, so Bob commenced to enlighten everyone within earshot about who we were and where we were going.

"You people were no doubt wondering," he began, "just who this group of athletes was with their broad shoulders and thick chests. Well, they're all national lifting champions of one sort or another, and we're on our way to California to show them what the boys from the York Barbell Club can do when they try. This smaller fellow here (pointing to Bill March, then the national 198 pound champion) holds the world record. As for this bearded giant next to me (pointing, unfortunately, to me), this man mountain, this one man

crowd, well, he's the strongest man in the whole wide world. (My God, I thought, I hope Paul Anderson doesn't hear about this.) Hips like a quarter horse, shoulders like a bull, and a grip like a gorilla. Why he can crumple up a beer can—not that he'd ever *drink* a beer, mind you—like an ordinary man would wad up a Dixie cup." And so on and on. By this time my turn had come and the ticket agent, who'd been unable to avoid hearing Bob hold forth about me and my "gorilla grip," was eyeing me suspiciously. He bent to look at my suitcase, which, because of some sort of malf unctioning of the catch, I'd been unable to completely shut when I left home. He looked up and said sharply, "You failed to snap your bag." At that point Bob stepped up, and said with a laugh, 'Well, young man, if you can shut it I guess we'll leave the big fellow here and take *you* to California." And then, with Bob, my teammates and what seemed (still seems!) to be half the people in the terminal looking on, the agent—an average guy—bent down, placed both his thumbs on the catch and, snap!, shut the thing like a lunch pail.

But, praise be, I have other memories, such as the time back in the mid-Sixties when Bob was confronted in my presence by Dr. Craig Whitehead, a young physician who questioned the medical and even the ethical underpinning of a recent ***Strength & Health*** article in which senior citizens everywhere were urged by Bob to consume lots of Hoffman's Hi-Proteen as a hedge against the aging process. "What bothers me, Bob," Whitehead said, "is that here I am, a healthy young man, in top lifting shape, and yet even *I* get gaseous when I eat much of that Hi-Proteen. Do you think that people in their sixties and seventies can metabolize all that soy flour?"

"Well, after all," Bob countered, without even a smidgen of hesitation, "what's wrong with a little gas? Most of the men on the York team have always had a little gas. Grimek's always had gas. And Stanko? Well! I'll never forget one night back in the late thirties coming home from a contest in New York with a carload of our men. We'd stopped to eat at a beanery as we left the city. . .What a trip. Thank God it was a warm spring night and we could roll the windows down."

Besides this Jovean ability to rationalize, Bob also had a great gift for hortatory language—whether spoken or written down. A politic writer and speaker, he encouraged people through books, articles, pamphlets, speeches and courses to become stronger, healthier and better for almost sixty years, publishing during that time an astonishing amount of material. In all, though only God or a Univac could know for sure, Bob quite likely put into print somewhere around *ten million* words, all of them typed by his own hands, in that rambling, personal style.

The reason he was able to crank it out so fast, other than his Brobdignagian capacity for work, was that until his last years he always had such a flypaper memory. Often, writing about lifting competitions he had attended, he would use no notes at all but could recall with precise detail every lift made or missed by every man in the meet, even if this meant remembering five hundred separate lifts. But age has a way of blunting even the sharpest of mnemonic tools, and Bob was honest about his loss, although he managed to give it his own characteristic spin.

"I have to admit that my failing memory is a bother to me," he said. "I have to constantly recheck my facts when I'm writing and I sometimes forget whether or not I have certain appointments. I travel so often and have so much to do that with this untrustworthy memory I occasionally wake up wondering where I am and what I'm supposed to do that day. No doubt during my operation the arterial flow to my brain was temporarily cut off, resulting in this loss. A normal man, of course, would have been turned into an artichoke."

The bottom line on Bob may indeed be this ability to turn things to his own advantage, to see a horse when others see only horse-apples. And this ability, unlike his memory or his physical strength, seemed undiminished as he aged. For instance, a couple of days after Bob's eightieth birthday, a softball church league in York held its annual dinner and Bob was are of the invited dignitaries, with me tagging along as his guest. What neither Bob nor I realized about the dinner was that although he was indeed a head table guest, he was not the main attraction, this honor belonging to Greg Luzinski of the Philadelphia Phillies.

As custom dictates, the head table was served first, and as we were finishing our meal, one of the boys in the audience finally gathered his courage and walked up to ask Luzinski for an autograph, at which point scores of other kids began knocking chairs over in an effort to be the next one up there. The crush at the head table became so bad, in fact, that the master of ceremonies had to ask the boys and girls to form a line extending off to Luzinski's left along the front of the table. And, after a lot of 'me first' jockeying, this was done. I was on Bob's left while Luzinski was on his right, an arrangement which meant that the kids began to fidget past the two of us on the way toward Luzinski's coveted signature. Bob sat still for a while, watching them pass, but finally he could stand the neglect no longer.

"Hey, there," he said to the ten year old directly in front of him, "do you know who this big guy is sitting here next to me (pointing, I realized with a flagging heart, to me)? Have you seen him on TV? Well, he's the strongest man in the world, that's who he is." (Oh, no, I thought, not again, especially since I'd been retired by then for more than a decade.) "Feel his muscle." (The kid reaches over, tries to encircle my arm with his small hands, and goes, "Wow, Mike, take a look at this arm.")

This new buzz attracts attention and as kids crowd toward us to feel my "muscle," the focus of attention begins to shift ever so slightly. Bob presses on, smelling blood, speaking now to each child as he or she passes in front, asking each one, "How big is that Luzinski, anyway? About 220, I'd say. Well, this guy here with me weighs well over 300 (about 270, actually). He makes old Greg look kind of puny now, doesn't he? Feel that arm. He's bigger than the Incredible Hulk I'm his coach, you know. He eats lots and lots of Hoffman's Hi-Proteen. That's why he made all those lifting records, and that's why he was an All American football player at the University of Texas." (Have mercy, I thought, never having played a single down of organized football anywhere.) As the kids clustered around us I was shaking my head and wishing for some hip boots, yet I had to laugh in spite of my embarrassment as kid after wide-eyed kid reached over to touch my arm and to ask for my autograph. And to ask of course, for Bob's.

[The majority of the interviews in this article were done in the days just before and after Bob Hoffman's eightieth birthday in York, Pennsylvania, in November of 1978.]

The Roark Report
John Terpak: 1912-1993

Born: 5 July 1912 in Mayfield, Pennsylvania.
Died: 1 June 1993 at 2:42 a.m., at York, Pennsylvania. Buried: 4 June 1993.
Married: Mildred Louis Bulk Son: John B. Terpak, Jr. Daughter: Joan Plitt.
Four Grand-Children; One Great-Grandson.
Met Bob Hoffman in 1935 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

John Terpak's life was one of continuous self-improvement. Even before he won the first ***Strength & Health*** magazine self-improvement contest in February, 1936, he had been improving. Competing in the 1934 Junior National Weightlifting championships, his eighth place finish in the 148 pound class was 281 pounds behind winner John Terlazzo's total. By the time of the 1935 Junior Nationals, Terpak won the 148 pound class and totaled 275 pounds more than the previous year. Of course, much of that was due to a successful two arm clean and jerk in 1935. He had missed all his clean and jerks the year before. Nonetheless, Terpak was setting a pattern of succeeding over previous attempts.

This year—l993—at the National Weightlifting Championships in Peoria, Illinois, Terpak was recognized for participating in sixty consecutive national championships. He won those nationals twelve times, and one span-from 1936 to 1945—was a literal decade of victory. Then in 1946 he placed second. The following year he won again. At subsequent Nationals, he was a spectator, a judge, or a coach. He also served in whatever non-spotlighted functions were needed.

During Terpak's lifting career, he participated in three bodyweight classes: 148, 165 and 181. The accompanying chart provides the details, and while not comprehensive, it does indicate the magnitude of his involvement with our sport. Take note of his lifting at the World Championships and in the Olympic Games.

Life changed over the decades for John. He went from living in a "Thirty-five dollar, five room apartment," to much better quarters. He evolved from champion lifter to businessman and executive with the York Barbell Company. When he was recognized this year in Peoria, one noticed his absolutely squared shoulders, his head held high and his determined walk. He was not a man who had lost his physique. Even at eighty, his demeanor was not diminished. When, only a handful of weeks after I saw him in Peoria, I learned of his death on 1 June 1993, it somehow seemed fitting that his life ended abruptly, rather than declinigly. He seemed to be full of life. Then died.

It was no easy task to be involved in our sport, with all the different aspects and federations and organizations and business competitions, and remain a survivor for more than half a century. John Terpak did it.

References to Terpak's lifting career may be found in:

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"American records—Terpak," ***Lifting News*** (March 1968): 8.
"John Terpak: Newest Lifting Sensation," ***Strength & Health*** (October 1935): 18.
"He Wins Self Improvement Contest," ***Strength & Health*** (February 1936): 7.
"Cartoonish Profile," ***Strength & Health*** (October 1939): 13.
"John Terpak," ***Strength & Health*** (May 1940): 29.
"Paragraph of Facts," ***Strength & Health*** (March 1941): 37.

John's byline appeared on the following articles in ***Strength & Health.*** Between April 1964 and October 1966 a series of athlete profiles ran each month called "Lifter's Comer." **[Ed note:** Few of these articles were actually written by Terpak.]

"Lifting Around America," ***S & H*** (October 1941): 18.
"Lifting Around America," ***S & H*** (November 1941): 12.
"The Christiani Family," ***S & H*** (November 1943): 28.
"Turning Handicapped Rookies Into Fighting Men," ***S & H*** (January 1944): 28.
"Fred Thompson: Self Improvement Winner," ***S & H*** (February 1944): 22.
"You Can Improve Your Athletic Ability," ***S & H*** (June 1944): 24.
"Clarence Ross: Mr. America 1945," ***S & H*** (August 1945): 17.
"Those Russians!," ***S & H*** (January 1947): 14.
"South of the Border," ***S &H*** (May 1951): 30.
[As told by John Davis,] "Training for the Press," ***S & H*** (May 1952): 10.
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"Dietrich Wortman: In Memoriam," ***S & H*** (January 1953): 37.
[With six co-authors] "So You Want to be a Weightlifter," ***S & H*** (August 1962): 15.
"Lifter's Comer: Tony Garcy," ***S & H*** (April 1964): 24.
"Lifter's Comer: Joe Dube," ***S & H*** (May 1964): 24.
"Lifter's Comer: Norbert Schemansky," ***S & H*** (June 1964): 28.
"Lifter's Comer Bill March," ***S & H*** (July 1964): 28.
"Lifter's Comer: Gary Cleveland," ***S & H*** (August 1964): 50.
"Lifter's Comer: Louis Riecke," ***S & H*** (September 1964): 22.

The Lifting Career of John Terpak

Date	Contest & Place	One-Hand Snatch	One-Hand Jerk	Press	Snatch	Clean and Jerk	Total
1934	UNKNOWN CONTEST:			175	175	225	575
1934	JR. NATIONALS: 8TH @ 148	126.5	143	176	187	0	632.5
1935	MIDDLE ATLANTIC:			180	180	230	590
1935	JR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 148	143	165	181.5	181.5	236.5	907.5
1935	SR. NATIONALS: 4TH @ 148	154	170.5	192.5	181.5	253	952
1935	TWO WEEKS LATER:			200	200	260	660
1935	ONE WEEK LATER:			205	210	0	410
1935	YORK v. TORONTO: AUG 4			208	208	263	679
1935	CANADIAN NAT'S: 1ST @ 148			205	215	260	680
1935	OLIPHANT v. YORK:			210	210	265	685
1936	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @148			220	220	297	737
1936	OLYMPICS: 5TH @ 148			214.5	220	275	709.5
1937	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			235	245	325	805
1937	WORLDS: 1ST @ 165			225.25	242	308	775.5
1938	MID-ATLANTIC: 1ST @ 181			235	260	320	815
1938	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			235	250	300	785
1938	WORLDS: 3RD @ 165			231	247.5	308	786.5
1939	SR. NATIONALS: 1 ST @ 165			235	240	325	800
1940	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			240	235	325	800
1940	INTERNAT'L CUP: 1ST @ 165			240	255	330	825
1940	NYC INVITATIONAL:			250	250	310	810
1940	QUALIFIED FOR OLYMPICS: GAMES NOT HELD DUE TO WAR						
1941	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			245	250	320	815
1942	SR. NATIONALS: 1 ST @ 165			240	245	315	800
1943	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 181			245	245	310	800
1944	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 165			250	250	330	830
1945	SR. NATJONALS: 1 ST @ 165			245	230	300	775
1946	SR. NATIONALS: 2ND @ 165			247	252	317	816
1946	WORLDS: 2ND @ 165			248	253.5	325	826.75
1947	SR. NATIONALS: 1ST @ 181			250	260	330	840
1947	WORLDS: lST@ 181			253.5	264.5	336.25	854.25
1948	SR. NATIONALS: 2ND @ 165			255	250	295	800
1948	OLYMPICS: 4TH @ 165			226	226	297.5	749.5

John Terpak was part of nine Olympic teams. He served as coach of the United States team in 1968—Mexico City—and in 1972—Munich. In 1986, in Moscow, he was head referee in the 220) pound class at the Goodwill Games.

"Lifter's Comer: Gray Hanson," ***S & H*** (October 1964): 22.
"Lifter's Comer: Joe Puleo," ***S & H*** (November 1964): 32.
"Lifter's Comer: Isaac Berger," **S & *H*** (December 1964): 38.
"Lifter's Comer: Tommy Kono," ***S* & *H*** (January 1965): 38.
"Lifter's Comer: Jim Dorn," ***S* & *H*** (February 1965): 38.
"Lifter's Comer: Geza Toth," ***S* & *H*** (March 1965): 36.
"Lifter's Comer: Lee Phillips," ***S* & *H*** (April 1965): 38.
"Backstage Warm-up," ***S* & *H*** (May 1&5): 26.
"Lifter's Comer: Imre Foldi," ***S* & *H*** (May 1965): 46.
"Lifter's Comer: Bob Bednarski," ***S* & *H*** (June 1965): 32.
[As told by Tommy Kono,] "The Golden Straps," ***S & H*** (June 1965): 48.
"Lifter's Comer: Mihaly Huszka," ***S* & *H*** (July 1965): 28.
"Lifter's Comer: Pierre St. Jean," ***S* & *H*** (August 1965): 30.
"Lifter's Comer: Leonid Zhabotinsky," ***S & H*** (September 1965): 46.
"Lifter's Comer: Bob Bartholomew," ***S & H*** (October 1965): 46.
"Lifter's Comer: Karoly Ecser," ***S & H*** (November 1965): 44.
"Lifter's Comer: Walter Imahara," ***S & H*** (December 1965): 44.
"Lifter's Comer: Arpad Nemessanyi," ***S & H*** (January 1966): 44.
"Lifter's Comer: Gary Gubner," ***S & H*** (February 1966): 36.
"Lifter's Comer: Kailajarvi Brothers," ***S & H*** (March 1966): 34.
"Lifter's Comer: Rudy Plukfelder," ***S & H*** (April 1966): 34.
"Lifter's Comer: Jerry Ferrelli," ***S & H*** (May 1966): 42.
"Lifter's Comer: George Pickett," ***S & H*** (June 1966): 34.
"Lifter's Comer: Barry Whitcomb," ***S & H*** (July 1966): 30.
"Lifter's Comer: Homer Brannum," ***S & H*** (August 1966): 30.
"Lifter's Comer: Phil Grippaldi," ***S & H*** (September 1966): 30.
"Lifter's Comer: Norman Rauch," ***S & H*** (October 1966): 30.
"A Message from the AAU National Weightlifting Chairman," ***S & H*** (July 1968): 50.
"National AAU Weightlifting Committee Report," ***S & H*** (February 1972): 19.
"Editorial: ***S & H*** Magazine is Ending," ***S & H*** (May 1986): 5.

—Joe Roark

The Association of Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen is scheduled to hold its 1993 meeting and reunion on the 23rd of October, at the Downtown Athletic Club in New York City. Honored by the association this year will be Dave Webster, strength historian and Scottish Highland Games promoter; Terry Robinson, famous Hollywood trainer of the stars; and Chuck Vinci, Olympic gold medalist in 1956 and 1960. For tickets and and other information, contact Vic Boff at 4959 Vii St., Cape Coral, Florida, 33904. Phone: 813-549-8407.

A British friend, fellow history buff, David Gentle, recently sent us a magazine article about another old-timers gathering, this one held in England. Inspired by the lead of the Association of Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen, Reg Park, Dave Webster, Tom Templeton, and Dianne Bennett joined together to host a reunion and to present the first "Pioneers of Physical Culture" award for the United Kingdom. The 1992 award went to octogenarian Bob Woolger, for his lifetime of dedication to the Iron Game. Dianne Bennett organized the dinner/celebration. Arnold Schwarzenegger was among those who attended.

Library News: We are grateful beyond words to Mabel Rader for her recent donation of the ***Iron Man*** magazine archives to our collection. Through the more than fifty years that Mabel and Peary ran ***Iron Man,*** they carefully saved the items that made up each issue of ***IM.*** The manuscripts, photographs, correspondence, and other related items tilled eighty book cartons and are now in the process of being sorted catalogued and preserved for future generations of iron game historians. We'd also like to thank Alton Eliason for donating his extensive collection of magazines and correspondence. Once a successful gym-owner and promoter of physical culture shows, Alton is now a national authority on organic gardening, though as his letter on the next page attests, he still loves the Iron Game.

Dear ***IGH:***

Remembering a letter sent to you by Curd Edmunds which you published in Vol. 2, No. 3, of ***Iron Game History,*** I thought he (and you) would be interested in this newspaper cutting [***Daily Telegraph,*** April 1993]. It involves a man, George Ives, who died recently aged 111 years. Ives could chin up to a parallel bar by the arms until he was well past one hundred. He remained critical of his children's generation, complaining that youngsters in their eighties and nineties were apt to let themselves go.

After serving as a soldier in the Boer War, joining in 1899, he became a farmer in British Columbia, Canada. He proved to be a hard-working and methodical farmer. In 1919 he moved to White Rock, British Columbia, where he took a dairy farm. I thought Curd would be interested as he, too, is a farmer. I recalled Curd writing, "I feel so good, maybe God will let me read ***IGH*** two more years," then wondered whether he had read Genesis, Chapter 6:3—"And God said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." As a point of interest, I notice that from the ages of sixty to seventy-five, Ives worked in a shipyard, and I imagine he still did work that involved keeping his muscular system in good tone—not office work.

Please do not think that I am suggesting that Curd should aim to live to be 120 years. Just as Alan Calvert wrote in ***Super Strength***—page 141—"It would be the height of folly to exercise just for the sake of getting big muscles on the outside of the body," so it would in my opinion be the height of folly to aim to grow old just for the sake of being old.

Re: Alan Calvert: In the same issue of ***IGH*** which contamed Curd's letter was another from Roger Manna suggesting a feature article about Alan Calvert. I, too, was mystified many years ago about his complete "volte face," (about face). How could he write in his ***Super-Strength*** (1924, page 169): "I can state positively that the easiest and quickest way to get a magnificent build and the super-strength that goes with it is to practice a progressive schedule of developing exercises with an adjustable barbell." And, write in the same book, on page 134, "The greatest value of barbell exercise is its undoubted effect in promoting the vigor of your digestive and assimilative processes." On page 143, Calvert wrote: "In conclusion, I wish to state emphatically that in order to be super-*strong a man has to be super healthy*. If you train so as to increase the vigor of your internal organs at the same time as you are increasing the exterior development, you will get the kind of muscle that will stay with you for the rest of your life, and you can create an upright, shapely figure that will not become bowed and enfeebled until extreme old age." Then, in the following year—1925—he published the pamphlet ***Natural Strength Versus Made Strength—an Explanation of Why I Abandoned the Field of Heavy Exercise.*** It was a 2500 word booklet and it ran into several editions.

In the late 1930s I bought a second hand book in a market for six pence (a few cents). It was ***Exercise Without Exercise,*** by S. Arthur Devan, a "disciple" of Alan Calvert in which his teachings are described in detail. It was published in Great Britain in 1935—no mention of an American edition-but I noticed in Vol. 2, No. 4 of ***IGH,*** there is a letter from Raymond Rogers who, writing about Alan Calvert, mentions Arthur Devan's name along with Harry Paschall, Sieg Klein, and Ray Van Cleef. I was surprised at this because I have never seen his name mentioned in an American magazine. I think he was probably English as he starts Chapter Two by writing: "An American friend of mine, Mr. Alan Calvert. . ."—in the same chapter he writes, "Some years ago he came to the conclusion that the whole business of training for strength through the use of apparatus and special exercises was all wrong." Although I have read this many times through the years and it contains some good sense, there are also several nonsensical statements concerning men with muscles sticking out all over them dropping off suddenly into the Great Beyond through heart failure and other things. When I was younger it was quite common for a person to say, "It is

well known that strong men die young." I would reply, 'Tell me one who died young and I will tell you of twenty who lived to be old." After all, when Sandow died at age fifty-seven, he was still several years older than the average man in England at that time.

Joe Assirati
London, England

Ed Note: If we had to pick one man as a relatively unsung hero in the field of physical culture, Joe Assirati, whom we featured in Vol. 2, No. 5 of ***IGH*** would be a good choice. Now eighty-eight years old, Joe still works out regularly, and it is an absolute delight to us when we receive a letter from him. As for the mystery of Alan Calvert's spurning of weightlifting, it appears to have been partly a matter of economics. In a letter to Ottley Coulter dated 31 January 1919, Calvert wrote: "All the offers I made to you will have to be considered as 'off as I recently sold out to a couple of young men who intend to revive the business and operate under the old title of The Milo Barbell Company. I have agreed never to re-enter the Bar Bell business, so all my connection with the P.C. game is at an end." However, as many of our readers know, Calvert's association with physical culture was not at an end. In ***Natural Strength Versus Made Strength,*** Calvert explains that he has purchased turn-of-the-century health reformer Edwin Checkley's copyrights and will be henceforth promoting the Checkley system Watch future issues of ***IGH*** for the full story of Calvert's fascinating career.

Dear ***IGH,***

I wanted to tell you of one of the most enjoyable visits Marge and I have ever had in our long life. We had the pleasure of meeting John and Lucille Gorton, a two hour visit that proved much too short. We went to interview John about his phenomenal powerlifting at age eighty-five. Lucille, age eighty-one is a wonderful, loquacious conversationalist with a delightful sense of humor that made the visit most enjoyable and memorable. You may remember my telling you of Ed Jubinville describing this eight-five year old powerlifter he saw compete in a meet at Stamford, Connecticut last year. John Gorton is the man. The few figures I will present will convince you of the strength of this quiet, unassuming, but legitimate strongman.

Born in England, 6 August 1907, he came to St. Johnsbury, Nova Scotia, Canada at age five. He moved to the United States in 1926 and survived the depression working as a migrant seaman and finally in New York as the manager of, to use one of his own words, a third-rate off Broadway hotel, from 1937 until he entered the service. Returning there after the War, he trained at Adolph Rhein's Gym-later to be John Terlazzo's—Sieg Klein's Gym and others. In 1955 at 190 pounds, he deadlifted 558 pounds. Later, at a bodyweight of 165 pounds, he deadlifted 514 and squatted with 412. At 146 pounds, he bent-pressed 166 pounds with his right arm and 156 with his left. At age eighty-five, in a recent meet in Stamford, where they live, he deadlifted 360 pounds, squatted with 250 and bench pressed 125. (Since I failed to write these last two figures down there may be a slight discrepancy in them.)

Obviously, his forte is the deadlift, which resulted from his severely injuring his seventh and eight dorsal vertebras in the service. Cautioned by the doctors that he would never exercise again, he took matters into his own hands and did just that. Noting that he suffered a severe curvature of the spine, he resorted to deadlifting with straight back while standing on a box, eventually reaching 300 pounds, lifting the bar from his toes. Having corrected his curvature, he then practiced the usual deadlift.

Alton Eliason
Northford, Connecticut

Dear ***IGH,***

I recently came across the May 1993 ***Iron Game History*** and want to tell you how much I enjoyed the issue. Having been a voracious reader of ***Strength*** & ***Health*** magazine and having trained in Sieg Klein's Gym in New York City, your magazine's articles struck many delightfully responsive chords.

The articles were all well-written and extremely informative. Especially noteworthy was the excellent word-picture description of the second Oscar Heidenstam Memorial Trust dinner reunion that occurred in England on March 20, 1993. The writer of the description, Dr. Rosa, did a magnificent job of presenting both the substance and flavor of the event. His account was extremely delightful and gripping to read. Actually, it gave me the sense of being at the reunion, such was his superb account of what transpired. It is obvious that Dr. Rosa is a very talented writer. I hope he will contribute additional articles to ***Iron Game History.***

There is a weight training/bodybuilding club at the University; I will have the president of the club order one or more subscriptions to your fine publication. Your publication is especially important for contemporary bodybuilders to read because it will clearly show them that great strength and magnificent bodies may be developed *without* the use of steroids.

Michael Klausner, University of Pittsburgh
Bradford, Pennsylvania

Dear ***IGH,***

I just got off the phone with you. I really enjoyed talking to you. I've enclosed some pictures of Richard Sorin, the guy with the super-strong hands I was talking about. I've got a bunch more photos of this guy if you are interested. I've also got a hand-gripper, made by Warren Tetting, and there are only four of these grippers in existence. They are of .300 of an inch diameter spring size. I have seen no man close them with both hands. Richard Sorin has closed it shut with one hand. This guy is worth looking into, he is for real.

Joe Musselwhite
Mabank, Texas

Ed Note: We know he's for real, Joe, because just as we were going to press with this issue, Richard Sorin visited us at the Library. As always, it was a pleasure to show the Library to someone so keenly interested in the old days.