IRON GAME HISTORY

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 2 January 1994

# ED JUBINVILLE–A MEMORIAL

JOE ROARK

Letter to me from Ed on 24 March 1990: "I go for a quad bypass the 28th. Keep in touch."

Ed's doctor had predicted another seven years of life following that operation. Karyn, Ed's younger daughter, had filed that prediction and had hoped it was accurate. It would not prove to be.

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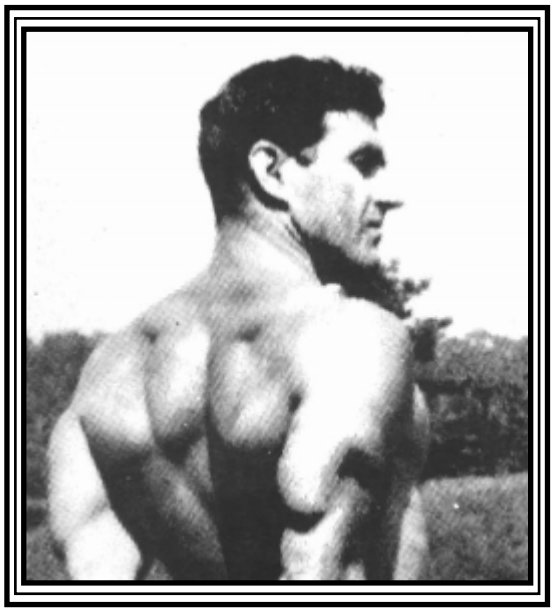
Year's ago when my newsletter, *Musclesearch*, began, the first subscriber was Ed Jubinville, who sent me five times the required money and asked for a one year subscription and that I apply the excess money "for the cause." That was my premier letter from Ed. During these past few years we have exchanged many letters, talked at length on the phone, and eaten some meals together at contest sites. When Dennis Reno telephoned me with the sadness of Ed's passing, it became obvious to me that a major source of information had just vanished that I had lost a friend, and that the sport's main "all-rounder" would never again participate.



Currently, lifters and bodybuilders endure for a brief spotlighted span in their respective indulgences: Ed had enjoyed a fifty-five year participation which included weighthfting, bodybuilding, powerlifting, equipment manufacturing, and arm wrestling. He was a promoter, a participant, a judge.

Perhaps most famous for his muscle control, a skill he began in 1938 and continued honing until his death, he kept a journal of all the public performances in which he demonstrated this nearly lost art. To get an idea of Ed's control, imagine flexing your right biceps, and then while keeping one biceps head flexed, alternately relax and flex the other head. You can imagine that: Ed could do that.

Perhaps Ed's most masterful control was over his viewpoint on life: he loved every waking moment of it, and had you spied him sleeping, probably a smile would be accompanying a snore. Even the stroke which removed his speech in 1981 did not remove his muscle control. His wife Betty worked with Ed on regaining his speech and six months led to great improvement Within another six months. full speech was his again, and he was able again to tell those wonderful stories with a flare that only those who have visited the places and people involved could relate them. He was, in fact, one of the handful of remaining connections with the strongmanism of the early part of this century, having flexed shoulders with Sieg Klein, handled the weights of Rolandow, and chatted with others of that era. But Ed stayed current. Your never perceived him as some old guy who was living in the past. In the early 1970s Ed and Lou Ferrigno toured Italy, and Ed was a friend to all he met. His acquaintances spanned decades of newcomers as he maintained friendships with men in the aging group who had originally inspired him to the iron.

One characteristic Ed never attained was arrogance. He once mentioned that he had not done anything that many others had not also done. He wrote to me on 13 October 1988: "In your newsletter, I couldn't believe what I saw and read about me. I guess I'm a friendly guy, why not, we aren't on earth that long so why not make the most of it. Take the good with the bad and believe it's for the best. God has His ways even though at times we do not agree but it always turns out right." Earlier, on 31 March 1986, he had written: 'The more I talk to Vic Boff the more I learn about the oldtimers."

Although he was humble, his sense of humor was exhilarating. 21 June 1985: "I have nine children—no muscle control there." Even *Muscle Builder* magazine reported in March 1964 that in "Holyoke . . . Seems that 'World's Greatest Muscle Control Artist" Ed Jubinville is trying to establish a reputation as 'father with the most children in the bodybuilding world.' The latest addition to the Jubinville clan is his new baby boy, who weighs in at 8 pounds, 3 ounces. That makes 9 kids. Congratulations, Ed. . .we're holding birth announcement space for you in next year's *Muscle Builder."* This was a reference to the 22 August 1963 birth of Ed's final child, Paul.

Ed's four marriages resulted in nine children, all of whom came through the first two marriages. With Dorothy Pouliot, whom he married on 30 August 1941, Ed had: Edward Jr. (29 July 1942); Richard (3 March 1944; died in a motorcycle/car accident on 2 June 1991); Norman (14 January 1947); and Elaine (22 August 1947). With June Haskell, whom he married on 2 April 1954, he had: David (5 June 1955); Robert (25 March 1957); Karyn (14 March 1959); Ronald (20 May 1961); and Paul (15 August 1963). Ed married Betty Forcier on 14 June 1986. She survives.

Ed began demonstrating his muscle control in 1938 according to his book, *That's Muscle Control.* "In October 1938, a local playground held a sports show and I was asked to perform." That was one month before his eighteenth birthday. Ten years later, *Your Physique* magazine announced in its May issue: "Edward Jubinville,

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America's greatest muscle control artist will challenge anyone in a contest in muscle control to prove his supremacy at the coming Eastem Mr. America event to be held May 28th at the Central Opera House in New York City. His story is currently appearing in *Muscle Power* magazine." That would be the June 1948 issue in an article by Martin Franklin about Ed titled, "Muscle Control Phenomenon," which informed us that, "After reading Maxick's book on muscle control, eighteen year old Ed fiddled around with the flexing exercises," Earlier, in 1941, Ed's wife's letter appeared in *Strength & Health* magazine in the December issue.

"Dear Bob Hoffman,

I am enclosing seven photos of my husband and myself. We have achieved much through living the *Strength & Health* way. My husband does not know that I am sending these pictures. I took them without his knowledge. His birthday is in November and I know he would be thrilled to see his pictures in *S&H.* Many people think he has the most unusual control over his muscles.

Mrs. Edward Jubinville
122 Newton Street
Holyoke, Mass."

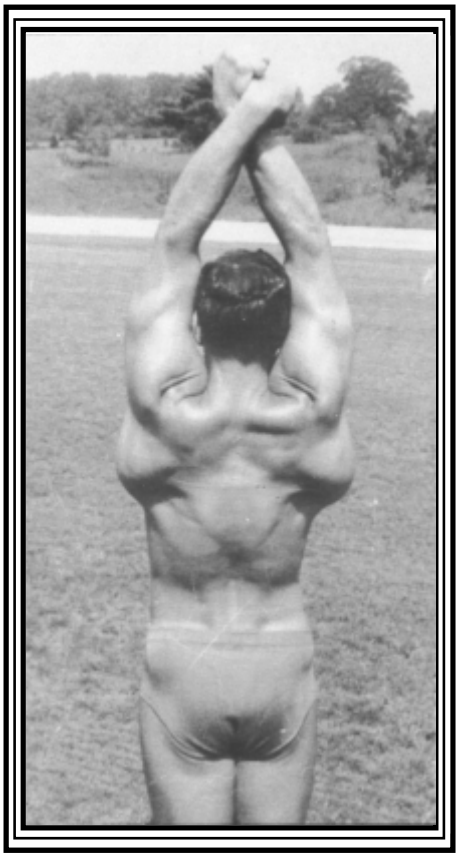
Ed was no doubt pleased to see the photo published showing him lifting Dorothy overhead. In the March 1944 issue of *S&H,* his own letter to the editor appeared.

"Dear sir,

I have most of your equipment and books, all of which I have used very much. I have received wonderful results. Enclosed find two pictures taken by Lon of New York City. I would be very pleased if one of them could be published.

I weigh 152 pounds and I can one arm clean 185 pounds. Please ask Grimek is he remembers the muscle-control friend who chatted with him for a full hour when he appeared at the Springfield College in 1940. I remain,

An ardent weightlifting fan,
Edward Jubinville"



ED JUBINVILLE PERFORMING THE MUSCLE CONTROL MOVEMENT KNOWN AS THE SCAPULA SEPARATION

*PHOTO: THE TODD-MCLEAN COLLECTION*

Ed's allegiance was to the whole iron game, not to any of its particular vendors, so in late 1947 when Ben Weider told Ed that the IFBB would someday be worldwide, Ed paid attention and, in the 1960s, became IFBB director for the New England area. He had not switched loyalty from the AAU; he had added loyalty to another group—the IFBB. Ed perceived the IFBB as being interested in furthering one of the aspects of iron—bodybuilding—that he loved. He later would lose interest in bodybuilding as a contest event because of the drugs, which caused bodybuilding to go as out of control as Ed's muscles were under his own control.

Ed was always his own man. Some may recall that Ed was head judge when Arnold defeated Sergio in Essen, Germany for the 1972 Mr. Olympia. This was a controversial decision but one which Ed stood by all these years, explaining that after the judges saw both men up close the nod went to Arnold. At one event, a promoter pulled Ed aside before the judging began and refreshed Ed's awareness that one specific bodybuilder had been promoted heavily in articles and ads and it sure would be nice if that bodybuilder could win this contest The hint was ugly and obvious, but Ed assured the promoter that the bodybuilder would win, if he was the best man on stage. The promoter then knew what Ed had known all his life: Ed Jubinville was not for sale.

Some of Ed's published memories were choice: *Iron Man* (January 1961, page 22): "A few years ago I received a letter from Lilly Christin (known as the Cat Girl) and a star of Mike Todd's 'PEEP SHOW," now one of the nation's top pin-up girls. In her letter she stated how she would like to learn the belly rolls . . . More than once I've been approached by female strippers asking for pointers on muscle control movements."

Ed wrote in *Iron Man* (March 1961) about the paramount control he had witnessed: "The most unique biceps control it has ever been my pleasure to see is the one performed by one of the all time greats, Marvin Eder, who can flex his biceps and have it move back and forth, first toward the forearm and then toward the shoulder."

Ronald Orlick addressed the issue of who has been our greatest muscle control artist when he wrote an article for *Muscle Training Illustrated* (September 1966): "Was Antone Matysek the greatest muscle control artist of all time?. . .Trying to compare the late Matysek with Jubinville is like trying to compare Jack Dempsey with Cassius Clay—no one will ever really know which is the greatest. My grandfather knew Antone Matysek when he was in his prime and raved about him. My father saw Ed Jubinville perform dozens of times and raves about him."

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The morning of 6 October 1993 brought news of Michael Jordan's retirement from basketball. At about the time that Michael was saddening the fans of that sport, Ed Jubinville was visiting the Jubinville Equipment Company. Two of his children, Robert and Karyn, had been running it for him since he retired in 1985. Ed would stop in most mornings from nine until noon, check the mail, perhaps install a cable on a machine, or help out in other ways. On this particular morning, Karyn trimmed her father's hair, and then Ed headed out the door and pronounced the final words Karyn would ever hear from her father's lips, "I'll see you tomorrow."

Ed drove the five miles to USA Superfitness in West Springfield, Massachusetts. He had joined the gym about five years earli-

er and usually trained there three times a week. His goal that day was to squat with 275 pounds, but into the workout, after he had finished a set of lat pulldowns, Ed was sitting on a bench when witnesses say he grabbed his chest and fell over. Immediately three men ran to his aid: one pushed on his chest and the other two alternated breathing into Ed's mouth with the skills they had learned in CPR class. The ambulance arrived twenty minutes later: fluids were injected. Karyn was unaware of all this until the phone rang at two PM. Ed had died at 1:48, and for the first time in fifty-five years, he no longer had immediate, bewildering control over his muscles.

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What follows are excepts from letters Ed wrote to me through the years, excerpts which help reveal the complex life of this multi-talented man.

**21 June 1985:** "I've been doing muscle control since 1939. I'm still doing it, last year was on *Real People* TV program."

**15 July 1985:** "I ran in an 8K race yesterday—right in my neighborhood—could walk to the start. Do some weight training daily—just whatever. Favor at moment equals to 2 full workouts per wk, perhaps . . . chins, dips, variety of presses, gutwork lower back, neck, legwork. Perhaps lunges or squats sometimes one-legged squats. Leg raises on chin-bar. Best gut exer. in my opinion. Now and then walk/run with weights in hands. Bike some too."

**26 September 1985:** "Weather is so nice and preparation for winter is reason I'm neglecting my book on M. [muscle control]. Come winter I will try to make up for lost time though it's impossible."

**3 March 1986:** "Not much new with me, last week was in VA for arm-wrestling meet. If this keeps up I should work for an airline—would be cheaper for me to fly."

**29 April 1987:** "Figured you would be interested in John Davis, first time I saw him was at Springfield College in an exhibition put on by Bob Hoffman. John did some Olympic lifting and after that did a one hand chin 3 reps while holding a 20 pound plate on the other arm. I was there to see this exhibition, others from York barbell were present including John Grimek (my idol). I skipped school that day and walked nine miles and it was worth it."

**25 August 1987:** "[It was] Weider's idea about writing a book on Muscle Control way back—I'm writing my bock my way. As for muscle control, what I've done in the past performances I still do with more variations. I performed in VA contest 2 weeks ago, this week in Vermont, I like to perform often, this way I am real sharp at it."

**9 October 1987:** Regarding the 209 pound Rolandow dumbell: "It wasn't clumsy—JCG [John C. Grimek] will tell you this. Just real compact—I picked it up in hopes of cleaning it—at that time I cleaned a dumbell weighing 186.5 lbs., and a barbell at 210 pounds. Never did go back to NYC to try it"

**31 August 1988:** (Ed had just sent me some magazines.) "A few old mags to make your day—enjoy. . .My M.C. book is at the printers—should be ready in three weeks. I refused the 1000 copies done by the first printer I tried. Not what I expected. Pictures with legs cut off, arm cut off, a few with part of my head cut off, asked for white paper and it was published with off-white, etc. . .Went to another printer yesterday and awaiting answer today."

**1 December 1988:** "Trust all is well with you. Next week I will be in Sweden with our arm wrestling team—19 people. 25 nations competing. Sure will be exciting for a few days—we use sit down tables."

**7 February 1989:** "The enclosed may help you on [the history of EZ curl] bars. Bob Hoffman sent me a letter, I still have it—Bob bought the patent from Andy Jackson—Springfield, N.J. George F. Jowett had a dumbell that weighed roughly 165 pounds. Told me nobody ever cleaned and bent pressed same. With my big and strong hands I could not clean it—circumference was too big. Paul Baillargeon a wrestler from Canada could not do it—finally brought it up with two hands to shoulder and then bent pressed easily."

**17 October 1989:** 'Whatever you do keep researching and write articles for mags which are sorely needed. I'm so dam sick and tired of the trash in the muscle mags—I like to read articles that make sense and are entertaining."

**1 November 1991:** "Hard to believe the shape Jack LaLanne is in—77 yrs, no loose skin on body, fantastic endurance and does water training daily in pool—I saw this. Deltoids like a young man. I compete next week in Fla. Masters P.L. 'Olde gray mare ain't what he used to be.'"

**27 June 1992:** (In l973 Lou Ferrigno competed in Switzerland and came in first.) "Two days after the contest I asked Lou to go to Italy with me for a few days...Went by train to Florence, found a hotel with one room left so we took it. We had a nice time and took a Gray Tour bus, went to churches, museums, etc . . . In restaurants we couldn't find pizzas, nobody talked English so we ate our share of spaghetti and ice cream. Everywhere we went he was marveled at by the citizens—all knew he was of Italian descent . . . [Here are] A few of the pics I took of Lou while in Italy. That is when I measured his arm with no warm up. At at that time he told me he weighed 255 lbs. Keep them."

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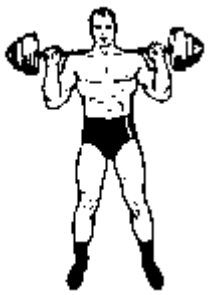
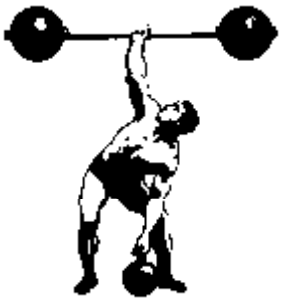
There is a sadness in me as I sit typing this. I know that never again will Ed turn his back to me and say, "I bet you've never seen this," and then flex the muscles on the back of his neck as though someone reached under them and plucked them. And then smile at me because he knows full well I have never seen such a feat.

Regarding Ed and the fact that I will never again be in his company to enjoy his conversation or to share his smile, or to listen to his wonderful tales of strength stars, I feel inside-out empty. ✣



*Jim Murray*

# *More Memories of Bob Hoffman*



**We are happy to announce that beginning with this issue we will publish a series of articles by Jim Murray, who, as a young man, worked as an editor for both Bob Hoffman and Joe Weider. Murray also played a critical role in the acceptance of weight training for athletes In 1956, he co-authored a groundbreaking book, *Weight Training in Athletics,* with Dr. Peter Karpovich. Murray lives in New Jersey and is retired, though hardly inactive; he is president of his local school board.**

Prompted by Terry Todd's "Remembering Bob Hoffman' *(IGH* Vol. 3, No. 1) and by a phone call from Terry, I decided to set down some of my own memories of Bob Hoffman, dating from the early 1940s until 1956. To provide perspective, I'll have to include some personal information, for which I apologize. One of Bob Hoffman's favorite precepts, which he ignored, was "Self praise stinketh." I have tried to observe this and will endeavor to keep self praise out of the personal material.

Picture, if you will, two starry-eyed high school sophomores, Jim Lorimer and Jim Murray, attending the U.S. National Weightlifting Championships and Mr. America contest in Philadelphia, in 1941. We had begun weight training somewhat haphazardly, to increase our strength in order to become—as the song said—football heroes and get along with the beautiful girls. (It worked, incidentally: as seniors we were co-captains of a championship football team and were dating, later to marry, two lovely and vivacious cheerleaders from the junior class at our high school, Jean Whittaker Lorimer and Jane Landis Murray.)

But in 1941 we reveled in hovering near The Champions—such Iron Game immortals as John Grimek, Steve Stanko, John Davis, John Terpak, Tony Terlazzo, John Terry, and others whose exploits were described and whose pictures were published in *Strength & Health* magazine. (We sat near Dave Mayor, a 1936 Olympian, and I heard a couple of Philadelphia weight trainers say, 'There's Dave Mayor, the former heavyweight champ. He can still lift 200-200-250. Wow! Two hundred press and snatch, 250 clean and jerk! At fifteen I thought I'd be satisfied if I could ever achieve that level and, in fact, after I became able to continental and jerk 250 pounds as a high school senior I never tried more until I went to York to edit *Strength & Health* seven years later and was around people lifting 300.)

My employment at York was somewhat happenstance. One of my college courses, at Rutgers, was in feature writing. We were required to write and submit an article to an existing periodical. If we had an article accepted, we were guaranteed an "A". Most of my classmates submitted articles to leading general magazines of the time, such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's.* I tried *S&H* and was the only member of the class to make a sale.

As a result of this contact, in 1950 I struck up a correspondence with then-editor Ray Van Cleef and submitted other material, including cartoons. After graduation from college I was employed as sports editor of *The Freehold Transcript* (Freehold, New Jersey), still corresponding with Ray. One of my suggestions was that *S&H* feature a weight trained athlete in every issue, to counter the then-accepted old wives' tales about muscle-binding. (My first publication in *S&H* had been a piece about a training buddy, Frank Thropp, who was an All-North lacrosse player at Rutgers.) Out of the blue one day in 1951, Ray telephoned to ask if I would be interested in taking over the editorship of *Strength* & *Health.* He was leaving to open his "Gateway to Health" gym in California.

Would I?! Again wow! Visions of sugarplums and dumbells danced in my head!

To make a long story short, I was interviewed at York and got the job. A faint tingle of disillusionment began at that time when I learned that Ray, who had been editing the magazine for some time, had been working for $75 a week. I had assumed that a person bearing responsibility for the sales vehicle that brought in the York Barbell Company's income would be well remunerated, perhaps as much as the princely sum of (gasp!) $10,000 a year.

Not so. After negotiation that was mostly a droning monologue by Bob, I was paid $85 a week (which my wife and I had been earning, total, at our two jobs) and had the use of one of Hoffman's row houses near the barbell company at a rent of $40 a month. It was during the employment interview that I heard for the first time what was to become a familiar Hoffman refrain: "We didn't get into this business to make money; we got in it to build a stronger and healthier America." I was also very much in favor of a stronger and healthier America, and working in York was certainly a fun job, but there was also a family to support!

Anyway, I took over the *S&H* editorship on August 27, 1951, a week after my first son was born. I had been supposed to start on August 20, so I could work with Ray for a week, but August 20 was the day Jimmy arrived and Ray had left for California before I got to York. No matter. I figured out how to produce the maga-

zine, with much-appreciated help from John Grimek, with whom I shared an office, and John Terpak, whose office was across the hall. Can the reader picture this? Here I was actually working with the men who had been my heroes when I was a teenager less than a decade earlier.

Another of Bob's frequent remarks, tied in with, "We didn't get into this business to make money. . ." was the assertion that he didn't take a salary from the York Barbell Company. How did the man live? I was to find out, at least in part.

Harry Paschall, old-timers will remember, was a regular contributor to *S&H*. He wrote an article every month and drew the "Bosco" cartoons. (Bosco was a fictional superman who, in Harry's lively imagination, was stronger than Paul Anderson, Louis Cyr, Herman Goemer, and Arthur Saxon combined!) Harry had been a topflight lifter and was a real pro as a writer. He met deadlines!

Much to my surprise one month, I was putting *S&H* together and had not received Harry's contribution. I mentioned to John Terpak that I was wondering whether to hold up printing and wait for Harry or to substitute something in Bosco's place. "Just a minute," John said. "Is Bob in?" He looked out the window and saw Bob's car parked in front of the old York Barbell Company building on North Broad street. "I'll be right back," John said, and he went out, down the stairs, and across the sidewalk to Bob's car. In about two minutes he returned with an envelope containing Harry Paschall's regular contribution to *S&H*— an article and Bosco cartoon.

It seemed that Bob regularly went to the Post Office in the morning, picked up the business mail, dumped it on the front seat of his car, and opened everything that looked as though it might contain an order. Much of the business was in small items that sold for from $1 to $10. Customers as often as not sent cash payment with these orders. Bob put the cash in his pocket and then took the mail to the office. In shuffling through the mail, Bob had tossed Harry's envelope onto the back seat where, knowing the boss's habit, Terpak had found it. The orders were tilled, of course, but it's understandable that a salary wasn't very important to a man who had several hundred dollars in spending money a week.

Another episode that I found mind-boggling was the "scientific" development of the original Hoffman's "Hi-Proteen." Purely by chance I happened to observe the activities in the "laboratory" as I returned to work from lunch one day. The "laboratory" was a space in the corner of the Swiss Automatic Screw Machine company Bob had installed on the ground floor of the York Barbell Company. It was an area just past a small room where featherweight champs, Dick Bachtell and Yas Kuzuhara packed small orders for shipment. The sight that met my eyes that day was Bob Hoffman standing over a fiber drum half full of finely ground soy flour, stirring the contents with a canoe paddle. (Bob had been an outstanding competitor in canoe racing and he stored his canoe and paddles on the rafters of the machine shop.)

Next to the drum was a container of sweet Hershey's chocolate with a scoop thrust into it. After stirring a while, Bob dipped his fingers into the mixture of soy flour and sweet chocolate, and tasted it. With a grimace he exclaimed, "Nobody will buy that!" And he shoveled more scoops of chocolate into the drum and resumed stirring. Eventually he achieved a mix that had a satisfactory taste and thus established the formula for Hoffman's original "Hi-Proteen."

The impetus for this nutritional discovery was Bob's learning that Irvin Johnson's "Hi-Protein" was exceptionally profitable. Johnson had been selling his product through *S&H,* but Bob banned him from the magazine's pages and substituted an ad for his own product as soon as he found out how much money Johnson was making.

Later, of course, Bob had other suppliers make his nutritional products and I'm sure that quality control improved. The various supplements continued to be highly profitable, however, and from a business standpoint had great advantages over the manufacture, packing, and shipping of heavy, less profitable barbell and dumbell sets.

Another thing that bothered me about Bob was his self praise, which, as he said himself, "stinketh." Take his "modern bent press record," for example. Bob could legitimately bent press about 240 pounds, but he wanted to set a "modern" record in Arthur Saxon's specialty. Bear in mind that to lift 240 pounds with one arm was mighty good lifting. The bent press was the one lift in which Bob really excelled, but there was no way he could have exceeded the 371-pound record set by the exceptionally strong and skilled Saxon, a true iron game immortal.

So Bob decided to go for a "modern" record. The trouble was, there were plenty of strong men around who, if they chose to train on the bent press for awhile, could have handled 240 pounds and more on the lift. In order to boost the poundage—the apparent poundage—Bob had constructed a six-foot-long Olympic bar and had some Olympic plates machined down to weigh five pounds less each. The bar was five pounds light, as were the 45s, 35s and 25s. If you had that bar loaded to an apparent 255, with 45s, 35s and 25s, there was a weight advantage to the lifter of 35 pounds: "255" was 220.

I must interject at this point that I didn't personally witness what transpired at the setting of the "modern bent press record." It happened a number of years before I joined the York organization. Nevertheless, what follows was described to me by two exceptionally reliable people who were there and who told me about it independently without being prompted.

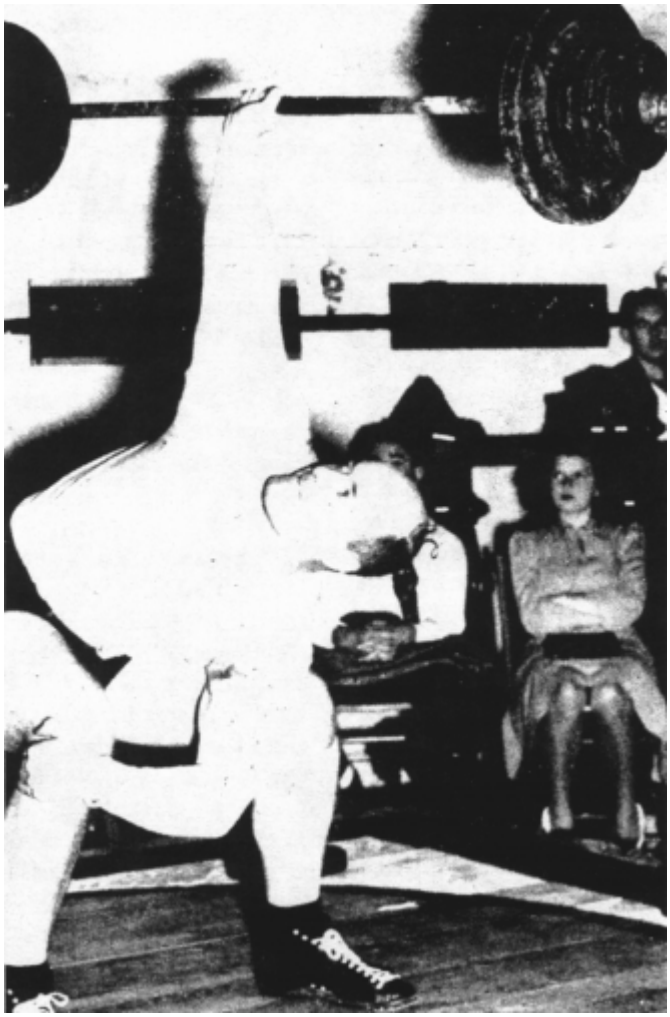
Here's how it was told to me: Bob, being a professional, lifted separately from the AAU athletes who were performing at an event in York. He explained that his barbell was specially made for bent pressing, being shorter and thicker than the Olympic standard bar. On this special barbell, he worked up to a lift with a face value of, I believe, 280 pounds and then had the barbell and plates weighed with the weighing witnessed. The scale balanced at 282 pounds! How could this be? One of my informants, who told me he still had the counterweights used, said the counterweights had been

machined to match the weights on the barbell.

But the rest of the story, told to me by a prominent weight trainer who was there, becomes somewhat humorous. When the bent pressing and weighing were finished, the loaded "record" barbell was rolled backstage where several lifters were warming up for the amateur portion of the event. Among them were Louis Abele, one of the three best heavyweights in the world at the time (The others being Steve Stanko and John Davis): Walt Nollenberger, a leading area heavyweight from Philadelphia; and Dave Brinker, a nationally ranked lightheavy from Easton, Pennsylvania. Nollenberger and Brinker, who could press around 250, were warming up with a somewhat lighter weight.

Abele, who could press 300 pounds, was ready for 280 so, rather than change the weight on the warm-up bar, he walked over to continue his preparation with the "modern record" barbell. As it was told to me, he was lucky not to knock his teeth out when he cleaned it, since he had applied a pull sufficient to clean 280 pounds. Recovering from his surprise, Abele quickly pumped out several repetition presses and called his buddy, Nollenberger. "Give it a try, Walt. I'll bet you can set a new record." Nollenberger tried and, sure enough, he also pressed the "280." Dave Brinker joined the fun and he pressed it too, to the accompaniment of much hooting and laughing Becoming aware of what was going on, Bob Hoffman quickly dispatched some of the York employees to remove the barbell—and the counterweights.

Incidentally, we often used the underweight bar and plates while giving exhibitions before service clubs and similar activities in the York area. We felt this wasn't really cheating, as long as we didn't lift weights we hadn't previously lifted on a standard barbell. It enabled us to make lifts that approximated our personal bests even if we had a cold or a headache or were otherwise indisposed. Unlike what happened when experienced lifters picked up the "282" pounds, when nonlifters would heft the loaded barbell, it felt "heavy," so they had no reason to question the stated poundage.



BOB HOFFMAN RECEIVED CREDIT FOR A 275 POUND BENT PRESS IN THIS EXHIBITION IN SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA. HE SHOWS GOOD FORM.

Toward the end of 1955 I decided, for a number of reasons, to leave York. I was concerned about writing and editing for an uncritical audience—uncritical as to the technical skills of my craft, that is—and felt the need to prove I could succeed where there was more competition. Another reason was my growing disillusionment with Bob Hoffman. I felt that he was overemphasizing the benefits of his food supplements and that he was doing it, not to build a stronger and healthier America, but to make big bucks.

None of my disillusionment involved the athletes, however, and I never ceased to admire and like such people as John Grimek, Steve Stanko, Dick Bachtell, John Terpak, Yas Kuzuhara Jim Park, Jules Bacon and others who worked for the York Barbell Company and worked in the battered old North Broad Street gym. They were superior athletes and wonderful people to associate with on and off the job.

Leaving York may well have been a poor decision, because the job was, in a word fun. I never really enjoyed working as much again though I greatly improved my financial position in subsequent years. And, in retrospect though Bob Hoffman had feet of clay, he surely did a great deal of good in his preachments about how to be strong, healthy, and happy. His advice on nutrition was questionable. to say the least. but his ideas on exercise were right on me mark. His publishing *S&H* hooked countless young people, as it did Jim Lorimer and me, into a lifetime habit of beneficial exercise. **[Ed. note:** Infomed readers may recognize the name Jim Lorimer; others will be interested to learn that Lorimer also moved up in the world of weights. For quite a number of years he has co-promoted the Arnold Classic in Ohio with Arnold Schwarzenegger.] I have long since forgiven Bob for the exaggerations about his own prowess and his exploitation of "health foods" for profit.

Rest in peace, Bob. Your contributions as a publisher, evangelist and patron of weight training and exercise in general benefitted the world.

*Kimberly Ayn Beckwith*
*The University of Texas*

# Thomas Jefferson "Stout" Jackson: Texas Strongman

Strength—the ability to produce force. An often valuable, sometimes invaluable, tool in the evolution of our species. These days, men and women test their strength not against predators or other aspects of the natural world but against various types of weights. Around the world there are many sorts of strongman competitions—such as the Highland Games in Scotland and various "Strongest Man" events. These two sports use iron weights very little, using instead objects found in everyday life, such as log poles (cabers), hammers, boulders, farmcarts, barrels, axes, planes, and trucks.[1] The Highland Games in one form or another have been in existence since at least the eighteenth century, but tests and demonstrations of strength have an even longer history: men have been lifting heavy objects as a form of physical display or training since ancient Greek times.[2] Milo of Croton, for instance, reportedly carried a four-year old heifer across his shoulders for six hundred feet, and Titormus, a Greek shepherd, was said to have lifted a boulder even Milo "could scarcely roll."[3] Whether Titormus did or did not lift this particular stone, there is archeological evidence that similar events not only happened but were considered important enough to be etched in stone. (At Olympia there is a block of red sandstone weighing 315 pounds bearing an inscription claiming that Bybon lifted it with one hand.)[4] Sometimes, animals provided the resistance, and Polydimas was said to have resisted the pull of two horses driven by a man in a chariot.'

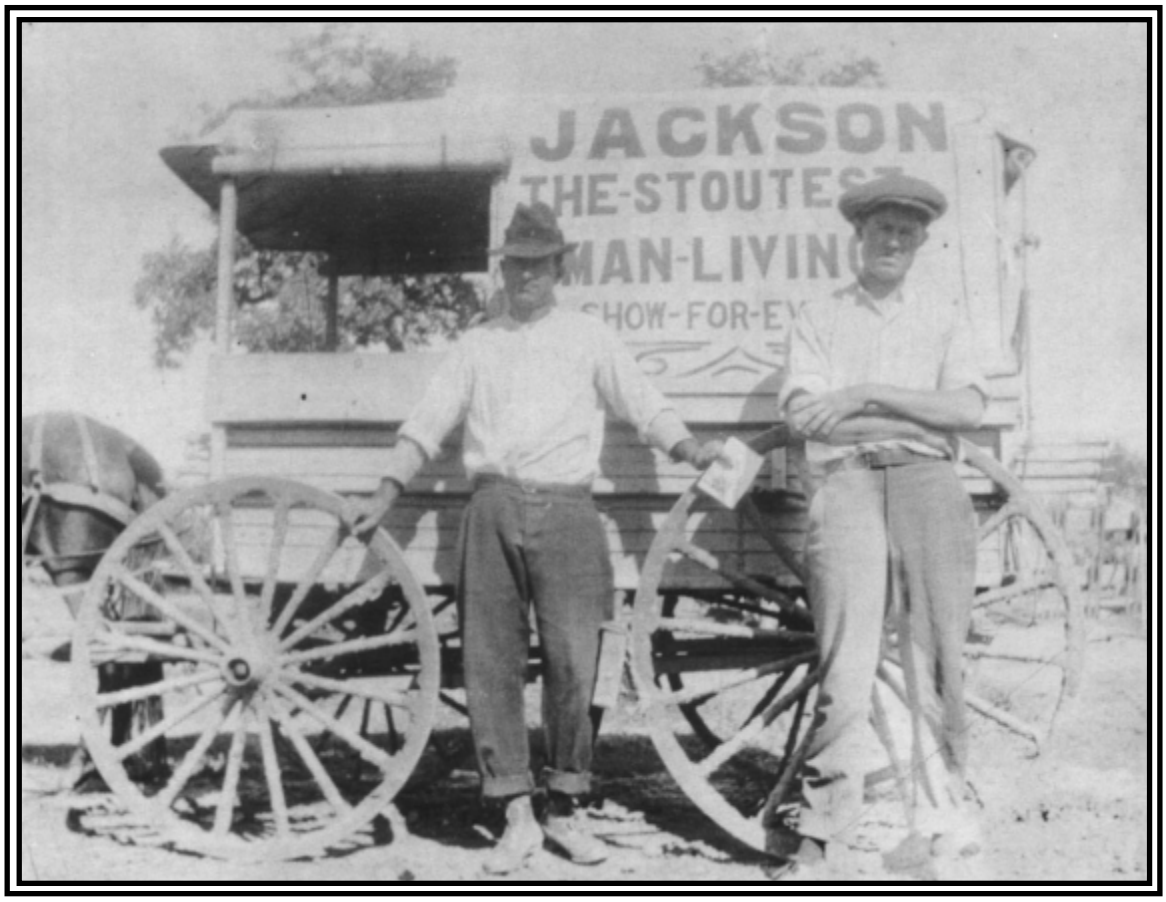
In more modern times, men were often famous for their strength at arms. In England and Scotland, for instance, several warriors gained fame by splitting opposing soldiers in two with their swords, using only one slice.[6] Most cultures found in Europe during the middle ages—English, Scottish, Scandinavian and German—held physical power in high regard and honored those with an unusual capacity for doing difficult feats of strength. This attitude led, in time, to the age of the professional strongman. One of the most famous strongmen was Thomas Topham of London who performed during the first half of the eighteenth century, doing such feats as resisting the pull of a team of horses, breaking heavy ropes and bending iron rods.[7]

When the Europeans came to America they brought these attitudes and performances with them. For the most part, these groups settled in the Northeast, and the larger population centers in that part of the country more easily supported the professional strongmen who began to appear in America in the latter half of the nineteenth century. For this reason, and because most of the major print media were located in that region, much more is known about the many traveling performers who exhibited their strength in that general area to earn a living. West of the Mississippi River, not much is seen in the literature about unusually strong men, except for legendary figures such as Pecos Bill and Paul Bunyan. The cultures that inhabited the area west of the Mississippi were different; being strong was still an advantage, of course, but unusual displays of strength were usually seen only in the context of physical labor.

One of the first men who broke this mold was Thomas Jefferson "Stout" Jackson. Jackson was a Texan, and he became a strongman and entertainer in the early twentieth century, touring the western states showing his strength. For the most part, Jackson's acts were similar to those done by strongmen in the North, so that does not set him apart. What distinguishes Stout Jackson is his most famous feat—his claimed backlift in 1924, when he supposedly lifted more weight at one time than any other man had ever done before, more even than any man has done up to the present day.

The backlift, as it is commonly done, requires a specially-built platform or table, a smaller block or bench and some form of weight. The lifter will position himself under the table, which is loaded with weight of some kind, so that his back is against the underside of the table, his legs are slightly bent and his hands are placed on the small block. When the lifter is ready he straightens his legs and arms, supporting the table on his back so that all four of the table legs clear the ground. Some of the more notable backlifters include Louis Cyr during the 1890s, Warren Lincoln Travis during the early 1900s Paul Anderson during the 1950s and Gregg Ernst of the 1990s. Jackson, if credited with his controversial lift, could also be added to this list.[8] Records that have been claimed for the backlift include one in the *Guinness Book of World Records* (Anderson with 6,270 pounds) and one published in Ripley's "Believe It or Not"newspaper column (Jackson with 6,472 pounds).[9]

Louis Cyr stood 5'10 and weighed 315 pounds in his prime. He was a French-Canadian professional strongman who gained the respect of the sporting world in the late 1800s. His more famous stunts were resisting the pull of four 1200 pound horses, lifting 553




STOUT JACKSON (LEFT) WITH AN UNIDENTIFIED MAN, STANDING ALONGSIDE HIS FIRST SHOW WAGON IN APPROXIMATELY 1907.
*PHOTO: THE TODD-MCLEAN COLLECTION. THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN*

pounds with one finger, lifting a 433 pound barrel of cement to his shoulders using only one hand, and backlifting 4,337 pounds.[10] A smaller and slightly less powerful man was Warren Lincoln Travis, who backlifted 4,240 pounds while weighing 185 pounds and standing 5'8".[11] Paul Anderson is a strongman who came to fame in the era of organized weightlifting which allowed the strength of athletes to be compared. Anderson set several world records and won the gold medal for weightlifting at the 1956 Olympic Games. At a bodyweight of 360 pounds, Anderson claimed a backlift of 6,270 pounds, as was noted in *Guinness.*[12] Another modern-day strongman, Gregg Ernst, a Nova Scotia farmer, just recently made an official record in the backlift at 5,340 pounds.[13] Does Thomas Jefferson "Stout" Jackson belong on this list? This paper hopes to answer that question.

Thomas Jefferson Jackson was born in Jack County on the Lassater Ranch outside of Perrin, Texas on 22 January 1890, the last of five children. His father, William Nimrod Jackson, was a rancher and a Baptist minister. Jeff, as he was called by family and close friends, grew up sleeping under the stars, performing demanding ranch chores, and running back and forth to school. As a child, Jackson was considered a runt and was picked on by other children. After much taunting he decided he needed to become much stronger, so he started taking more exercise. He would finish his chores and then spend his time in the outdoors doing anything he could think of that would improve his strength — swinging through the trees, running, and lifting heavy objects. Eventually, he talked his father into buying a barbell and dumbell set. During the time Jackson was training his body through exercise he received regular doses of preaching from his father. His father believed in taking care of the body from the inside out, so no alcohol or tobacco was ever touched and good healthy food especially milk, was always consumed.[14] These teachings stayed with Jackson throughout his entire life and were actually the basis for his wanderings, or so he said.

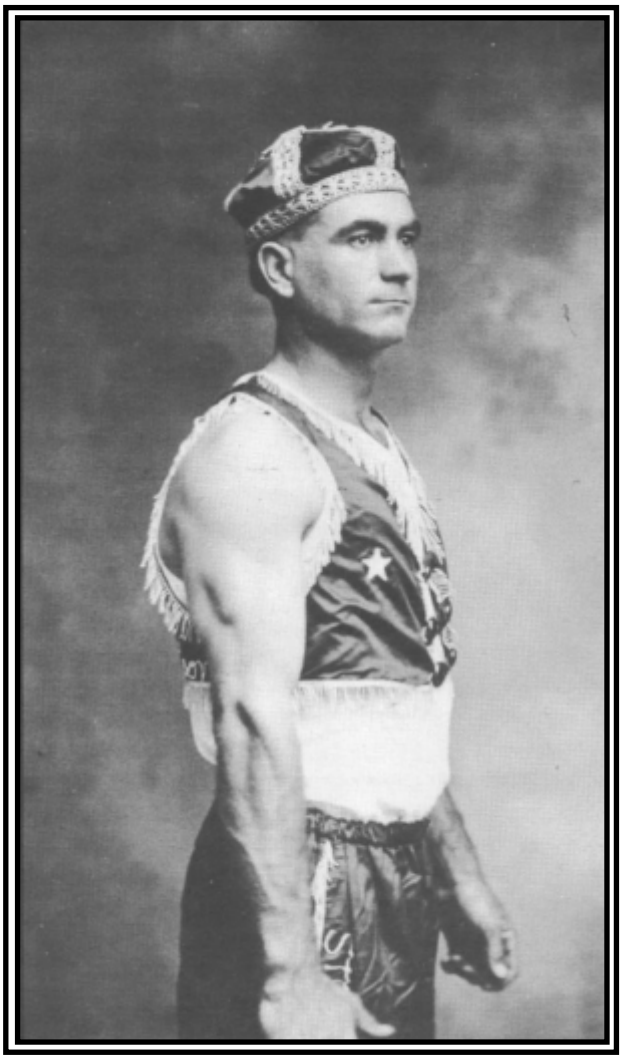
His first glimpse of a professional strongman came from a Ringling Brothers circus he attended when he was about twelve years old. After watching and analyzing everything the strongman did, Jeff went home, doubled his own efforts and was soon able to duplicate the strongman's act. At fifteen years of age Jackson could bend twenty penny nails and backlift fifteen hundred pounds. Always the showman he would put on demonstrations for the local townspeople, polishing the skills with which he hoped to turn professional at a later date. At seventeen, he wanted to travel and show people his strength.[15]

After convincing his parents that he could use his strength acts as a cover for spreading their good-living, Christian beliefs, Jackson put together a traveling outfit. A costume is always necessary for a good entertainer and Jackson had a small vest, knee-length pants, and a cap all made of silky material. His pants may have even had his show name on them—"Stout."[16] While his mother may or may

not have had a part in helping with the costume, his father did have a part in providing transportation. In order to travel the country, as Stout wanted, reliable transportation was a must. In 1907 that meant a team of mules and a sturdy wagon, both of which were provided by his father. Stout painted on his wagon: "Jackson— The Stoutest Man Living—A Show for Everyone."[17] In order to present a decent show, a traveling showman needed a movable stage, and in the early 1900s this was accomplished by using a "side-wall" —a wagon with canvas sides that opened on one side so presentations could be made.[18] Stout bought his side-wall by chopping wood for one to two dollars a cord.[19]

The first stop of his lifelong career as a showman and entertainer was Joplin, Texas where he made $15.15 in one day by charging fifteen cents a person, big money for those days. His act included tight-rope walking, bending sixty-penny nails into staples, pulling cars with his teeth, resisting the pulling of a team of horses or cars, breaking half inch manila ropes, and driving nails through boards using only his fist.[20] Stout Jackson, as he came to be called professionally, also performed backlifts using men from the audience as the resistance on the table, sometimes lifting as many as twenty people. To add to the show in those non-litigious days, he would often shake the platform after he cleared it from its supports so that the men either fell or jumped off the platfom?[21]

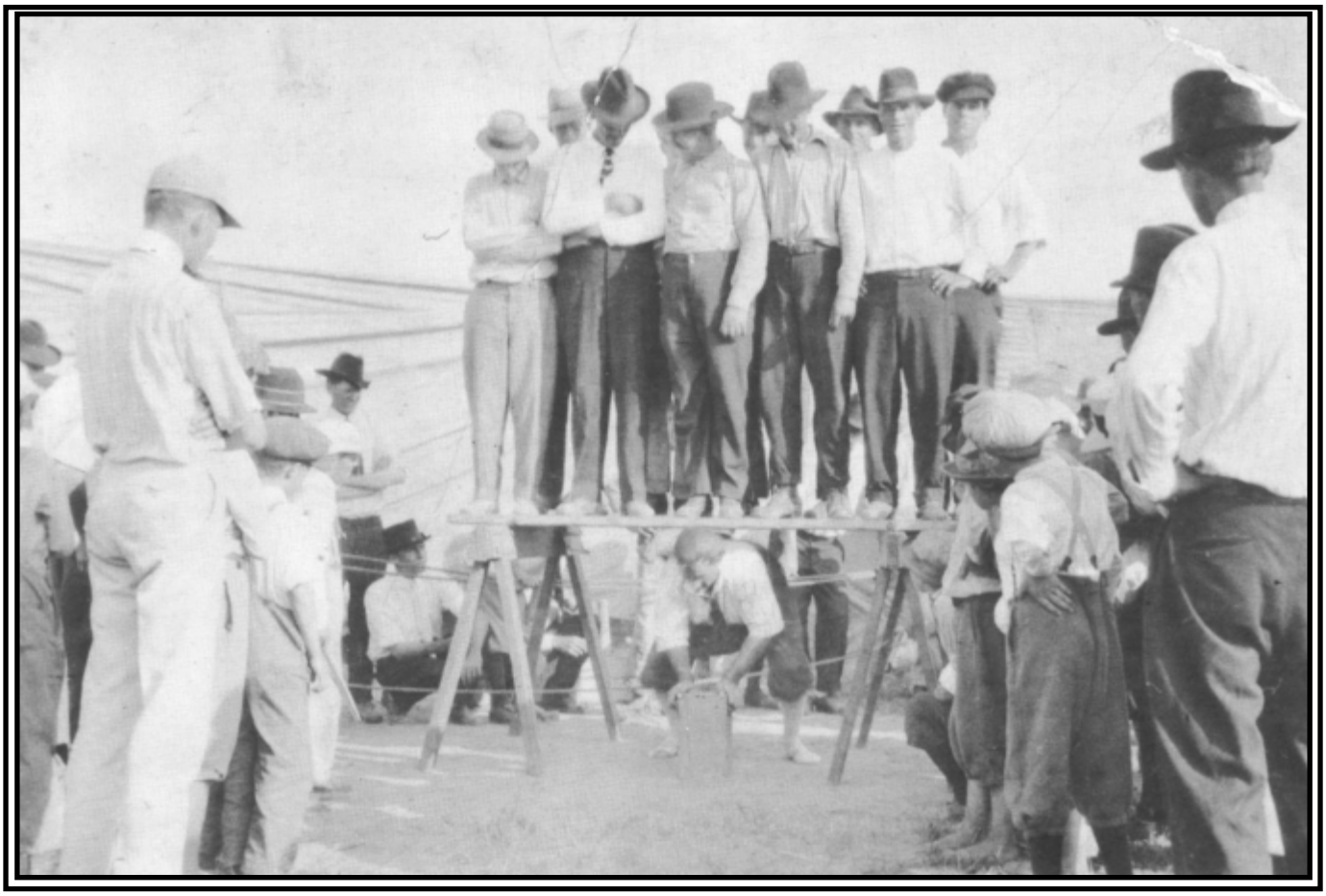
For a year or two he traveled around Texas and Oklahoma demonstrating his strength and lecturing to people on body care and living a clean life. As Jackson got older he would also show people how to strengthen their own bodies. He had inner-tubes that he would stretch in different directions. [22] He told people they could do the same exercises and make themselves stronger just like he had done. In those days most traveling shows included, or were primarily, a type of medicine show. Medicinal mixtures, or cure-all liquids, were the main sellers at these shows.[23] The only things that Stout sold at his traveling shows, however, were math pamphlets that explained a method of performing "fast math" he had discovered.[24]



DRESSED FOR WORK, STOUT JACKSON MODELS HIS LIFTING COSTUME IN THIS STUDIO PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN EARLY IN HIS CAREER.
*PHOTO: THE TODD-MCLEAN COLLECTION*

Jackson traveled with circuses to Canada and around the United States and even into South America. In 1910 he signed with a circus headed to Brazil; he made eighteen dollars a week putting on his act at the many small stops they made.[25] Stout soon tired of this and caught a boat back to the States and began to travel with a circus that ended up in Canada. He claimed that during this trip he met and challenged Louis Cyr to a backlift and won. From this time on Stout called himself the "World's Strongest Strong Man."[26] The sport historian Terry Todd rejects this claim because the two men were not really contemporaries.[27] Cyr's last professional appearance was February 26, 1906 and he died on November 10, 1912.[28] It is highly unlikely that Jackson and Cyr ever met, much less competed against each other. In any case, Stout now threw challenges to anyone who could outdo him on one of his lifts. He was known to offer as much as $l,000 to the owner of a team of horses that could out pull him, or to someone who "indulged in smoking" yet could still equal what he did. According to Jackson, he never had to pay.[29]

When automobiles became available, Jackson bought a 1913 Model T roadster. He was then able to travel further with his eight hundred pounds of equipment and, in the process, make more money. He claimed to have sometimes made over one thousand dollars a day when he worked by himself putting on four shows a day at fairs.[30] His auto had his show name on the side, "Stout Jackson: World's Greatest Strong Man, Greatest One Man Show on Earth."[31] One year, Stout performed in every state west of the Mississippi, doing his own act as well as sponsoring several other acts, such as wrestling and boxing. Stout was said to be a good wrestler, and he had such well-known wrestlers in his group as Everett Mar-



BACKLIFTING PIAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN STOUT'S TRAVELLING SHOW. THIS PHOTOGRAPH, TAKEN IN 1916, SHOWS HIM POSITIONING HIMSELF TO BACKLIFT TEN MEN.

*PHOTO : THE TODD-MCLEAN COLLECTION , THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN*

shall, Railroad Rout, and Bobby and Chick Dude.[32] Stout often wrestled with them but he could not last for more than thirty minutes. He did not like to box, but his son, Thomas Jefferson Jackson, Jr., never saw him hit a person more than once before they were knocked unconscious.[33] Once when traveling through South Dakota, Stout received the chance to perform before President Calvin Coolidge. He offered to pull the President's car, but the President's advisors did not think it was a good idea.[34] He also gained attention when he saved a pilot from a wrecked plane at an air show by picking up the plane so the pilot, Ed Stinson, could get out.[35]

Stout performed many of the same strength feats as other strongmen have done, but his most famous lift will always be a matter of dispute. On March 19, 1924 at a Lubbock cotton gin, so Jackson claimed, he lifted twelve cotton bales in a backlift. A cotton bale weighs around five hundred pounds, and the total for this lift was given as 6,472 pounds. Ripley's "Believe it Or Not" gave him credit for this lift in 1949.[36] In order to validate the lift, Stout had to send affidavits from several witnesses, the official weigher of the bales, a local news photographer, and himself. When Terry Todd sent a request to Ripley's for copies of these affidavits and the picture they used in their record books, Ripley's sent their file on Stout but the crucial affidavits were missing. The file did include a 1949 letter from the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce stating that the affidavits had been gotten and were enclosed. When the photographer of the official picture was traced down it was found that the negatives of this picture had been destroyed in a fire.[37] Although Todd does not consider the lift to have been impossible, he considers it improbable. Todd is suspicious of the grainy photograph, in which the platform appears to be five or six inches off the supports. Todd also argues that the supporting sawhorses were the only things bearing the burden of over six thousand pounds, and that it would be too dangerous to crawl under such a heavy, poorly supported load.[38] Neither

Joe Roark nor David Willoughby, both of whom are historians of physical strength, give Stout credit for the lift.[39] In Jackson's defense, Todd points out that exaggeration of poundages by professional strongmen was almost universal and that at any given time in the early part of this century there were dozens of men claiming to be the world's strongest man.[40]

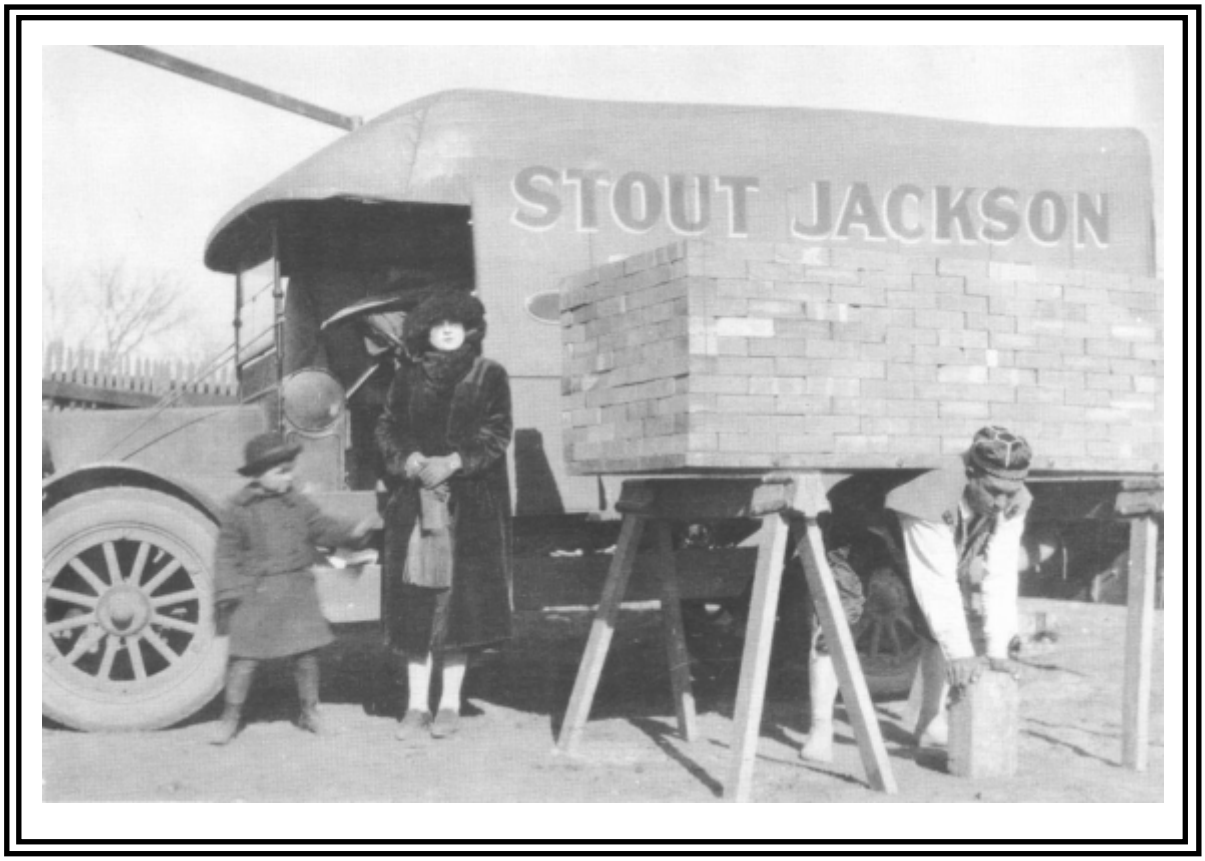
Another lifter whose famous backlift is sometimes discredited is Paul Anderson. His backlift of 6,270 pounds was listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for thirty years, 1956-1986, and is in direct conflict with Stout Jackson's backlift.[41] Following a request for specific details from Terry Todd, *Guinness* checked their files and decided that supporting information for the record was not up to their normally high standards, and so they now no longer list Anderson's record.[42] Todd says that Anderson's lift was easier to accept because of his many other record lifts. The record may now be held by Gregg Ernst of Nova Scotia for his August 1993 lift of 5,340 pounds. One of the reasons Stout's lift never got into the *Guinness Book of World Records* may be that Stout never sent in the paperwork when the McWhirter twins first began compiling records for Guinness in 1954.[43]

Exaggeration in the realm of professional strongmen was not limited to Jackson's and Anderson's era. The historian Leo Gaudreau believes many proclaimed strongmen were not quite as strong as they claimed. He describes horseshoes being bent in impossible directions and impossibly heavy anvils being used, both stunts being used to increase publicity.[44] Many strongmen exaggerated to add flair to their show and to attract crowds. Circus strongmen were known to fill, or not fill at all, their hollow-ended barbells with light weight so they were lighter than advertised. They also often used "trick" photographs. For example, Jackson performed a backlift for a photograph using what appeared to be a load of bricks as the weight. He claimed the load consisted of 1045 bricks at five pounds each for a total of 5,375 pounds.[45] Closer examination of the photo reveals approximately 605 bricks (11 bricks x 5 bricks x 11 rows) for a maximum weight of 3,025 pounds.[46] This figure is a far cry from 5,375 pounds, but the disparity went much further still, as his son said the photo was taken for publicity purposes and the actual load consisted of an empty shell surrounded by one layer of bricks.[47] Witnesses remember seeing Stout backlift five cotton bales later in his life, but the claim of twelve bales may possibly have been a way to attract attention. Because of the affidavits and letters Ripley received attesting to the authenticity of the 1924 backlift, however, it cannot be stated categorically that Jackson did not make the lift, even though the affidavits were sworn twenty-five years after the fact.


Always the entertainer, Stout was on the lookout for new forms of entertainment to add to his show. When silent films became popular, he bought circus tents, set them up in the towns where he stopped for his strength act, and showed movies. This business was quite profitable because it was the only form of entertainment in many small communities. Throughout most of this time, 1919-1935, Stout and his family, a wife and son, were more or less based in the Lubbock area; they traveled primarily during the summer months, sometimes following the migrant workers from the Valley region of Texas to the northern states.[48] When the Depression hit, Stout's strongman business suffered. He was then staying in the South Texas area, in Robstown, so he decided to stay for the winter. What he discovered there would define his footsteps for most of the rest of his life —poor, Mexican migrant workers.

According to the 1930 U.S. Census, over sixty percent of the Mexican residents in Texas were born in the United States; they called themselves Tejanos.[49] The ratio of Tejanos to Anglos in the Robstown area during this same time was thought to be sixty to forty. The present day ratio is approximately ninety to ten.[50] When Jackson arrived, Robstown was controlled by Anglos, and racial discrimination was the order of the day where Tejanos were concerned. There were separate living areas in town: Anglos usually within the city limits, Tejanos across the railroad tracks; there were two Catholic churches: one for Anglos, another for Tejanos; many businesses did not allow Tejanos in their stores; and the schools were segregated.[51] Most of the Tejanos at this time in Robstown were migrant workers. They had to migrate with the growing season because most could not afford to live in the area once the crops were harvested.[52]

These migrant workers labored in the cotton fields surrounding the Robstown area all day for nine dollars a week.[53] They generally had large families so they had little left on




STOUT'S SON, THOMAS JEFFERSON JACKSON, JR., IS SHOWN STANDING NEXT TO HIS MOTHER, MRS. BEATRICE JACKSON. THIS PUBLICITY PHOTOGRAPH, TAKEN IN THE EARLY 1920S REQUIRED STOUT TO BE ABSOLUTELY MOTIONLESS. A HOLLOW BOX WAS PLACED ON THE TABLE AND BRICKS WERE STACKED AROUND IT AND ON ITS TOP. THE CLAIMED LOAD WAS 1,045 BRICKS FOR A TOTAL OF 5,375 POUNDS.
*PHOTO: TODD-MCLEAN COLLECTION, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN*

payday for entertainment. Talking movies were then being made in Spanish and Stout decided to do something for the families in South Texas, and for himself. He began showing Spanish language films, and he began his new business with several large circus tents. He traveled to Mexico frequently to buy Mexican films and later, as more money came in, to bring Mexican artists into the United States. In those days the Hotel Brindel in Robstown would not accept Mexicans, so Stout built a two-story building that acted as both a dressing room and sleeping quarters for the artists.[54] The Tejano workers would flock from all over the countryside to the tent theaters on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, often carrying torches, candles, or lights of some sort.[55] Stout charged ten cents for children and fifteen cents for adults and once he built his permanent theaters, he could seat two to three thousand people.[56] Soon he expanded, adding theaters in Alice, Falfurrias, and Kingsville. For several years, Jackson's son would collect the money every night from the distant theaters and return to Robstown. He recalls several chases from would-be thieves, who never caught him thanks to his "souped-up" Lincoln.[57] The theater staff and Beatrice Jackson, Stout's wife, would often be up until two or three in the morning counting and rolling all the coins they had collected the night before. It was a common sight to see Stout carrying a valise filled with two to three hundred pounds of coins to the bank on Mondays.[58]

During their years in Robstown, Jackson and his wife did much to alleviate some of the suffering that the Tejanos felt due to discrimination. Not only did they provide close and inexpensive forms of entertainment in the Tejanos' own language, but they also worked closely with the Catholic church. It is said that Beatrice was a midwife for hundreds of women (there are apparently hundreds of Tejano women named Beatrice in Robstown).[59] She was also well known for lining cardboard boxes with material for dead babies' coffins since the families could not afford anything else.[60] The Jackson household was believed to have owned one of the first telephones in Robstown, and they willingly let Tejanos use it in times of

need.[61] Stout also often bailed the Tejanos out of jail.[62] When the Tejano children had fundraisers they never left the Jackson residence without some sort of help, and a few promising children were helped through school and college with the Jacksons' support.[63]

When Stout moved to Robstown in 1935, he retired as a professional strongman, although he still put on small demonstrations in Robstown, sometimes in connection with his films. A few people remember seeing him do a backlift using five large cotton bales, and he was also observed lifting one bale directly onto his back using cotton hooks, breaking a half inch manila rope, driving nails into boards using his fist and then pulling them out with his teeth, and pulling his seven-passenger Lincoln sedans with his teeth.[64] At the age of fifty-nine, Stout started taking more exercise and decided to stage a comeback into the world of the professional strongman, beginning with a tour of the West Coast. He found he could do just about everything he did as a young man, but he decided to stay away from draft horses and heavy backlifts.[65] It is thought that he just did a few shows in South Texas, but not on the West Coast.[66]

Stout was strong mentally as well as physically. Architecture fascinated him and he was always trying to invent some new type of building. He started with large permanent theaters that had canvas walls which could be rolled up in the summer or let down in the winter. Over the years he designed and built permanent structures in Robstown, Kingsville, Falfurrias, and Alice. Unfortunately, the Alice city officials drove Stout out of town by making and enforcing building regulations after Stout threw one of the city officials' rowdy sons out of the theater and into a ditch by his hair one night.[67] The theater in Robstown burned down in 1966, but the theater structure is still standing in Kingsville.[68] Other structures that Stout was famous for are drive-in movie screens that can withstand hurricane-force winds. He constructed several screens in West Texas but never made money with them because of timing; he began building them just as television was killing the drive-in movie industry.[69] Even so, he continued to design buildings that were bomb-proof and fireproof; he had patents for many discoveries.[70]

Stout was strong until his very old age. He never drank liquor or smoked or took anything that was habit-forming. He was never sick a day in his life, or so he said. For a man who did so my stunts with his teeth, he died with a full set and not a single cavity.[71] Stout died in an Austin, Texas nursing home on 6 January 1976.

Thomas Jefferson "Stout" Jackson played numerous roles in the lives of many Texans—"strongman, showman impresario, inventor, builder and humanitarian."[72] For many people, he was living proof that the weak can improve themselves through clean living and exercise. For others, he was a figure who could be looked upon as almost a saint—an exceptionally strong man who helped people with darker skin during times of discrimination and hardship. Mainly, though, Stout was an entertainer. He started his career with strength acts for fifteen cents a person and finished by making contracts for the first Mexican artists who toured the western United States. Many people, of course, will remember him for his famous, if disputed, backlift, but the people of Robstown, Texas will remember him best because he gave them entertainment in their native tongue and treated them as equals. Perhaps this was his greatest strength.

## Endnotes

**The author would like to thank Dr. Mary Lou LeCompte and Dr. Terry Todd of The University of Texas at Austin for their guidance in the preparation of this manuscript.**

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[3]David P. Willoughby, *The Super Athletes* (South Brunswick and New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1970), 30-31; Rachel Sargent Robinson, *Sources for the History of Greek Athletics* (Cincinnati: by the author, 1955), 88, quoted in Terence Todd, '"The History of Resistance Exercise and Its Role in United States Education," (Ph. D. diss. The University of Texas, Austin, 1966), 30.
[4]Norman E. Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals* (London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1910), 82-83, quoted in Todd "Resistance Exercise," 30.
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[9]Norris and Ross McWhirter, *Guinness Book of World Records* (New York Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1969); Robert Ripley, "Believe It Or Not", *San Antonio Light,* 5 July 1949, (9-A).
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[12]McWhirter, *Guinness.*
[13]Terence Todd, "Gregg Ernst: Bringing Back the Backlift," *Iron Game History* 3(September 1993): 1.
[14]Kermit Westerholm, "World-traveling Showman, Stout Jackson, Plans Comeback," *Robstown Record* 30(2 December 1948), 1.
[15]1bid.
[16]Photo, Thomas Jefferson (Stout) Jackson, Scrapbook No. 1, Todd-McLean Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.
[17]1bid.
[18]Ibid.
[l9]Kermit, "World-traveling", 1.
[20]Ibid.
[21]Interview with Thomas Jefferson Jackson, Jr., 4 November 1993, Austin Texas.
[22]Ibid.

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[64]Interview with Salinas, Olaf Hefte, Cruz Gonzalez, 29 October 1993, Robstown, Texas.
[65]Poster, Jackson Memorabilia Collection, Todd-McLean Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.
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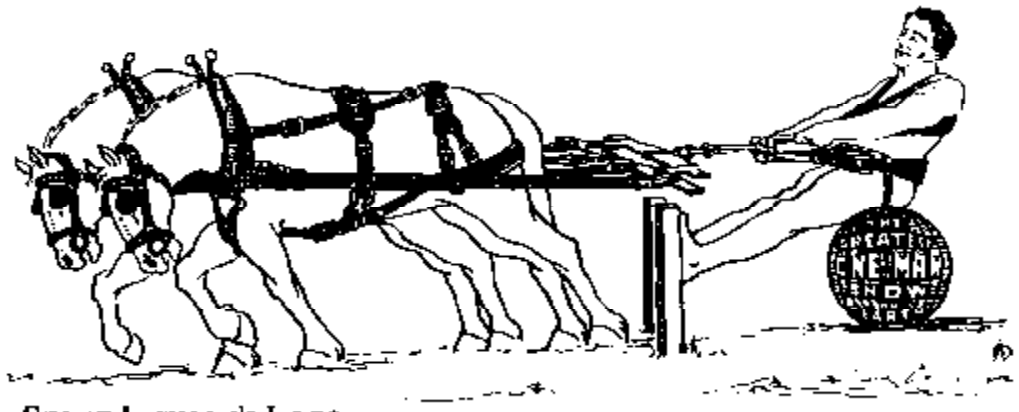

STOUT JACKSON'S LOGO.

*Where Are They Now?*

# Bob Samuels

**Allen Smith**

**Ed Note: Al Thomas, our regular "Where Are They Now?" contributor, will return to these pages next issue.**

With the recent passing of so many iron game veterans, the few surviving old-time strongmen are all the more worthy of recognition. Such a man is Robert "Bob" Samuels. Samuel's career is particularly noteworthy because he spans the gap between the old stage strongman with his theatrical exhibitions of raw strength and the modern age of Olympic-style and powerlifting competition, in which he pioneered and held records, as well as coached, promoted and officiated.

Robert Samuels was born to immigrant parents in New York, and brought up in an orthodox Jewish home. His interest in lifting came early. One of his first recollections was of lifting heavy objects around his father workshop. His first break in the Iron Game came when he attended a Police Field Day involving the stage strongman Siegmund Breitbart, best known for driving a spike into thick planks of lumber with his bare hand. Breitbart was impressed by the enthusiasm of the stocky, muscular fourteen year old who came up to him after the show, and gave Samuels his first advice on lifting.

Early on, Samuels performed feats of strength in exhibitions, which included bending spikes in his bare hands and pulling a fire engine with a mouthpiece and chain held in his teeth. He also supported enormous weights in the bridge position and lifted people, which he—like Louis Cyr—favored for exhibitions because their weight could not be faked. He also entered early weightlifting contests and continued this avocation when he traveled to Hollywood to work in the motion picture industry and, when he moved to Louisiana and began to work in the shipbuilding trade. In 1935, Samuels established one of the earliest YMCA competitive weightlifting programs in the country at the venerable Lee Circle YMCA in New Orleans; he became its first champion.

Lifting in Samuels' early days consisted of the odd-lifts—those specialized exercises which predated modern powerlifting. In the side, press Bob managed 220 pounds in his right hand and 205 in his left for an unofficial record. He could do alternate or "seesaw" presses with a 110-pound dumbell in each hand. Perhaps his most impressive odd-lift feat was a shoulder-bridge press with a "world record" 420-pounds. His abdominal strength was commensurate with that of his other muscles, as he could do sit-ups with 145 pounds behind his shoulders.

Samuels developed into a world-class Olympic-style overhead presser in later years. Though experts such as Peary Rader wrote that they hoped to see Davis and Samuels meet in competition, this was not to be, for Bob lost his standing as an amateur. After a torn leg ligament killed his chance to gain a berth on the Olympic wrestling team, Bob decided to move on to the colorful world of pro wrestling. "I got into wrestling because my arms were too short for boxing—I was getting killed!" Bob conceded. A true renaissance man, Bob continued to hold a full-time job—wrestling in the evenings and weekends—and also introduced scores of people to the benefits of physical culture. He also raised a family, pursued intellectual interests, made a movie, and in later years became a successful real estate developer.

As he did in the world of strength, Samuels served as a "missing link" in the transition of wrestling from the Golden Age of orthodox professional wrestling with such great champions as Frank Gotch, George Hackenschmidt, Stanislaus Zybysko, Strangler Lewis, and Jim Londos to modern, theatrical pro wrestling. Samuels' career began in 1935 and ended five years later. He did most of his wrestling in the Southwest, where he became friends with fellow wrestlers Milo Steinborn, Dory Punk, Buddy Rodgers, Lou Thesz, Man Mountain Dean and a very young Antonio Rocca. One memorable incident transpired when a young grappler named George Wagner asked Bob for some advice on advancing his career. Samuels replied that while he was a fine technical wrestler with a thorough mastery of holds and escapes, he needed a "gimmick." Several months later the young man re-emerged, transformed. "He had platinum blond hair fashioned into a flowing bouffant style, a valet who sprayed the ring with Chanel No. 5, a chiffon dressing gown and a new name: Gorgeous George. He had become the immortal 'Human Orchid,' and pro wrestling was never the same again," Bob laughed. Bob favored more manly gimmicks for himself. At intermissions between the matches, he sometimes put on strength exhibitions: his favorite stunt involved a tug-of-war between himself and several men. What made the stunt difficult was that Samuels held his end of the rope or chain in his teeth.

Professional wrestling has traditionally been a last athletic stop for discarded heavyweights of all sorts. Ex pro boxers and football lineman as well as outstanding lifters such as Doug Hepburn, Ken Patera and the mighty Bruno Sammartino ended their athletic careers as pro wrestlers. Because Bob never wrestled full-time—in all he had only 150 pro matches—he was able to gain reinstatement as an amateur athlete. and compete again in weightlifting. The terms

of his reinstatement specified, however, that he could not lift in the Olympics or the national championships.

The overhead press was Bob Samuels' best Olympic-style lift, and in strict form he did 305 for a state record and later made 325. He also did three rapid power cleans and presses with 300 pounds, and five presses off the rack with the same weight. He was also a pioneering powerlifter. At a bodyweight of about 220 pounds, he was one of the first men to bench press over 425 pounds. This was done when a bench in a gym was generally used for sitting down and resting between sets of military presses. Indeed, earlier he did a version of this lifting lying flat on the floor, pulling the weight over himself before pressing it. His personal best in the bench press was to be 440 pounds, and in the era prior to the Hepburnesque mastodons, he informally held the record in this lift. In the deadlift his all-time best was 640 pounds. Samuels considered Milo Steinborn the strongest wrestler-weightlifter of his day, especially considering his big squats. Steinborn was so avid about squats building overall strength that he encouraged his own sons to do them religiously. "When Dickie and Henry were little more than toddlers they already had muscular thighs and calves," Samuels recalled. Samuels also included squats in his routine, though he never matched Milo's poundages.

Turn-of-the-century strength performers were much like gunslingers of the old west. They had a reputation to uphold for the sake of their livelihoods, and were compelled by honor to meet the dare of any legitimate challenger. It was not uncommon in the early days for an audience member to "jump the stage" and ask to try a man's barbells while a show was underway. Before standardized contests began to be held in the early 1960s, powerlifting was not far removed from this state of affairs. Incredible claims circulated throughout the Iron Game, claims which achieved the status of truth based on the integrity of the performer of the alleged lift the consistency of the various reports which described the lift in question and the veracity and number of witnesses present.

Laughing about this early state of affairs one day recently, Samuels recounted a perfect example of the lifting rumor mill at work. "A story circulated years ago," he explained, "about a man fitting my description who had been seen lifting a set of wheels and axle from a railroad car over his head." Such an assembly, he explained, normally weighed around 1,200 pounds. What "eyewitnesses" actually saw, he reported, "was me doing overhead presses with a wheel-axle assembly salvaged from a small tram used for moving luggage in a railroad station. It weighed only 180."

Samuel's integrity about lifting matters carried over into his work as a referee in weightlifting. Once, he gave thumbs down to the great Norbert Schemansky for a technicality, on one of the heaviest lifts of Schemansky's career. Schemansky was livid, Samuels reported, at being denied his new record, and many in the audience booed the judges. Samuels, however, stood his ground "I judge by what I see," he told them, "not by what I think I see."

Perhaps the most amazing aspect of Bob Samuels' lifting career is that much of his best lifting came about after he was 50 years of age. In 1965, Bob organized a team of American weightlifters to participate in the Maccabiah Games in Israel. Before leaving the country, Gary Gubner, his heavyweight, took ill and could not make the trip. Samuels—suffering dysentery himself, not having practiced the Olympic-style overhead lifts in some time and approaching senior citizen status—filled in for Gubner, and won second place. This achievement, at an international event the calibre of the Maccabiah Games, brought Samuels more publicity than any other achievement of his career. At that contest, Samuels did a press with 285 pounds and achieved a highly respectable total.

Bob's strength diminished little with the passing of the decades. When he was a mere lad of seventy-three, he could still bench press, in strict style, 375 pounds. He is, in fact, still a very strong man able to bench press 225 pounds at the age of eighty-two.

Samuels' greatest contribution to the Iron Game has been as a weightlifting and powerlifting coach. As a mentor of young lifters, he firmly believed that the weight room should not belong solely to genetically gifted potential champions. He welcomed anyone with ambition and an interest in self-improvement. For Samuels, this included the "last chosen," those traditionally excluded from the athletic mainstream. To the chagrin of so-called experts, some of these less genetically gifted athletes became top lifters; those who did not make it to the top of the lifting heap still reaped the secondary benefits of self-discipline, fortitude and confidence, attributes which carried over to enhance other areas of their lives. Samuels belief that lifting was for everyone even extended to an innovative remedial program for the handicapped, who trained and competed not just with each other but right along with unimpaired lifters. His first candidate was C. J. Bennett, a young man severely afflicted with cerebral palsy, who could barely walk when he began weight training. Bennett changed his life dramatically by training. He went on to compete in open weightlifting contests, build a successful career, get married and even drive a car.

The highlight of Bob Samuels' coaching career came in 1969, when his Lee Circle YMCA team garnered the National YMCA Weightlifting Championships. Bob equated that victory, however, with the time his team finished second in the Senior Nationals to the dynastic York Barbell Club. Bob Hoffman York's legendary coach, paid Samuels a supreme compliment when he admitted that he had picked his team from established winners, while Samuels had developed his from "diamonds in the rough."

IN 1946, RIPLEY'S "BELIEVE IT OR NOT" FEATURED THE LIFT OF BOB SAMUELS', A 420 POUND FLOOR PRESS.

*PHOTO: COURTESY BOB SAMUELS*

Ever true to his holistic athletic philosophy, one of the first things that Bob Samuels told beginning trainees was that weightlifting should not be the most important thing in their lives. Young lifters were always reminded to not neglect their schooling. Samuels would tell his teenage lifters that a competitive lifting career rarely lasted more than ten years or so (rare exceptions being lifters like Kono, Schemansky and himself) and that having a good career and higher aspirations were more important. Samuels firmly believed in the classical Greek credo: the good life must embrace a balance between physical intellectual, social and spiritual-moral components. No one aspect of a man's life should dominate, he argued, all must reinforce and enhance the other aspects of manhood. True to this philosophy, when Bob talks about his former team members, these days, he boasts not about their past lifting, but about what fine men they have grown to be. This is true when he talks about any of his lifters. More than his strength feats, coaching or international officiating, it was probably this coaching and moral influence which moved Peary Rader in 1970 to successfully nominate Samuels for the prestigious Helms Sports Hall of Fame in California.

Bob Samuels' involvement with competitive lifting came to a halt in 1972. A prime reason was his heartbreak over the loss of his protégé and close friend David Berger, who was one of the athletes murdered by terrorists while competing in the Munich Olympics. Too, like other aging athletes, Bob had the sinking feeling that he was one of the last leaves on a tree in fall. Many of his lifting contemporaries were gone, as was his friend from his high school days at James Monroe High School in New York, Baseball Hall of Famer Hank Greenberg. Samuels grew disgusted with coaches and lifters who abided drugs and less than sensible training methods, people he believed were so obsessed with winning and records that they ignored the much larger world beyond the walls of the gym. Even so, Samuels continued to work out in his home and occasionally read strength publications, but he was not seen anymore in gyms. When word got around that he had donated his collection of strongman literature and memorabilia to the Todd-McLean Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, it appeared that an extraordinary career in the iron game, a career that began back at Breitbart's show, had finally come to an end.

But one day, while reading his evening paper several years ago, Bob Samuels came upon sports writer Peter Finney's column about a brave powerlifter named Bob Hafner who had survived a deadly bout with leukemia and planned to lift again as a symbol of hope to others fighting to live. Later, Bob learned how Hafner had planned to re-establish a special program for handicapped youngsters. Like Bob's own program from years past, Hafner's charges would train and compete with unimpaired lifters. This story inspired Bob and prompted him to make one more visit to the Lee Circle YMCA to watch a meet.

At the contest, he was immediately spotted by former national weightlifting champion Jimmy Craig and ten-year Louisiana powerlifting champion Glen LaBorde, who served as MC that day. When Samuels was introduced to the crowd, he received a long and enthusiastic ovation. At first, Bob could not believe that there were so many of his ex-lifters in attendance. In reality, there weren't: he had simply become a legend. Most of those in the crowd who cheered him that day were men like powerlifting champion Jesse Kellum, lifters whose relatives or older friends had told them about the man from whom they had gotten their start in the Iron Game. They knew of Bob Samuels as a man who was always ready to help with a personal problem, who was known to pay for equipment or traveling expenses out of his own pocket. He was "Uncle Bob" to the many kids he helped in the weight room, and his acts of kindness had not been forgotten.

At that recent powerlifting meet, Samuels felt like a visitor from another time. He was surprised by all of the accessory gear lifters of today wear, but very pleased to see how well the Special Olympians fit in and fared alongside the regular lifters. He had never before seen women lifters at a meet, but looked on approvingly as several competed, including Louisiana's greatest all-around female athlete, Lurline Hamilton Struppeck, a mother of three grown children, who made an impressive deadlift that day.

Bob Samuels always shunned the spotlight of publicity and avoided interviews. But he was always a "lifter's lifter," respected by the great twentieth-century giants of the strength world. He did a great deal for his beloved sport and helped many along the way. He deserves a hallowed place in the Eternal Pantheon of Ironmen.


**We begin this issue's "Grapevine" with Dr. Ken Rosa's impressions of the annual gathering of the Oldetime Barbell and Strongman Association.**

## THE OLDETMERS GATHER

I was finally there, in the prestigious New York City Downtown Athletic Club, home to the Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen reunions. As I exited the elevator on the thirteenth floor I was elated to see that Jim Mitchell of Channel 9 TV was there interviewing the Hammer Man, Slim Farman. Jim had telephoned me a couple of weeks before to express an interest in covering the reunion, and I put Jim in touch with Vic Boff to coordinate the details.

The world famous Heisman Room was packed with iron game enthusiasts of all ages. The energy in the room was palpable. Jim Mitchell was interviewing me when the elevator doors opened and out strode a woman possessing a pair of the greatest muscular, shapely calves ever to grace the Heisman Room. I knew instantly that this had to be Laurie Fierstein, the attractive strongwoman-bodybuilder. Whereas traditionally at the reunions the men and women are usually dressed in non-revealing suits and other such garb, Laurie was fashionably attired in an outfit which concealed very little of one of the most muscularly developed physiques I have ever seen!

With superhuman effort I diverted my gaze from those magnificent thighs and focused back on the program. We were to be treated to an abundance of really great speakers. I looked around the room and couldn't avoid noticing, a 6'5", 275 pound mass of muscle, Carl Braun, the top hammer thrower in the world. At first I though he was from Scotland because he, like Dave Webster, was wearing a kilt, but Carl wore the kilt because he competed in the Highland Games. He's actually from Virginia. Big Guy. Seated near him was another big guy—Gregg Ernst—who is a modern day Louis Cyr in appearance and in strength having recently performed an official back lift with 5,340 pounds! **[Ed. Note:** On January 1, 1994 Gregg increased his record, unofficially, to 5,618 pounds. The weight consisted of two upright pianos and eighteen men, plus the platform.]

Now let me tell you, I enjoy listening to Terry Todd speak so when he introduced another of my favorite speakers, Dave Webster, I was totally captivated. These days, Todd said, the iron game is not the way it used to be. It used to be like a family. We knew one another, We were friendly rivals. Today the game is split apart. We (Olde Timers) come together because we like to remember those days. Dave Webster symbolizes those days. Dave Webster won weightlifting titles in Scotland. He was a powerlifting competitor. He was a bodybuilding competitor. He was a handbalancer. He had a set of steel expanders and nobody could stretch them like he could. He's an organizer of the Commonwealth Games and is greatly involved in United Kingdom meets. He is a prolific writer who has authored, among other works, *Barbells and Beefcake* and *The Ultimate Physique.* He is a collector of strength books and paraphernalia and until his retirement was the director of a Recreational Center in Scotland. He has made an enormous contribution to the game. With those glowing words Dr. Todd introduced a man I respect very much, Dave Webster. Vic Boff then presented Dave with the Highest Achievement Award of the Oldetime Barbell and Strongman Association.

What a treat it was to sit back and listen as Dave said that "people are more important than places. The older guys have shaped the fitness boom of today. When I came into the game we were warned that weight training would give you dandruff and ingrown toenails. I remember back about 1946 or so I saw a photograph that was of a man whose physique was absolutely unbelievable. Of course, it was the incomparable John Grimek. I said to myself that's what the sport is all about." Dave is an eloquent and captivating speaker, and I was glad to be present as I again furtively glanced at Laurie's forearms. Just amazing.

Master of Ceremonies, Steve "The Mighty Stefan" Sadicario, introduced the USWF's Artie Drechsler, who spoke about the exploits in competitive weightlifting of Chuck Vinci, who was not present. Vinci was the gold medal winner in the Melbourne Olympic Games of 1956 and the Rome Games of 1960, and in 1965 as a 148 pounder he did a standing Olympic style press with 285 pounds! Vinci was also an outstanding arm wrestler.

Then up to the microphone strode the man I call Captain Marvel. Why? lf any of you have been around long enough to remember Whiz Comics and may still have some well preserved issues as I do, look at the Captain and you'll also expect at any moment to hear Al Thomas say the magic word SHAZAM and become the Worlds Mightiest Mortal. Physically powerful, Al Thomas speaks with a passion and forceful fluency that seems to cast a spell. Thomas was there to introduce a man who I grew up reading about and being inspired by in the pages of *Strength & Health* magazine. Thomas was in good form as he spoke about a youthful seventy-six year old athlete who has a suntan and looks like he comes from California; actually, he's a New Yorker who lives in California. He was born in Coney Island and trained in boxing by the great Benny Leonard. He also lifted and wrestled at the Brooklyn Central YMCA with Walter Podolak, the Golden Superman. He is a man who helps people. He is a doctor of chiropractic and at one time he had his office in Bothner's Gym. He placed fifth in the 1940 Mr. America which was won by the unbeatable John Grimek, he taught hand to hand combat in World War Two to the armed services and, after the war, Louis B. Mayer put him in charge of MGM's physical training studios where he trained people like Clark Gable and Mario Lanza. Rocky Marciano, when he was in California, would live in this man's house and they would even spar sometimes. He is now the general manager of the Century West Health Club. Earl Leiderman called him "the man who lived a Technicolor life." A tremendous round of applause greeted the man about whom Thomas was speaking, Terry Robinson.

Robinson was marvelous as he spoke about his memories of Coney Island and Flo Ziegfeld who brought Sandow over and how Thomas Edison used Sandow in his early motion pictures. He spoke about Joe Bonomo and the Mighty Atom, and then he pulled a real surprise. He said that music is the universal language (he's right) and he introduced Joey Loren, a professional opera singer, who dedicated "Thine Alone" to John and Angela Grimek, who were cele-

brating their fifty-third wedding anniversary. The Grimeks are obviously still very much in love and it was, indeed, a beautiful moment, Robinson told us, "we have to get old but friendship never gets old." He concluded with a quote from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "come grow old with me, the best is yet to come." The applause was tremendous and well deserved.

If there's anybody I like to listen to as much as I like to listen to Terry Todd it's Jan Todd, who was next on the program and reported on their work at the Todd-McLean Collection. Jan informed us that Mabel Rader had recently donated the *Iron Man* archives to the Collection. Mabel and Peary Rader were the founders and publishers of *Iron Man* magazine for fifty years, and she wanted to see the records of the magazine's earlier era preserved in a university setting. Jan also told us that the pioneer of women's bodybuilding, Pudgy Stockton, had also donated many things to the Library. I don't think anyone disagreed when Jan affirmed that "if we don't look after our own history no one else will look after it."

Each of the honorees received a magnificent painting done by the bodybuilding artist Jim Sanders, along with the specially inscribed plaques presented to them by the Association.

Showtime. The moment for which so many had been eagerly waiting. Strongmen and a fantastic physique artistically displayed. There are people who love to see phenomenal displays of pure raw strength, there are those who want to see magnificent physiques adroitly displayed and there are those who like to see both. We had both. We all tried to position ourselves to better see Dennis Rogers tear apart lengthwise, one at a time, six New York telephone books. Easy? Try it. Then big John Brookfield ripped apart a deck of cards wrapped in duct tape. Dennis Rogers came back to amaze us as he bent a black steel bar across the back of his neck. Rogers is not a huge man but he is exceptionally strong. [Ed. note: Rogers recently demonstrated barbending and phonebook tearing on the David Letterman Show.] Back came big John Brookfield to astound us as he bent and then broke a hardened steel chisel. A hardened steel chisel. Impossible? But John Brookfield did it.

And talk about great physiques natural bodybuilder Russ Testo stepped onto the posing platform looking even bigger and more muscular than a couple of years ago. He posed to the music of "Over the Rainbow" and included lip-synching in his routine and I was moved to tears. He is a very imaginative poser and when he was rewarded by tremendous applause he expressed his thanks and said he was thrilled to be performing for the people who had inspired him when he started to train in 1972 and was reading the bodybuilding magazines of the 1960s.

What a fantastic evening. Every year it gets better. I think many people were sorry the evening was ending and were already looking forward to next year. Did I leave with Laurie? Tune in next time.

**Ken Rosa**
**Brooklyn, New York**

**Dear *IGH*,**

Sign me up for another couple of years as a McLean Fellowship Patron, and keep ***Iron Game History*** coming. Since much of the subject matter of the publication deals with the era that I participated in, each issue revives memories of a very exciting period in my life.

I particularly enjoyed your vivid verbal portrait of Bob Hoffman. You accurately and eloquently pictured the man as I knew him. As you indicate, he was an incessant promoter of all he strongly believed in—weightlifting, Hi Proteen America and above all, himself. I was not unaware of his faults, but I always had a very high regard for him, partly because I was never able to completely divest him of the aura I, too, had built around him as a teenager. Also, because he was always fair and considerate of me, and would even pay my expenses to compete against York Barbell men Tony Terlazzo, Frank Spellman, and Stan Stanczyk. But most of all because he was the best thing that ever happened to US weightlifting.

Our sport sorely needs another Bob Hoffman but I'm afraid the combination of attributes that made Bob Hoffman and the circumstances in which he operated, will not come together again in our lifetimes.

**Peter T. George, D.D.S.**
**Honolulu, HI**

**Dear *IGH*,**

Thank you for your phone call recently regarding my desire to locate more information on the lives and writings of two physical culturists from the "past": Walt Baptiste and Joe Southard. If any readers have something to share, I would be grateful to learn of them/it.

As some readers may be aware, Walt published *Body Modern*— a little known magazine with a holistic approach to weightlifting that, perhaps, was an effort ahead of its time. Joe had many advertisements in *Iron Man* for courses, etc. He strongly believed that we should practice what we preach.

**John Mauceri**
**Wolcott, CT**

**Should anyone have information on Baptiste or Southard for Mr. Mauceri, please send it to *IGH*, Room 217, Gregory Gymnasium, The University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712. We'll be happy to forward it.**

**Dear *IGH*,**

Enclosed is a check for a two year renewal. I enjoy the journal and wish it could be larger and published more frequently. With respect to the last issue:

"Remembering Bob Hoffman"– I also met Hoffman for the first time in 1958. Very few of us give him the true praise and respect he deserves!

"Bringing Back the Backlift" I am amazed that you provide no date or picture to confirm this event; a description of the platform and the method by which the load "was carefully reweighed." I am not doubting that "what Gregg has done is to walk with the giants of the past." But it seems, as with many of the odd lifts of the past

there is only a written, vague description. If you would like to see and record the results of current day lifters on such things as the hand and thigh lift, the hip lift, the harness lift, the neck lift and the more painful Zercher and Steinborn lifts, Bill Clark and I are ready!

**Dale E. Friesz**
**Annandale, VA**

**Although we have several photos of Ernst's two recent backlifts, none were very good. It was raining and windy as he made the lifts in the outdoor arena and it was difficult to protect the lens. The lift was videotaped and was shown on national television in Canada. It was also shown in October at the annual meeting of The Oldetime Barbell and Strongman Association. The platform he used was the same one on which he lifted the team of oxen two years earlier. [See Vol. 2, No. 1] The two cars, the two drivers, the "drag weights" and the platform were individually weighed on the official fairgrounds scales. The scale was checked earlier in the day for accuracy by the county official in charge of weights and measures. The weighing was observed and verified as to accuracy by the local district attorney; the Director of the Bridgewater Exhibition where Gregg made the lift; and by Jan and Terry Todd. We are both anxious to attend one of the AU-Rounders' Events you and Bill Clark are promoting.**

**Dear *IGH*,**

Want to tell you how much we enjoyed your articles. Terry, your article on Bob had me almost falling out of bed with tears running down my face, as I read your story relating Bob's telling about Grimek and Steve's gas. Marge wondered what was going on. I laughed so much I could hardly read it to her. The other incidents you relate were so typical of Bob I almost felt I was there.

Ed Jubinville's death grieves me greatly. Ed appeared in my shows from 1940 until the early 1950s. He was a master of muscle control and a true professional. Ed, like myself, was not endowed with great muscle size or strength. We worked hard in those years when weightlifting advocates were branded "muscle bound morons" to dispel this misconception–Ed by performing anywhere and everywhere and I, by presenting physique contests and performing with Marge and the kids. It was such a pleasure to renew our friendship at the Oldtimers banquet after my hiatus from the barbell game and my years teaching and practicing organic gardening. I will always be grateful to my good friend Joe Lembo, one of my pupils many years ago when I ran the gym, for telling me about the Oldtimers banquet. From this renewal of our friendship, Ed and I developed a closeness I was looking forward to enjoying for many more years. In just this short time we corresponded regularly. He helped me find old lifting friends and new oldtimers like John Gorton, that phenomenal eighty-six year old lifter. Our last visit together was in White Plains, New York at a lifting meet. How good it is to once again be back in the barbell game, if only as a spectator. Ed told me he had begun lifting again with an eye toward competing in some senior citizen's contests. He joked about the poundages he was lifting. I, in turn, sent him a canceled check for $10 with which I paid him for performing on my show in the forties.

Ed was not only a gentleman, he was a friend and I fight the tears as I think of all he meant to me. His passing only brings home how tenuous our hold is on life at our ages.

I intend to utilize every one of my remaining thirty to forty years living life to the fullest. As comical as that statement is, with a mother who died just short of ninety-eight and a brother who died last year at ninety-one and with brothers of eighty, eighty-four and eighty-five and a sister close to ninety maybe I have reason to be confident. Especially with a blood pressure of 120 over 60 to 70. Of course, these could well be my famous last words.

We visited with John Hordines recently who said he turned eighty-five on the tenth of October. A good friend of his whom we also visited while we were there said John didn't really know how old he was because he was born in Poland and had to accept what his parents told him. This information didn't jive within a couple of years with what I wrote in my first article about John forty-five years ago. The idea that he left weightlifting after conducting the first "Mr. America" contest is not true. He was instrumental in introducing barbell training in one institution after another for many years culminating in being the first person to bring barbell training to the blind in which endeavor he spent me last thirty years of his working life. I will verify this with his letters to me, still in my collection. They relate his activities as he moved from one institution to another. He has given me permission to give these to you. Like Ray Van Cleef's letters, I myself am stunned by the number I have accumulated and the facts they hold.

What made John's contest so outstanding was that it was the only contest in which professionals and amateurs competed until the AAU's stranglehold on physique training was broken some years later. Speaking of the AAU, I fought this dictatorial organization all my years in bodybuilding, insisting physique contests were not athletic events and that the AAU had no right to control and restrict such events to AAU members.

Bob Kiphuth, the famous swimming coach at Yale, and a fellow board member of the Connecticut AAU, so despised weight training he restricted the student's lifting facilities to a small room, about twelve by twelve feet, at the top of the tower of the Payne Whitney Gym. Heaven forbid if any of his swimmers were caught lifting a weight not attached to a wall pulley. They were immediately banished from the team. In fact, his program of physical fitness–a program of calisthenics–was compulsory for all students. I had no quarrel with this program, feeling any exercise was better than none, but when finding out Henry Jacob was one of my pupils, he made Hank stay after his class was completed and repeat the entire program with the next class to the extent of exhaustion. This despite the fact that Hank was in far better condition than ninety-nine percent of the other students. Of course this was an effort to prevent him from coming to my gym. I never understood the story that Kiphuth changed his mind in later years about weight training. He insisted that performing exercise with wall pulleys was fine but not free lifting. His dictatorship was so complete at Yale that even the wrestling coach didn't dare let his team members lift weights. His contempt for weightlifting was an obsession for him and he was a thorn in my side all the years of our relationship and to this day I have nothing but contempt for the man.

Kiphuth's dislike of Bob Hoffman dated from the time the Olympic athletes were on board ship traveling to the 1936 Olympics

at Berlin. During a heavy swell of sea, the boat tipped and Rosetta, Hoffman's wife, fell and managed to pull a man's pants down as she grasped for something to hang on to. Of course, Kiphuth turned just in time to see the end result. Rosetta's vulgar language didn't help.

**Alton Eliason**
**Northford, Connecticut**

**Dear *IGH,***

I hope all is well with you. I am fine, just lonely alone. I hope you have a great Christmas. I sure enjoy *IGH;* it is a high day when I see it in my mailbox.

I heard from Bill Good the other day. He is fine, trains with barbells twice per week, does lots of sets. He sees Walter often at the nursing home. At eighty-five or eighty-six, Walter can barely walk. Harry, at ninety, is thin but doing well: their sister Mary, aged eighty-eight is also well. Bill is eighty-three. What a tough family. Mary and another sister (whose name I don't know) were shown in Mark Berry's book called *Physical Training Simplified* in the 1920s. I had the book, it was great.

Here is my latest chinning picture. On June 1993 I did twenty-four chins at age 81. I was thrilled to read in the latest *IGH* what Joe Assirati said about George Ives who lived 111 years, and that such a great man over in England had noticed me. Joe is right about exercising the internal organs. I do some 170 hanging knee and leg raises per day. Love to all the *IGH* boys.

**Curd Edmunds**
**Glasgow, Kentucky**

**Enclosed with Curd's letter was a copy of a letter he received from Harry and Emma Good dated September 28, 1993. Curd gave *lGH* permission to print the following from Harry's letter. We agree, to quote Curd, that Harry was "super strong at only 170 or so pounds in those early days."**

I was close to twenty-two years of age when I started to exercise with barbells. These are some of the lifts and I did many stunts and barbell juggling on feet and hands weighing over one hundred pounds. Also kettlebells.

Backlift 3,000 pounds. 3,017 weighed. Harness lift approximately 3000 pounds. Five times in succession: 2750 pounds. Eighteen times in succession: 2500 pounds. Twenty-five times in fifteen seconds. These lifts were all made in public. Sony, there were no moving picture cameras to take them. Harness lifting is different from deep knee bends. I never did any heavy deadlifts or deep knee bends after 1928 because of pulling ligaments in the lower back.

In the two-hands anyhow I did 313 pounds, an official World's LightheavyRecord. Done at Baltimore, Maryland if I remember. Did over 320 pounds at York show three times but could not straighten right arm with kettle bell, the angle of the barbell interfered and I was unable to change it. It did not pass. Clean and Jerk: 292.5 pounds correct weight. Sorry I did not practice on it to get over 300 pounds. That would have given me three lifts over three hundred pounds. Two Hands Snatch 225.5 official. Two Hands Press: 197.5. One Hand Clean and Jerk: 181 pounds at the AAU Championships. Bill did 220 pounds at the same contest. Teeth lift: 451.5 pounds, official, in 1928. One complete Leg Press: 380 pounds. Three times in succession, in public. Cleaned and Jerked 160 pound barbell [with one hand] and lay down flat on back with it and get up again. I practiced mostly on various stunts, etc., instead of lifting and for that reason I was offered to perform at Coney Island side show in 1930 to take Warren Lincoln Travis' place. I have the letters to prove. Instead, I went to York with Hoffman when he went in business. I also bent two of the softer sixty-penny spikes at one time and also straightened out the tougher ones after bending them.— **Harry Good**

**Dear *IGH,***

I was fascinated by your article in *IGH* that revealed the "real" Bob Hoffman. Modern bodybuilding magazines completely ignore his role in promoting weight training in America. I read my first copy of *Strength & Health* back in 1945 at age 13, when Clarence Ross was featured on the cover as that year's Mr. America.

Over the years, I've regretted never having made the pilgrimage to the York Barbell Club during its heyday when Grimek, Stanko, Terpak, Terlazzo, John Davis, Gord Venables, Ray Van Cleef, etc., were all present. However, from your account, I would have been greatly disappointed by the rundown condition of the gym, if I'd gone in the 1950s.

None of the writers for *S&H* ever even hinted at Hoffman's tendency to exaggerate his physical accomplishments or his ongoing affairs with women. How wonderful to discover after all these years that Bob Hoffman—who seemed to me from his articles in *S&H* to be overly conservative and somewhat of a prude—was in reality an outrageous human being.

An old-time English weightlifter, William Barker, lived in my hometown (Napa, California) during the 1950s and 1960s. Although I never met him, his wife told me he could muscle out two forty-five pound kettlebells when he was in his late seventies.

**Al Cardwell**
**Napa California**

**Dear *IGH,***

Enclosed is my renewal for a Patron Subscription. As we spoke, the Mr./Mrs. America "could" be in Texas next year and, if so, I will certainly be by to visit your collection. I also wanted to sham with you, and your readers, a few thoughts about the passing of my good friend, Ed Jubinville.

I have to go back to all the wildly entertaining shows at Maintain Park in Holyoke, Massachusetts with prompter Ed Jubinville doing everything from hanging a spotlight on a "rigged" frame for posing, to carrying in the weights, to emceeing, to cleaning up. That was the type of life that kept Ed going and what made him a true member of the Iron Game.

I first met Ed approximately twenty years ago. We were both judging a bodybuilding show. I can't recall where, since in those days we would be in a different place each week. Ed would

always act as "Head Judge." With his distinguished background in the sport, we even designated a method of scoring as the "Jubinville System." Ed's character and integrity were certainly never to be questioned at any meet. Whenever he was involved, the shows just seemed to move without any problems as to honesty and fairness. As we began to work more shows together, it was only a matter of time until I began judging and competing at the "legendary" Mountain Park competitions. In those years, anyone who was anyone in the area in the sport was there, either as a competitor, guest poser, judge, or spectator. Even the original *Pumping Iron* movie was filmed at Mountain Park. I'll never forget the craziness there that day. Cameras all over the area with people jumping out of their seats and Ed having everything under control.

Most Mountain Park people will remember Ed's first New England Strongman competition. Ed was never one to ask for help and at this competition, like the others, Ed was setting up tire throws, dumbell runs, bench presses, etc. The late Al Leroux and I were judges, and Ed did some judging himself, in the middle of running down a hill with a ninety pound dumbell in each hand, back to the starting point.

I feel very fortunate to have been considered a friend by Ed Jubinville and to have known him in different lights. Those in the business world appreciated their dealings with Jubinville Health Equipment. There was no kinder, more polite, easy-to-deal with man than Ed. When I approached Ed upon wanting to open a gym, he took me "under his wing" and gave me the guidance that I later realized was from a very special friend and unique person in this business.

Besides the many bodybuilding, arm wrestling, and strongman shows that Ed promoted he was an accomplished weightlifter, holding many records and winning many titles, along with judging many top professional competitions such as the Mr. Olympia. With all this "stardom," Ed was more modest than anyone in his field, although he received many awards. Ed would not tell anyone of these awards, and he would most humbly accept them without a speech. But at the same time, he was most honored that his peers held him in such high esteem. That's the Ed Jubinville that we will always remember.

Ed had an extensive mailing list of friends and fellow lifters to whom, at his own expense, he would mail information about anything that was happening in the weight world just to keep everyone informed. As years went by, the mailings kept coming. I would always open a letter or package from Ed before any other mail. I knew there would be something interesting. Back in the early eighties, Ed and I were to meet in Maine to judge the "Old Orchard Beach" competition that Marty Joyce ran for many years. It was a very dismal summer day on the beach with constant rain and cold. I couldn't find Ed in the crowd and when I asked Marty where he was, I was shocked to learn that Ed had suffered a stroke. It just didn't seem possible. That cold day in Maine that couldn't have gotten worse got worse. But weight training helped Ed to bounce right back as he did from his more recent multiple by-pass surgery. When I first visited him at his home, just days after his return from the hospital, he was extremely depressed. But with Ed's always strong will and determination, he was back to his love, the "weights," in no time. It's not generally known but Ed died in the gym. Very few of us get to leave the present world doing what we love best. A man who has given us so much and asked for so little died doing what he loved.

I will miss our talks, the travels we had together, the people he would introduce me to, his wisdom, his caring, his sincere dedication to a life of "iron," his unselfishness, his unique business ethics, his devotion to his family, and most of all, his "real" friendship. I will miss him.

**Fred Yale**
**West Haven, CT**

**Dear *IGH,***

Been wanting to tell you how much I've been enjoying *Iron Game History*— each new issue seems better than the last. I showed (and loaned) some issues to a semi-retired chiropractor—and weight training enthusiast—friend of mine, Bill Neal of Raleigh North Carolina, and he immediately subscribed. He was ecstatic about the article on Hackenschmidt and Hack's writings about "cell memory," etc. He was just awed at how far ahead of his time Hack was. He's had whiplash patients, for instance, speaking of "cell memory, limb memory," etc. who'd lapse into a repeat of the same spasms just from hearing loud brakes behind them. Trigger-point therapy kind of relates, too.

Being a longtime George Jowett fan, I particularly enjoyed John Fair's article. Also enjoyed that very cerebral piece several issues back by Al Thomas about how a bodybuilder "is" his hobby. I'd only received three or four issues of the *Roark Report,* when Joe stopped producing them, so I'm glad to see his writings regularly in *IGH,* too. Anyway, I wanted to send you a few words of encouragement as a pleased reader.

I'm doing a painting for Dr. Grover Porter of Huntsville, Alabama. He visited with you in the library there in Austin and sent me copies of some pictures he took there. You had given him a great deal of encouragement and support on his cancer operation which he had at the hospital there (he seems to be recovering well).

Last year I had the good fortune to acquire two books I'd always wanted: George Jowett's *The Key to Might and Muscle,* and a first edition of *Tarzan of the Apes.* Did I ever tell you the obscure trivia fact that John Grimek posed briefly for J. Allen St. John in Chicago when Grimek was modeling in the Art Institute? St. John did illustrations for several of the early Tarzan novels, and I have a *Tarzan at the Earth's Core*, with a frontispiece of Tarzan having an unmistakable Grimek facial profile and rib-box.

**Jim Sanders,**
**Garner, North Carolina**

**One of the nicest things about being honored by the Oldetime Barbell and Strongman Association this past year was that we received a beautiful painting, done by artist Jim Sanders, commemorating our careers. Sanders does a painting for each of the honorees; their presentation, at the close of the evening, is one of the highlights of the show. Thanks, Jim.**