IRON GAME HISTORY

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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON IRON GAME HISTORY AS REVOLUTIONARY MANIFESTO AND EVANGEL

By Al Thomas, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: The editorial for this issue is part of a much longer essay, and we hope to publish other sections of the essay in future issues. Al Thomas is a man of many parts. For over fifty years, Al has trained with real joy and passion and as the years have passed he has brought his formidable intellect to bear in the service of the game he loves. His series of articles in ***Iron Man*** in support of serious weight training for women, for example, laid the philosophical foundation on which the phenomenal growth of women's competitive lifting and bodybuilding has been built. Not everyone agreed with those articles and not everyone will agree with this editorial. But anyone who is serious about bodybuilding will do well to read his manifesto.

When I answered, "Over fifty years ago," to the young champion's question as to when I started training, I heard, instead of the expected compliment to my perseverance, "Wow, either you know something I don't or you're just as bad as all the others. Worse, really, because I'd expect a grandfather to be more discriminating than some damn kid in latching-onto a lifestyle its narcissistic and venal as this one is."

As her words swam into focus in my tired brain, I knew my workout was over for the day. In all my years, I'd never heard a gym-type expostulation that zoomed with such precision to the biggest chink in my well-reinforced armor. Focusing on the much-photographed face, I knew that there was more depth to my complainant than just her well-earned reputation as one of the game's strongest physique-athletes. Knowing there was no retreat. I leaned back on my end of the bench and asked what had disillusioned her so thoroughly.

Later in life than usual, she discovered in herself a real "talent" (as she put it) for developing muscle and strength after an already-long career as a social activist. Unfortunately for her, all the unselfish joy of her formerly other-directed life came, over time, to take second place to the self-centered pleasure she was experiencing in the competitive bodybuilder's real *raison d'être:* building her muscles and her strength. The same woman who had fought with all her imagination and courage to heighten society's consciousness now earned an admittedly pretty penny as a personal trainer to "rich folks who sought out [her] celebrity" and spent all the rest of her waking moments mapping out campaigns to acquire more muscle, to win yet-more contests, and to achieve even-yet more salability on the seminar circuit. All of which had come to seem manifestly unimportant to her: a life that didn't stand up to even the most cursory scrutiny.

"I ask old guys whether this is the nature of the beast. But they always give me the usual bull about the 'good old days,' even big-names from the old game who do seem different, I must admit, from the ones today. But maybe it's just that they're old and mellowing with age. Maybe it's always been a ratrace for the big buck, with everybody trying to outpsych the other. The world that Terry (Todd] and you and the other old guys write about doesn't seem to have much in common with today. I keep hoping that I can something from the old-timers I talk with about all this, but I haven't gotten much so far."

In my view, the most important function of ***IGH*** and the iron game historian is reminding the current generation's weight-men and women—reminding all of us really—about the world and mind-set from which we evolve. Not merely calling attention to the game's

giants, but recreating that world so fondly recalled by the old-timers: the worst of it, to be sure, but especially the best of it. Manfully attempting, in the process, to avoid the inevitable lapse of the ruminating old-timer into postures of moral superiority to his youthful audience, a lapse which even the most charming of my childhood's best-loved story-tellers never wholly escaped. The youngest of listeners can grant us the slippery implications of "good" in "good old days," long as we don't fall into the question-begging proposition: If the days of old are (were) good, the days of here-and-now are bad. This is obviously absurd: "logic" at its most fallacious.

In those "good old days" of the not-distant past (as a recent issue of ***IGH*** attests), the most knowledgeable and sophisticated of coaches denied their athletes access to even the lightest of barbell training. The outcome of which was that their boys gathered to "lift weights" in conspiratorial stealth, rebels conspiring to build muscle, but almost as devoutly to throw-over the ruling oligarchy: the world of coaches and physical culturists who "sold good health" and the sort of "muscle tone" that accompanied light gymnastics and stretching. And in those "good old days," if a girl sought to lift anything heavier than the "figure salon's" weighted wands in her quest for a "muscled figure" (never, of course, a physique), she was written-off as a "man-hating inversion or worse," definitely not a time for the liberation of a female's desire to be strong and free.

Not a time, either, for the African-American, however symmetrical his muscle mass, to win the major physique contests or even to appear on the covers of most muscle magazines. ("They just

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don't sell, you know."). But, then, at least one publisher still has not really corrected this inequity. This was unconscionable in the past when publishers defended this discriminatory practice as a "matter of dollars and cents," but doubly unconscionable today when the other muscle magazine publishers, and those in virtually every other area of American publishing, have grown too "enlightened" to fall back upon such outrageous excuses for prejudice. The function of editors is to provide moral leadership, not merely to follow the "dictates" of the market analysts. Historically, the role of moral leader has been assumed by precious few editors of our magazines. It is beyond conscience in the mid-Nineties that the argument is still trotted-out that covers featuring minority models don't sell.

No. There was much that was decidedly un-good about those old days, but much, also, about which our historians must remind us, and especially the younger generations, that was very good: much that would be a salve, a long-needed purgative, to the puffed-up-ness, the ugliness, of so much in the Nineties world of iron and muscle.

In his graceful acceptance speech on the occasion of being honored by the Old-time Barbell and Strongman Association a few years ago, John Grimek talked in gently reminiscent language about the "fun" that character&d the game in the decades that he was our game's most respected icon. Except for today's wide-eyed innocents (the work-a-day trainers who sweat with such abundantly-amateur-joy and attend the big shows with the uncritical eye of the enthusiast), the old fun extolled by Grimek has long departed our game and especially so in its upper-reaches, in its competitive ranks.

As a person intimately aware of the early physique contests (and even the omnibus strength and bodybuilding exhibition), the historian can best communicate to the young, in their own language, what distinguished such events from their modern analogs. That which was "good" about such contests was the fact that they were (not quite, but almost) an afterthought, hooked-on at the end of a long two-days of Senior National Weightlifting Championships. Since there was no money involved, the contestants' fates (and more particularly their very livelihoods) were not contingent upon their placement. (There were no contracts, endorsements, seminars, or cover layouts on the line: no money.) The result was a camaraderie that one never finds in shows of the last twenty-five or thirty years.

In the early years, our historian never saw or even heard about such latter-day vulgarities as "psyching-out" or even simply upstaging an opponent ("opponent"?), trashing the judges for their "obvious bias," the unmanly "fishing" for compliments about one's body at the expense of another's, the effeminate pouting and other theatrical demonstrations of pique at the announcements of results, the refusal (even the unconscionable smashing) of trophies that fall short of the expected placement, the whipping-up of one's factions (or claques) when it's sensed that one has been "done badly by," the tedious jumping in front of a fellow competitor so that the audience won't have its attention diverted from one's own "infinitely beautiful" self, the after-contest cruising from group to group (the little-boy heart so needful of sustenance and restoration, inevitably broken by any placement other than first), the incredulous look in the little-boy-eyes (the look of one whose very own mama has placed his chief-nemesis two places ahead of him because of a better calf-sweep and lower lats). All so "devastating."

THIS PHYSIQUE SHOT OF PROMOTER LAURIE FIERSTEN HELPS EXPLAIN HER INTEREST IN CELEBRATING FEMALE MUSCLE.

—*TODD-MCLEAN COLLECTION*

"It's all so narcissistic"; our young champion was downcast, seeing herself as no less guilty than the worst of the others, "but not by nature," she insisted. And it is true. By "nature," she had happily served the oppressed at a salary barely above minimum wage. Indeed, it was the pain of this internal conflict that had brought her to the old historian with her questions about the old days.

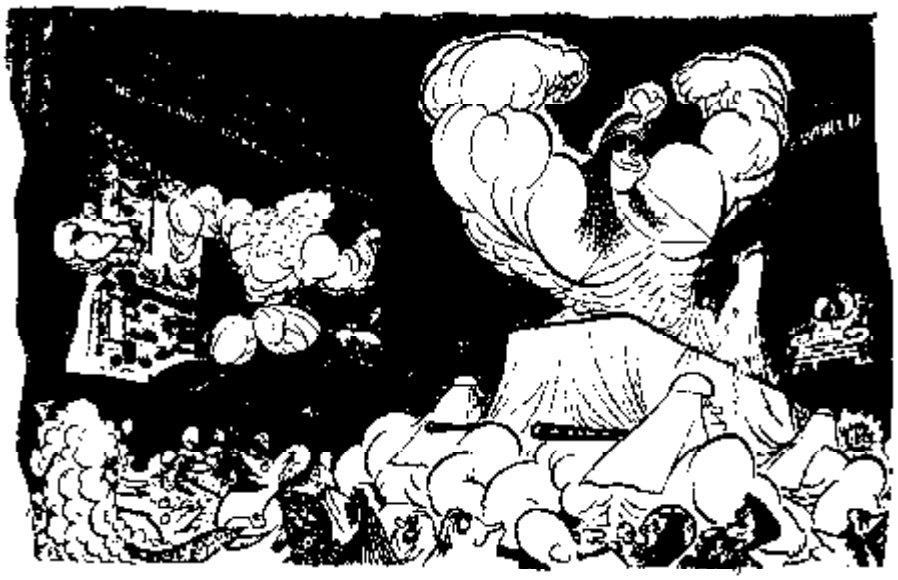
Context shapes behavior. The gentle Baptist boy straight from Christian School, plunked-down into the hellishly chaotic horrors of combat, is capable of monstrous breaches of soldierly conduct Each of us is, to the dismay of everybody but the behaviorist. ever the student of context's shaping power. The force of context is overpoweringly strong in the modern physique contest. Within its shaping context, our generous-hearted champion came to behave as ungenerously as the worst of the contestants described earlier, and that she could be moved to such behavior stabbed her with its irreconcilability to her "real nature."

If for the historical reasons suggested earlier, physique contestants in the "old days" usually escaped psychologically intact, they surely don't today, and neither does the game itself, nor we who love this display of massive strength. Neither in the old days nor today is the contest a proper vehicle for the display of the human physique, male or female. For almost thirty years, I've inveighed against the physique contest in many articles, having long since anticipated the past quarter-century's snowballing of

HUNKETTES

NO DISCUSSIONS OF FEMALE VICTIMHOOD THE OTHER NIGHT AT ROSELAND JUSTTWO DOZEN WOMEN BODY-BUILDERS, VERY PUMPED UP?

by ARNOLD ROTH



the vulgar thing confronting us today.

Many have written about the apples-and-oranges impossibility of judging physiques of different sorts: the magnificent narrow-clavicle, broad(er)-hipped physique versus the no less magnificent wide-clavicle, narrow(er)-hipped one. The chore, no less impossible, of judging the perfectly-developed African-American according to the same criteria employed in judging the perfectly-developed white man or yellow man. All quite impossible. All this has been hashed-out often over the years, but the physique contest continues.

A more powerful argument against the modern contest, however, resides in the aesthetic fact that such a complex experiential response—the response of an observer to the effect upon his nervous system of a shadow-casting body—cannot be reduced to an abstraction, a number, without the loss of all that is important and beautiful in the experience (in the response of the observer to the body). How unworthy becomes our response to the body's transcendent beauty when we operate on the assumption that such a response to the most awe-inspiring of man and nature's artifacts can be mediated by a table full of abstractionist-"judges," conjoined mindlessly in processes not markedly different from those used in number-grading a truckload of Idaho potatoes.

The aesthetician—but more importantly the historian who has been around long enough to remember the old exhibitions—must remind us that the human body is not a sport, not just another athletic event like diving that may truly lend itself to number grading. In a sport a judge's response is to what bodies *DO*, and these "doings" can be judged and compared by means of number-placements (abstractions). But in physique exhibitions. the response is not to what a body does, but to what it *IS* and (by extension: poetically and symbolically) what it "means." And neither that which a body is nor that which a body "means" lends itself to number abstractions. Physique-creations are a product of the human brain and will and imagination as they have imposed themselves upon human flesh, upon nature. The result is inarguably an artifact and according to some definitions, a work of art. And neither artifact nor work of art lends itself to the reductionism represented by number-grading. Therefore, if despite obvious absurdity and against all reason, a phenomenon continues (in this case, the physique *contest),* one is well-advised to follow the money trail—as well as the insights provided by historical perspective.

Embarking upon this money trail, the historian is confronted, early on, by the inevitable defense of the Nineties' contest: "It's the competition that people turn-out to see. So what that physiques are judged from best to worse or numbered first to last? How'd you know who was best otherwise? That's the whole reason for the judge's consensus as to the best body in the show!"

No. Not so. And that it isn't so is borne out by history in the term's usual sense, as well as in the sense of the term as it relates to an observer's careful perception of what happened in the near-past and what is happening here and now. Competition *seems,* surely enough, to be almost second nature to human beings, or at least to human beings as they've been conditioned by culture and society. But in this particular matter of exhibiting human bodies, the "need" for competition is far less intrinsic than it is in traditionally "competitive" athletics." It is far more the product of a carry-over to the posing dais from the domains and arenas of more inherently competitive athletics. a "carry-over" that has never really been subjected to thoughtful consideration as to its aesthetic or philosophical justification.

"How'd you know, then, who's best without contests?" our contest-defender continues. The aficionado knows. The story has come to the historian that, at a recent "Night of Champions," Vic Richards was spotted lolling around outside the theater after the competition. Needless to say, to anybody who has ever surveyed this modern-day Hercules, in a minute or two Vic was surrounded, four or five deep, by admirers—all this to the utter consternation of the contestants as they filed-out, wholly unnoticed by the fans. In separately reported pronouncements, several of the contestants deplored the "unfairness of being ignored," after having exposed their painfully crafted bodies before the toughest judges in bodybuilding. An

PART OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CELEBRATION OF FEMALE MUSCLE WAS THAT THE EVENT ATTRACTED MAINSTREAM MEDIA ATTENTION SUCH AS THIS CARTOON, WHICH APPEARED NOVEMBER 29, 1993 IN THE INFLUENTIAL MAGAZINE, ***THE NEW YORKER.***

"indignity and an unfairness," they argued, especially given the fact that "the guy getting all the attention [was] an eternal-no-show," and worse yet, a "no-show who'd never in his life gotten himself into real contest shape, much less into a contest." One of the "unnoticed" complained. "He always gets all the attention, but never's won anything. How come?"

In answer to his "how come" and to the contest-defenders plaintive. "How'd you know who's best?"— the historian replies: "Best," as it applies to the human body, has nothing to do with number-placement in physique contests or, even, with whether a given bodybuilder sees fit to participate in such contests at all. Witness Vic Richards and, in an earlier generation of women bodybuilders, Kay Baxter. They were and are the apple of the aficionado's eye, whether or not they won (or win) contests—or even deigned to enter contests. Who cared or cares? When Kay came upon the scene, and when Vic does today, (mere) contest-winners just faded away. In fact, they "curled-up and died," even when they were, admittedly, much more cut-up and "contest-ready," even, indeed, when they may have been more "perfect" according to one-or-another convention of physique perfection. When offered the opportunity to contemplate the physique magnificence of the contrarian Richards (who abhors contests and their formulaic, cookie-cutter demands) or just-another-version of the shredded, trained-down war-horses so familiar to contest goers, the aficionados, as they always do, showered their attention upon the reclusive Richards.

The contest-ness of contests, their unbearably tedious competition, has nothing to do with the appeal of an ultimately developed physique to an audience. Not that evening. Not ever. Give audiences a modern-day updating of the non-competitive physique exhibition of the past, and they will come—in droves. They will come ready to revel in the artistic, epiphanic pleasure provided to one's aesthetic sense—indeed, almost to one's religious sense—by the ultimately developed human body: the Richards-ian sort of physique which transcends the limitations imposed by the contest upon truly unfettered development.

As reported more widely in the general print and electronic media than any other physique presentation in bodybuilding history. audiences descended in droves. in November of 1993, upon a first-of-its kind (totally non-competitive) exhibition called "A Celebration of Muscle." Created by the young woman who had brought me up so short with her earlier questioning—strongwoman/physique-athlete Laurie Fierstein—tie exhibition was presented as a Broadway-type show at the famed Roseland Ballroom in the heart of Gotham's theater district. Give audiences a magically conceived and imaginatively executed physique exhibition—even one that was unable to land sponsors or to get more than *pro forma* attention from the muscle magazines—and they will come in great numbers. That night they came thirteen hundred strong, a block-long phalanx of enthusiastic show-goers, snaking past the theater marqueeing Richard Chamberlain's ***My Fair Lady.*** Ms. Fierstein had been adamant about mounting this unprecedented performance, this exhibition of the unfettered female physique, in the theater district, even though every single voice from the game had advised otherwise, recommending junior high gyms here and college field houses there: More of the old thing. Unable (as the contest mentality always is) to comprehend that the old presentational modes are simply too boring and unimaginative, contributing nothing to a physique-athlete's discovery about himself or, in this case, herself.

In telling an athlete how to look—in effect, how to train, because without that "look" he or she won't win—the contest ignores what the athlete would like his-her own body to be, and how he-she wants to be seen. It ignores that the body in which we move-about is what we are, our statement-to-the-world about how we conceive of ourselves and want others to perceive us.

In Fierstein's Exhibition, the women had been encouraged, it seems, to present themselves as they wanted to look, whether that was big and massive, or smaller and more cutup: *however* they chose to look. And they were reminded that they had *carte blanche* in the matter of posing or presentation. They could, in short, present themselves in any manner they chose. There would be no judging. No

placements. Just the pleasure of presenting themselves to a manifestly appreciative audience. And appreciative it was, knowing that it was witnessing the wave of the future in physique presentations: non-competitive and humane. Fierstein's Exhibition was an artistic experience that was enjoyable to the women, who had been saved from the contest's built-in dynamics of contestant-alienation; and enjoyable, also of course, to the audience which, in non-partisan relaxation, could bring all its powers of appreciation to each of these profoundly different women.

The question has been posed, "How'd you know who won without a contest?" As one old-timer wrote ever the historian, "I'd never been to such a bodybuilding event, if that's what it was. Nobody was angry about a bad decision. There weren't any decisions. All the women looked happy, not starved-down. Big and round, well-fed. but still strong looking. Round muscles, not like the starved-looking girls in the contests I've seen. They were like the women from the earlier years that I remember seeing photos of in the old ***Strength & Health.*** At the end, I had a good feeling—what a difference! There were no losers. Everybody was a winner."

"How'd you know who won?" So asked the defender-of-contests. And thus passes yet-another myth.

In the words of our formerly disillusioned young champion. there's a glimmer of hope! "Something like the Celebration would be a sign of good things to come for the men, also. I came away with real hope. What struck me was that all the women got along with each other and were having a happy time, with none of the psych-jobs I've seen so much of. I'd never seen a show where everybody seemed to respect everybody else."

The impact of the human physique beggars all the systems improvised in the last thirty years to quantify it: all the competitions dreamed-up by the game's moguls to enhance their own power and revenues—and to insure a fresh Mr.-This or Ms.-That, whose real "function" is to serve his or her fruit-fly moment of "fame" as the bosses' chief salesperson in their house-organ muscle magazines.

An important role for the historian is to call attention to the venal changes effected in modern physique display and to the fact that these changes are a product of the powers-that-be and their sensed need to enhance their control and revenues. In the hollowness at the core of the purple-thing that our game is becoming lies the cause of so much that is meretricious about it. And a major cause is the moguls' pursuit of ever-more profits. The logical consequence thereof is the money-carrot they dangle before the bespangled eyes of their muscular contest- "winner" -salespersons. And not just the winner: also the other dozen or so males and females kept "breathlessly" on the verge of triumphs-to-be by means of the bosses' skillful manipulation of their own media (and the media dependent upon them).

As a result of all this. it becomes necessary for the top names to make bodybuilding their "career," their "profession." Not just in the defensible sense that they might "use" their bodybuilding know-how in operating a gym, or becoming personal trainers, or going-on to a degree in exercise physiology. or into writing about muscles and health, or starting a clothing line or a health food store: all applications of their cachet that would make sense. What doesn't make sense and is, indeed, insidious is that the moguls' dangled-carrot of "big money" leads even some of the smartest of these muscular youngsters to obsessing about a "career, a profession," up on a posing dais, making-muscles to a pack of co-dependents and facilitators out there in the dark.

If there is some sort of rationalization for paying big bucks to people for hitting golf balls or baseballs or other chaps' jaws, there is no such rationalization for the pimpery and prostitution necessary to the "professionalizing" of "making-muscles" on a posing dais. Such doings don't comprise a sport. They do comprise, in one sense, the creative (and typically unprofitable) side of art and, in another sense, the sacral dimension of the holy man, who is sworn to (at least a twentieth-century version of) poverty.

It's incumbent, then, for our historian, chatting with his young friends after a workout, to remember with them that, even at its best, making-muscles for money is illusory. There's precious little money to be made and no really big money, even for the very few at the top who make the very most (a "most" which is piddling compared with the money earned in *real* sports). But even this "piddling most" is earned, in bodybuilding, by a smaller fraction of the game's participants than in the other sports, the *real* ones. (A message never relayed to the enthusiast by the moguls' magazines.)

And it's not bad (as the historian must be quick to remind his young friends) that bodybuilding is not a sport, real or otherwise. It is, in fact, something much more precious than mere sports or games which, after all, are merely things that we *DO*. Bodybuilding is, and becomes, what we *ARE*.

If the most-winning men and women have been able to buy better cars than they'd have been able to buy otherwise (a debatable "if'), the moguls' growing preoccupation with kindling the flames of competitive fire for their own profit has resulted in the compromise and vulgarization of bodybuilding, bodybuilders, and bodies.

The silly, vulgar squabble between two of the top women should be as embarrassing to them as it is to the game and those who want to admire its heroines. This sort of narcissistic ugliness, unfortunately, is rife among the top men and women, among competitors at all levels. If Muhammad Ali managed to carry this sort of thing off with playful élan, it was because of his mastery of the act which it *was* with him: just another game. Precious few among our musclemen and women have learned the trick of it. It's hard to imagine that the men and women whose vendettas are a staple of the magazines' gossip columns are the same monumental folks whose photos and regimens elicit so much admiration in the reader. But these campaigns to enlarge one's fortunes (by necessity at the expense of one's training partners' because of the limited billets available for the big-money earners) have disastrous effects, as earlier expressed in Laurie Fierstein's disillusionment.

In the old shows, there was a sense of camaraderie among the men behind the scenes. This isn't the word, however, to communicate the taut-jawedness of the ambiance behind the curtains in modern shows. When reproached for her "silent disdain:" her refusal to acknowledge the other contestants in a recent show, one of the top-women shouted, "This is my career. It's my profession!" The implication: "If I blow this show because of being talky and nice and losing my 'focus,' my future goes down the toilet. This is my business."

How very sad. How very unworthy.

Then there's the pathetic sight of kids lining-up to have their photos taken with the game's star, but the big shock (and the historian's mission is to make sure the hardened 90's youngster knows that it is a shock) is seeing kids hand-up greenbacks for the honor of occupying space at the star's side. Then, there are the ubiquitous stacks, wherever he crops up, of the star's autographed photos-for expensive sale. Just try to get him—or her—to pose with your kid, or you, *gratis.* ("Look, this is my job. Plumbing is yours, right? This is mine: it's how I make my living. Nothing personal. Just the way it is in 1994.")

Or, the brusque, "I'm holding a seminar on all that next week at Joe's Gym," in response to a star-struck kid's questions (for which, read: "Be there, kid, and add your twenty-five bucks to my next car payment. My words don't come free.")

But the historian remembers the old York Barbell Club's picnics (free across-the-board), and he reminds his young friends about his annual half-hour questioning of the game's best, Grimek (or any of the York "guys"), with no more payment requested by the Great One (or his lieutenants) than the young wisdom-seeker's close attention.

Not long ago, as Grimek has reminded us, it was *ALL* fun, all of it: all this business of physique shows and the people in them. Unprofitable to be sure, but fun. But though unprofitable, nobody "went without," at least not because they were "professional" bodybuilders (whatever that might have meant back then) *on a losing streak.* They all had jobs. They all trained ponderously hard when they chose to. They all built, withal, wonderfully muscular and powerful bodies. And because their jobs and futures—and their very selves—were *not* threatened by a loss in the weekend get-together-"contest," they hustled themselves onto the dais without the need for any magic muscle-building concoction. always with the expectation of getting some good feedback (a term they wouldn't have understood) from cheering audiences of iron gamers, who had traveled across the country from the very same kinds of jobs that they, themselves, sweated-over back home. And fun it was withal. Not despite, but because of not yet having fallen prey to the present-day contest's preoccupation with the three P's: placement, profit, and product.

As a final thought in this vein, whether or not anabolic steroids represent the scourge that many physicians and researchers claim, they certainly represent for many people a source of ethical discomfort and possible compromise of the endocrine and immune systems, Without them the ethicist and the medical establishment, indeed most people, would be considerably more happy and perhaps even more healthy, certainly less tom than they are now, both ethically and morally.

Before the advent of the big lure of big bucks and all the inflated blather that accompanies big bucks, there was far less sensed need ("need") in the world of muscle for steroids: the primacy accorded steroids occurs primarily in a world that is dominated by a similar primacy accorded the two P's: contest Placement and Profit (growing out of the importance accorded contest Placement by Profit). A world dominated, also, by the muscle industry moguls who exploit these two P's in selling the ah-important third P: Product (the engine that makes the whole thing go).

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Trading upon the obvious fair-mindedness of his historical analysis—and upon his assumption that those whom he focuses upon share his love for the game and for honest self-appraisal—the historian bristles at what the perceives to be the undermining of the iron game by a commercial Fifth Column, obsessed with the huge Profits accruing to Product sales that are generated by puffed-up first-placers in contests that are barely camouflaged extensions of the bosses' product sales and publicity departments.

From his study of the game's roots, the historian has come to sense, with the economist's certitude, that the promise of profit has resulted in a great leap forward in the sort of body that we've become used to seeing in modern contests: the production line, "standardized" Nineties physique. Despite the fact that the promised profits have proved as illusory as all the other big lies propagated by these powers behind bodybuilding (and its industry), the mere promise itself has been enough to fuel the huge production and eventual overproduction of bodies, each one of which is aesthetically capable, by any artistic rationale, of winning virtually any major contest, if it were judged strictly on merit.

The most cursory survey of any major contest's stageful of muscle glut provides evidence aplenty of this overproduction. "Custom cut" to specs that allow for differences only in color and height. it's a glut that numbs the senses and defies any equitable or meaningful evaluation by the judges.

"Good heavens," cries the contest-defender. 'They're all gods! Over-production? Is this so bad? How so?"

Beyond debate to our historian (as economist) is the economic impossibility of providing an equitable spread of most contests' paltry earnings among the contests' participants, the bodybuilders, the "workers." The bulk of the revenues doesn't find its way into the pockets of the muscle business' laborers. And they don't even expect it to: sad sack rank-and-file that they are. Ever since their propagandized childhood, they've been systematically divested by the muscle mags (the house organs of the muscle industry) of any sense of their just deserts. They've been denied—and deny—that they're really owed anything, except the pleasure of paying to stand up there on a posing dais. And except, of course, the pleasure of the kindly Master's tousling their sweaty heads after hard work (outs). And except—Who could forget?—the Master's celebratory ritual-of-sharing, when (instead of the "symbol-share" of the bushel back to themselves of their very own corn) these muscleman-"share-croppers" of the Nineties are offered tin statues of yet another deballed chap with muscles.

Over-production, however, causes something worse than this matter of a greatly increased number of worker-commodities (contestants), each one of whom is good enough to win even the most prestigious contests. And it causes something worse than the consequent devaluation of markets and (as a function and product of this) the devaluation, objective and subjective, of worker-commodities.

The "something worse" that has been caused is a failure of moral force or nerve. The irony is, of course, that even the mere promise of money and profit (the vehicle of all this abundance in

quantity and quality of physiques) has led to an abundance of yet another, less happy, sort: an abundance of emptiness, as it were. In this case, a pervasive emptiness in what's become just another business with a hole at its core, but was once not a business. not a sport, not even a game in the real sense, but to its devotees a way-of-life that was informed, long ago, with meaning, and with deep and great good feeling.

Whatever its benefit to the young champion, the advice proffered by our historian is the sort expected by the younger generation from the older one: expected if rarely requested in words. And. *as* this piece suggests, the chief function of such advice is subversive (from the Latin "sub" and "vertere": to turn, or overturn, from beneath). The function (basically but not exclusively subversive) of the historian-as-old-man-*of* (-and-still-*in)* -our-game is important if what was better about the old days is ever again to bloom in the new day ushering-in the 21 st century.

Yet all this "change from beneath," this "subversion," must be achieved without denying the profoundly important improvements effected in today's game by a vastly upgraded science of strength- and muscle-building, nutrition, and all the physiotherapies. As "science" the game is always in change from beneath, the "subversion" in this case being implemented by scientists who are better trained to implement such changes than the historian is, with his roots in another time, in a less sophisticated "science" concerning such matters.

All this is well and good, and as it should be. The quaint notion, however, that change is always for the better is just that: "quaint" and a "notion" —a peculiarly New World concept. In the Old World cultures, with their more deeply rooted sense of the human condition's tragic dimension, this reflexive view that "sees" change as invariably for the better has never been sufficiently rooted to demand uprooting. In ours, on the other hand, uprooting is necessary. and all the moreso in the glitzy bodybuilding side of our game, with the priority it claims for everything big and new and shiny and expensive. Despite all our intrinsic fondness for it, bodybuilding often seems to know more about the cost, rather than the value, of its baubles.

Formidable indeed is an old guy at the opposite end of a gym bench from an audience of young weight trainers. With a half-century or more of hard truths about the iron world. he is, at the very least the boys' historian, whether by his own choice or popular elevation. At very best, he must be their revolutionist.

Granting the admirable gifts of science to weight training, much in this world and many people in it cry out to be "overthrown from beneath": among these are the braying and venal hucksters who have shamelessly degraded its lovingly remembered dignity.

It's time to correct the stupidness. the injustice, the inequity, the personal humiliation and pain inevitably accruing to a production mode premised upon the promise of profit (especially a false promise) — and especially so in an activity as affectional-visceral as the building of human bodies. Instead of the cruelly acquisitive vision of the muscle industry's chiefs, it is time for all of us, old and young, to develop an unprecedented vision. A vision that includes, for the first time ever, a new community of producers at all levels, from the production of bodies to the production of physique exhibitions or shows. A community of producers who are bound to each other—not by adherence to the self-servingly pompous rules of some body-building organization or federation or by commitment to the contest-"grading" of bodies for profit—but who are bound to each other by love for the game and for the cultivated human body: its beauty and health and strength.

In short, it's time for bodybuilding's "workers" to seize the means of their game's "government," so long controlled by the body business' money-makers and worse yet, by its greenback-wavers. Enough already.

The correct, the humane, vehicle of physique presentation is something other than the official bodybuilding federations. Over the decades they have demonstrated no real interest in the body-as-body or in the humane values of the body's exhibition, except to the degree that the contest "winner' and the contest itself contribute immensely to the organizations' profits and, hence, to their self-perpetuating power. A cruelly circular business at best.

The only "worker"-sensitive vehicle of physique presentation is the "functional unit" that operates autonomously, without "control from above": a "unit"that is shaped and provided its informing validity from below. from its "worker"-participant. He or she comes then to have a "say" in the direction taken by the particular functional unit of presentation (the show or exhibition) in which he or she is involved (has chosen to be involved). This sort of input on a participant's part is not a gift to him, not a function of the "producer's" generosity, as it often pretends to be in the producer-participant interaction that characterizes the current physique contest and its production. As envisaged here, the participant (the "worker") is the only reason for the show, its *raison d'être.* He is its engine. Not vice versa, as in the Nineties contest that is controlled-from-the-top.

Except as each unit might choose to cooperate with another to the mutual benefit of both, each functional unit involved in physique presentation would be independent of every other unit. Whatever the general, universal power to corrupt exerted by the promise of money and profit, it is beyond dispute to the historian (bestride his gym bench) that the promise of money and profit has corrupted the Nineties muscle game. As the old historian advises his young friends: Just look around and listen. Just read the magazincs. Just look back to the time that Grimek alludes to and examine it relative to the empty glitz, the moral nadir, of the Nineties game.

In such an activity as ours—if not in others (That's for others to debate)—the promise of big money ("professional bodybuilding" and profit) has proved incompatible with real freedom for the game's players. its worker-participants, who (however free they think themselves) walk on eggs, ever-fearful lest their freedom prove illusory and they suddenly find themselves banned, outside the bodybuilding pale, having their freedom to compete (their freedom, in effect, to "work" and to "earn a living" in their "profession") snatched from them for nothing: at least for nothing worse than having spoken, or having chosen a course of action, without due regard to the organizations' "rules" or some whim of the federations' masters.

One always returns, incredulous, to the question: Can there actually be "federations" and "rules" for something as supernal as the pleasure to be taken in the ultimately developed human body? Can such a reductionist absurdity as federations and rules—such a perversion of one's instinctive response to the beauty of the human

form—be explained, rationalized, defended?

In a sane world of course not. But it's the very insanity of so much in today's muscle world which renders even the most tedious protestations of its historian so irresistibly important if our game is ever going to return to its former good health.

"No offense, old historical buddy, but all this blather seems to be more of your old hobby-horse, again. The idea of exhibitions as opposed to contests does seem a lot more civilized and humane, but who cares about such idealistic bull? What's important to me is that exhibitions sound more exciting than these boring damn contests. But this isn't your 'old days.' Who'd make all these things happen in 1994? Things like the exhibitions that you talk about? The bodybuilders themselves? What a joke—you can't be serious. They're too absorbed with their muscles to throw-over anything from beneath, especially anything that validates how wonderful they are. As much as I hate the arrogance of the organization, we need them, and you know they'll never Promote non-competitive exhibitions because their corporate profits depend on the contest. We can't just cut ourselves off from these organizations even if they are run by dictators. Realistically, we'd never 'make it' on our own."

DOUGHDEE MARIE LIFTS 218 POUND FRITZ JAY AT THE CELEBRATION OF FEMALE MUSCLE.

PHOTO BY BJORG, COURTESY LAURIE FIERSTEIN.

Sounds like your typical Tory back in 1776: "We can't 'make it' without Mother-England." But America and Americans have "made it on their own" for the past 218 years, without the control-from-above of "corporate" dictators who had profited so long on the labor of little folk, over here, who'd been brainwashed into thinking themselves powerless, unable to survive without the know-how of a ruling class above them: a class, however, whose true interest in them proved to be, as always, merely economic and, hence, exploitative. (So what else is new about the self interest generated by unshared power and the will-to-profit?)

The Revolution of '76 turned out to be a cake walk, as did the first skirmish in the (admittedly somewhat) less important one mentioned earlier: the "Fifth of November Revolution" fomented by Ms. Fierstein. The revolutionary product of one person's rebellion against a deadening system, her "Celebration" cannot fail to be perceived in historical perspective as a watershed in the history of physique display: A first-of-its-kind Exhibition that has prompted second thoughts—much rethinking—about the validity of the old notion that the physique contest is the only means of exhibiting the physique.

According to all published accounts, this unique Broadway-type show was the product of one lone woman's dream and administrative know-how. Neither sanctioned nor supported in any sense by any of the game's organizations or federations, it received virtually no publicity in the muscle magazines—though publicized to an unprecedented degree by all the other print and electronic media that saw it to be the humane, humanizing, exciting creation that it was. Such a thing can be done. And can be done on one's own. And can be done, literally, on ONE person's own. One single person against the system. It had never been done before. But having, at last, been done—with both financial and popular success—it will be done again. And again. The handwriting is on the wall. And one person, one person alone, pushed the chalk. It can be done. It *has* been done.

Ms. Fierstein's "Celebration," in short, is proof of the power to change history possessed even by one lone dissident who understands history. Hence, the power of the historian to our game. With her knowledge of history, this young woman was able to throw-over from beneath the contest mode of physique display, in which image had come to be shorn of all content or meaning: Despite their muscles, the women in Fierstein's "Celebration" had previously exerted absolutely no control over the presentational mode which, increasingly, had become a "way of life" for many of them. Her efforts changed this and changed it absolutely.

Though a first step, the "Celebration" was a huge one, the first in what promises to be an on-going campaign to free physique display: to liberate the contest participant (as "worker") from the institutions and administrators that exploit to their own purposes, the bodybuilder: his body and his "labor." Just as important: A component of this on-going revolutionary campaign is to free physique display from the ingrained patterns and procedural dead ends which, over the decades, have made the contest as boring and funless as it has become predictable, inhumane, and exploitative.

Those who think bodybuilders, inevitably and by definition, "too self-absorbed" to be revolutionaries might like to discuss the How-To's of her revolutionary manifesto by writing this most UN-self-absorbed of bodybuilders via Fierless Productions, P.O. Box 1954, New York, NY 10113-1954.

Jim Murray

Paul Anderson:

Superman From the South

The person who "discovered" Paul Anderson was the late Bob Peoples, who then held the record for the deadlift at 725 pounds. At the time Bob met the youthful, natural strongman from Toccoa Georgia, Paul was living in Tennessee where his father was employed by the Tennessee Valley Authority. Bob wrote to ***Strength & Health*** in 1952 to report that he had met a 275-pound nineteen year-old who could squat rather easily with 550 pounds as an exercise and that he had a best single of 635—more than anyone else in the world had done at that time!

Peoples listed the following measurements for his protege: Height 5'10", weight 275 pounds, neck 21-l/2", arms 20", chest 50", waist 42", thighs 33", and calves 19". We later learned that Bob had rounded the height measurement off to the next taller half-inch: Paul was actually 5'9-l/2" tall. That was Peoples' only exaggeration. In a matter of weeks Paul was progressing by leaps and bounds and had far exceeded the feats originally reported in the January 1953 issue of ***S&H.*** Later that same year, the April issue of ***S&H*** reported that Paul had begun testing himself on the three Olympic lifts and had won the Tennessee state heavyweight championship with 275 press, 225 snatch, and 300 clean and jerk.

More significant he had performed a deep squat with 660-l/2 pounds (weighed and witnessed by AAU officials)—which was 30-1/2 pounds more than the record set by Canada's super-strong heavyweight, Doug Hepburn. Anderson was twenty years old by that time.

Bob Peoples wrote that he thought Paul had potential as an Olympic weightlifter to match his obvious aptitude for squatting with heavy weights, an aptitude noted early on by Paul's brother-in-law, Julius Johnson. Julius told us, during a visit to York, that Paul had performed three repetition squats with 315 pounds the first time he worked out with a barbell!

Later Paul visited York on several occasions. and on one of them he stayed a few days to train at the York Barbell Club gym. He asked to have a bar cambered, so it wouldn't tend to roll off his massive trapezius muscles. And he wanted it loaded to 700 pounds! This was, of course, far more than anyone else had done at the time. Jules Bacon, a former Mr. America who managed the foundry and shop, had the bar made up—a seven-foot Olympic bar without collars, and eight 75-pound exercise plates. Additional smaller plates were added to bring the weight to a face value of 700.

The way Paul trained with the "700 pounds" was this: He came into the gym, walked over to the squat rack, shouldered the barbell, backed off a couple of steps, and did two (2) deep squats. Then he rested a few minutes and did it again. I can't remember how many sets of two he completed, but he did them all without seeming to extend himself—and with no warm-up. And, by the way, he was wearing an ordinary Olympic lifting suit with no belt and no wraps.

After Paul returned to Tennessee. the massive barbell remained untouched on the squat rack for several days. no one having any inclination to try to squat with it. Then one day, out of curiosity, John Grimek, Jim Park and I took it off the rack—just standing up with it a few inches—to see how it felt. It felt heavy! We broke the barbell down and, as an afterthought, put the plates and bar on the scale. It didn't weigh 700—it weighed 720 pounds. The plates had been poured at the factory, but were not weighed and machined to true weights. All the 75s were two to three pounds heavy. Think about it: Here was this 20-year-old youngster from the South exercising his legs with a barbell about 90 pounds heavier than anyone else had ever squatted with, and he didn't even notice the extra 20 pounds.

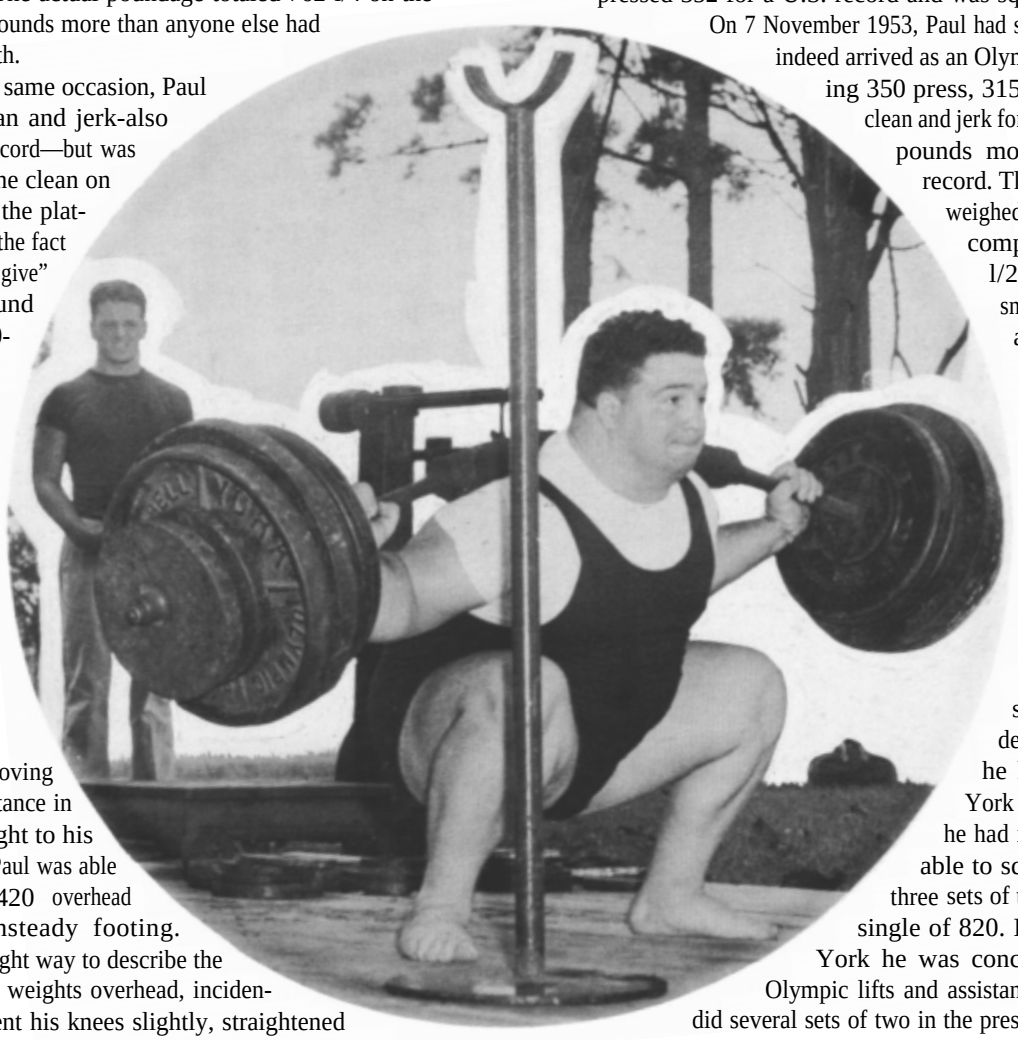
In the June 1953 issue of ***S&H,*** we published an article on Paul by Rye Bell, a prominent AAU official from Tennessee. It was entitled "The Dixie Derrick." Bell reported that Paul's lifts had improved to 300 press, 250 snatch, and 325 clean and jerk. Paul had also performed a jerk-press with 360 pounds and had been able to take 1300 off squat racks, a portent of things to come. He was also exercising with a pair of 100-pound dumbells for repetition presses. Paul had gained 10 pounds to 285, Rye Bell reported, with the following measurements: neck 22-l/2", arms 20-l/4", chest 52", waist 43". thighs 34", and calves 19-l/2".

It was on 25 July 1953, at Bill Colonna's "strength and health" picnic in Norfolk, Virginia, that Paul Anderson showed himself to be a throwback to the Iron Game giants of the past and, I believe, established himself as the strongest man in the world. Picture the scene. It was outdoors and a platform of planks for the day's lifting had been constructed. The ground was not level, so the platform had a definite slope downhill from back to front. Paul decided to go for a heavy single squat despite the uneven base. As usual, he wore no belt and no knee wraps. On this occasion he also was barefoot as can be seen in the accompanying photograph.

After a brief warm-up, Paul decided to try 760 pounds. The

bar was loaded and George Greenfield and Steve Klisanin stood by as spotters. Paul shouldered the barbell, stepped away from the racks and set himself in his usual stance-feet a bit more than shoulder width apart-sank into a deep squat and rose without any difficulty. It looked as though he could have handled 800 on that occasion, but he was satisfied with what he had done so we weighed the bar and plates. The actual poundage totaled 762-l/4 on the scale, a full 97 pounds more than anyone else had ever squatted with.

On the same occasion, Paul tried a 420 clean and jerk-also well above the record—but was unable to hold the clean on his chest due to the platform's slope and the fact that it had some "'give" with a 300-pound man and a 420-pound barbell moving on it. With assistance in getting the weight to his chest, however, Paul was able to shove the 420 overhead despite the unsteady footing. "Shove" is the right way to describe the way Paul jerked weights overhead, incidentally. He just bent his knees slightly, straightened them quickly to get the weight started, and pushed the barbell smoothly up to full arms' length overhead. Anderson's astounding performance at Norfolk was reported in the November 1953 ***S&H,*** the same issue that announced Doug Hepburn's upset win over John Davis at the world weightlifting championships held in Stockholm that year. (Hepburn's win was considered an upset because Davis totaled only 1008 on the three lifts to Hepburn's 1030. Davis's record was 1062.) Hepburn, the gigantic Canadian strongman, was the only man in the world who could be compared with Anderson for strength and while Doug at that stage was a better presser, Paul was close in the press and was far ahead in squatting strength. **[Editor's note:** In 1953, Hepburn beat Anderson in head to head competition in the Junior National Championships with lifts of 360-290-360 to Anderson's 300-270-370]. In Stockholm, Hepburn pressed a world record 369-l/4. In the December 1953 ***S&H*** we reported that Anderson had pressed 352 for a U.S. record and was squatting with 800.



A YOUTHFUL ANDERSON SHOWS HE CAN GET DEEP WITH A 762 WORLD RECORD SQUAT DONE BAREFOOT AT AN EXHIBITION IN NORFORK, VIRGINIA.

On 7 November 1953, Paul had showed that he had indeed arrived as an Olympic lifter by scoring 350 press, 315 snatch, and 400 clean and jerk for a 1065 total, three pounds more than Davis's record. The actual weights, weighed after each lift was completed, were 35l-l/2 press, 319-l/2 snatch and 405 clean and jerk for an unofficial total of 1076. Obviously, some of the plates used were slightly over weight.

In the April 1954 ***S&H*** we published a progress report on Anderson's training and described a workout he had taken in the York gym. By that time he had improved and was able to squat with 780 for three sets of two and had a best single of 820. In his workout at York he was concentrating on the Olympic lifts and assistance exercises. Paul did several sets of two in the press with 320, sets of three presses with 135-pound dumbells, singles in the snatch working up from 225 to 310, two sets of three deadlifts with 690 (using hooks to aid his grip), and four sets of waist-high pulls with 500 pounds (also using hooks to help him hold the bar). Asked if he could deadlift 700 pounds without the grip aids, Paul responded by loading the bar to 700 and deadlifting it, using a reverse grip and no hooks. He refused, however, to even consider attempting to break his friend Bob Peoples' record. By this time, Anderson had begun doing some bench presses in his training—and he did three sets of two with 410 pounds

in York. A better indication of his increasing overall strength was the fact that he was doing quarter squats with 1800 pounds. But then Paul's career suffered a temporary setback. Pulling in a heavy clean his elbow contacted his knee and the shock transmitted up his arm resulted in a broken wrist.

When Paul returned to training and competition it took some time for him to regain his former strength. As evidence, his lifts in winning the Jr. National heavyweight championship, reported in the September 1954 ***S&H,*** were 350 press, 290 snatch, and 390 clean and jerk. A few months later, however. the July 1955 ***S&H*** reported lifts of 402 press—a record—315 snatch, and 425-l/4 clean and jerk for a total of 1142-l/4. The lifting was done on April 16 and less than a week later, on April 22, 1955, weighing 331, he improved his press to 403-l/2, snatched 300 (losing balance and missing 315 and 320), and cleaned and jerked 434.

The 425-l/4 that Paul had lifted in April was fractionally more than Norbert Schemansky's world record, but not enough to break it. His 434, however, was clearly more than anyone else had done before. As he was gaining strength, Paul was also gaining size. He weighed 331 on April 22. A month and a half later, at the U.S. National Championships, he weighed 340. Surprisingly, despite the weight gain, he had an off day in the press, getting "only" 390. He snatched 320, however, and cleaned and jerked 435—actually 436-1/2 for another record. His total at the Nationals: 1145.

When a group of U.S. weightlifting champs traveled to Russia in 1955—the first U.S. athletic team to be invited behind the Iron Curtain-for a series of exhibitions with the Soviet national team, Anderson showed his lifting at the Nationals had not been a fluke as he astounded the hosts by starting to lift after everyone else had finished and registering 402-l/2 press, 314-l/4 snatch, and 425 clean and jerk for a total of 1141-l/2. One Russian official, at this meet in Moscow, showed his preference for strength over a small waistline by exclaiming, "He (Paul) is Mr. America! "

Paul did some excellent lifting at the 1956 Nationals: 400 press (less than a 409 record he had established earlier), 335 snatch for a world record, and 440 clean and jerk-also a record. His total of 1175 was the highest ever recorded at that time. He weighed 328 at the Nationals.

At the1956 Olympic Games Paul was considered so invincible that the Soviets didn't even enter a heavyweight. Even so, his performance at the Games was disappointing and anticlimactic. Apparently, he had contracted a throat and inner ear infection that disturbed his balance. His strength was good and he could pull and push the weights with no more difficulty than usual, but when he got them overhead he'd lose control and drop the barbell. It took every effort of will for him to hold his final jerk-press with just enough weight to tie Humberto Selvetti of Argentina-and win by being lighter man. Anderson started in the press that day with 369, after Selvetti's first-attempt 363. Then Paul jumped to 380, which he pressed easily enough only to lose balance and stagger around on the platform. He did this twice and wound up trailing Selvetti, who succeeded with 385, by 16 pounds. Anderson and Selvetti tied at 319 in the snatch, though Paul dropped his first try at the weight (after a 308 start), again due to his balance problem.

In the clean and jerk, Selvetti lifted 374, 385, and 396. The giant Argentinian weighed 320 to Anderson's svelte 303, so all Paul had to do was clean and jerk 413—ordinarily a very easy lift for him—in order to tie on total at 1102 and win by being lighter man. It took him three tries to make the lift. After the first two easy cleans, Paul staggered and lost both lifts by failing to stand still with the jerk for the count. Finally, on his last attempt. Paul made a do-or-die effort and through sheer force of will held the barbell overhead for the "down" signal. He was 1956 Olympic heavyweight champion.

After the Olympics-and after the ear infection cleared—Paul turned professional with a nightclub act in Reno. One stunt he performed was a squat with a barbell that had a safe full of silver dollars at each end. The total in dollars was $15,000 and the weight was said to be 1100 pounds. **[Ed note:** The weight was also rumored as 900 pounds.] At each performance, it would be announced that anyone who could duplicate the feat could have the silver dollars. Needless to say, no one ever collected.

I kept in touch with Paul sporadically after I left ***S&H*** and in 1969 asked what his best training poundages had been on the (then three) Olympic lifts. He responded that he had cleaned and pressed 485, snatched 375, and cleaned and jerked 485. He said he had also done a push-press with 560 pounds, so it was his limit in the clean that held him down in both the press and jerk. Paul had a very strong pull and was amazingly quick and agile for such a massive man, but his thick arms tended to compress and rebound as he pulled weights in to his chest. The barbell would bounce off.

The ***Guinness Book of Records*** reported a back lift by Paul Anderson (done June 12,1957, in Toccoa, Georgia) of 6,270 pounds at a bodyweight of 364, calling it the "greatest weight ever raised by a human being." ***Guinness*** also listed Paul's best powerlifts as 627 bench press, 1200 squat, and 820 deadlift (done after others had exceeded Bob Peoples' record).

I personally believe Paul Anderson was the world's strongest man of all time, regardless of what anyone else has done in widely practiced lifts and feats of strength. It is important to remember that when he did his lifting he was so far ahead of everyone else that there was no incentive for him to continue to try more. It is also important to remember that his lifting was done with no assistance from wraps, super shirts or suits, or any special supports except for a brace on the wrist that he had broken.

When Paul began to raise funds for the Paul Anderson Youth Home he opened in Vidalia, Georgia, he shifted to stunts he could perform for audiences in various locations by borrowing plates to make up a heavy dumbell for one-arm presses or a table for back lifts with people on the table as weights. In addition to operating the youth home for unwanted teen-age boys and girls —to encourage them to become good citizens through spiritual guidance, education and physical fitness — Paul was a dedicated member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, traveling around the country to give inspirational talks (getting plenty of attention from large audiences by also performing strongman stunts).

But what I remember most about him — in addition to his great feats of strength — is that he was one of the nicest, kindest, friendliest people I've ever met.

FATHER-FIGURE OR PHONY? GEORGE JOWETT, THE ACWLA AND THE MILO BARBELL COMPANY, 1924-1927

John D. Fair, Ph.D.
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It is my belief that the present day official amateur lifting in Canada and the United States is the natural result of the efforts and accomplishments of George Jowett in regulating and promoting lifting and creating interest in progressive exercise.[1]

—Ottley Coulter, 1956

He is so notorious for drawing the long bow, that what he says is of little value and not to be relied on. He always told it to the advantage of George Fiusdale. Nothing he claimed was so. No titles. No Awards. No nothing.[2]

—Charles A. Smith, 1989

The most striking feature of the growing body of strength literature in the past decade has been the prevalence of biographical accounts. Glittering portraits abound of heroes from the past, satisfying the nostalgic cravings of ***Strength & Health*** Boys Grown Up" and proving a rich heritage of role models for future generations of strength athletes.[3] Comparatively less attention has been focused on the great patriarchs of the iron game, the likes of which include George Windship, "Father" Bill Curtis, Professor Attila, Eugen Sandow, Bemarr Macfadden, Alan Calvert, George Jowett, Mark Berry, Bob Hoffman, Peary Rader, and the Weider brothers. Of these luminaries only Windship, Sandow, Macfadden, and Hoffman have been subjected to academic scrutiny.[4] That Jowett who (with Ottley Coulter and David Willoughby) institutionalized weightlifting as a sport in this country during the 1920s has not received greater recognition as a father-figure may seem curious. During his editorship of ***Strength*** magazine from 1924 to 1927, Jowett was clearly the most dominant figure in American weightlifting. But internal strife at the parent Milo Barbell Company led to his dismissal, the decline of his once vibrant American Continental Weight-Lifters Association, a sullying of his reputation as a physical culturist and a legacy of doubts concerning his patriarchal status. An examination of contemporary sources, principally Strength and the Jowett-Coulter correspondence in the Todd-McLean collection, reveals that much of the confusion over Jowett's role as a founding father is rooted not so much in the realm of sport as in the vagaries of American business.

In the 1920s Philadelphia was the mecca for American weightlifting that York would later become. There Alan Calvert, inspired by Eugen Sandow's magnificent physique and strength feats, had founded the Milo Barbell Company in 1902 and started publishing ***Strength*** in 1914. After struggling for two decades to acquaint the public with barbell training and to sustain a living from it. he sold the enterprise to Daniel G. Redmond and Robert L. Hunter. The former, son of the treasurer of Fairmont Foundry, Milo's supplier of weights, revived the business which Calvert had virtually abandoned during the war years. Hunter soon sold his interest to Redmond, but he prepared the first issue of ***Strength*** (which had also ceased operations) in November 1919 and set the magazine on a prosperous course in the early twenties.5 After finalizing the deal, Calvert explained to Coulter that he had "agreed never to reenter the Bar Bell business, so all my connection with the P.C. game is at an end."[6] But he did retain an association with the magazine over the next five years culminating in the publication in 1924 of his Super Strength, an inspiring and informative training guide that was marketed by Redmond.[7] Philadelphia thrived as a strength center from the presence of the venerable Herrmann's Gym as well as the Milo Barbell Company, and when Carl Easton Williams, formerly editor of Bemarr Macfadden's ***Physical Culture,*** arrived in late 1923 there was a dramatic transformation of ***Strength***.[8] But Williams, mysteriously, stayed less than a year. It seemed fitting that Jowett, whose stature as a writer and promoter had been growing, should join Redmond's staff in September 1924, the impression being that he would complement Calvert's presence and help give the magazine a greater weightlifting orientation.[9]

While high hopes were expressed all round over the probable benefits of this association, anticipations likely exceeded reality. In an early letter to Coulter, Jowett provides a rare glimpse of routine life at weightlifting's first true capital.

> I dictate & write articles, help write ads, & write leaflets, answer questions for 'The Mat' & Answer & Question Dept., & see all goes out in courses, & mark up all the courses of instruction.

> It does not keep me awful busy, as I have three stenogs [to] dictate to & one for my complaints on shipments, others handle the rest.
>
> Calvert does little but write & sell his books, just in a few mins. a day. . . I cannot say I like this city at all. It is too dead, & they call [it] the Quaker City alright, everybody seems to have forgotten how to smile.
>
> Redmond will not allow a girl in the office with us as a worker, & it makes a lot of running around for me, taking stuff to them.
>
> He does not approve of you saying Good morning to them, as he says it makes them go above their station, & makes one appear clubby with them. Can you imagine that. [10]

Despite the princely sum (at least $75 per week) Jowett was earning at Milo, it is obvious that ennui had already set in. What he needed was more opportunities to tap his gifts of organization and imagination, lift him out of the humdrum of office routine, and fulfill the considerable needs of his expansive ego.

The ACWLA furnished just such an outlet, and company officials were quick to recognize that it brought an infusion of altruism to the otherwise commercial image of Milo. As Calvert noted in introducing the concept to ***Strength*** readers. "the standardization of lifting" was one of the 'principal objects" of the organization Jowett had brought with him. But "don't get the idea that by joining, all you will do is to help along a worth movement for the association can do more for you than you can do for it." Calvert predicted that Jowett, as president, was "going to be a much overworked man, but the ACWLA was "one of the greatest forward steps that has ever been taken by American athletes."[11] Jowett was no less sanguine, and it seemed at last that his dream of a North American lifters organization that would rival the British Amateur Weight Lifters Association (BAWLA) was at last becoming a reality. "The Milo is paying for all the A.C.W.L.A. correspondence," he explained to Coulter. "I told all of our true circumstances to Redmond & Calvert, & Redmond is willing to take the chance. I am in touch with the A.A.U. now to try & affiliate with them."[12] But Jowett had no intention of relinquishing his paternal rights to any other governing body. His response from the AAU, he told Coulter, was

> rather amusing, as they stated that they controlled weight lifting in the United States, and that the last meet they pulled off in California [conducted by Willoughby], was a successful issue. Can you beat that! I sure had a good laugh over their conceit. They claimed they would bring my letter to the attention of the board when they hold their annual meet next month in Atlantic City. Perhaps they will do something, but we should worry.[13]

For the moment, at least, the AAU had little interest in weightlifting. Thus for Jowett and his ACWLA, buttressed by Milo resources, the future seemed bright.

Within months Jowett instigated more activity than in the previous two years of his organization's existence. On 11 December 1924, the ACWLA held its first "meeting" at Siegmund Klein's gymnasium in New York City. Here Henry Steinborn performed a 340 pound clean and jerk, and Klein did a 225 pound continental press. [14] But what Jowett really wanted was to draw attention to Philadelphia (and himself) by reviving Calvert's practice, begun at the old Milo headquarters on Olive Street, of holding exhibitions at regular intervals. "When any particularly good man came around" Jowett recalls, Calvert would "notify all the boys in and around Philadelphia and out of town enthusiasts." Eventually, "quite a crowd mustered together. After the special events were over, they would engage in impromptu contests among themselves, and you can imagine what a good time they would have." Now the Milo Barbell Company was opening a big and well equipped floor space for local ACWLA members at its new location on Palethorpe Street "where we expect to repeat the good old times, and continue the great work Mr. Calvert started."[15] Jowett staked a further claim on iron game turf through his editorials and inspirational articles, often accompanied by flattering pictures of himself. And under the pseudonym of John Bradford, he edited the American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes where he was able to engage in unrestrained self-praise. Most of all, Jowett craved international recognition. Though British and European lifers were more advanced than their American counterparts, ***Strength*** readers were assured that records in the military press and two hand jerk would "stay with us a long time as no European ever equaled the feats of president Jowett as a middleweight." Inasmuch as he "knows every angle and trick of every lift as each nation practices it" one would expect American weightlifting performances eventually to "reach and, we hope, surpass those of the foreign competitor."[16]

Never did such high hopes seem more realizable than in Jowett's portrayal of the ACWLA exhibition on 3 January 1925 in the Quaker City. It was "the best attended weight lifting contest we have ever seen," he reported "Members came from all pans of America" and "wrecked records galore."[17] On this special night "everybody was happy and true sportsmanship prevailed. Never before was there such a number of weight lifting celebrities gathered together on one occasion." In addition to "great old timers like Paulinetti, Otto Arco, and Teddy Mack," there were "stars of the present day like Steinborn, Snyder, Weber, Smith and Gay, and the new generation of young strong men who are destined to go a long way in the manly sport of weight lifting." A demonstration of classical posing by Sieg Klein, then in his prime, was followed by some one-hand balancing and then attempts to establish weightlifting records in various

classes. officiating were Roy Smith of New York City, Arthur Gay of Rochester, and Jowett who, as referee, prior to each lift, explained the ACWLA rules to the audience. In the feature event of the evening Klein bested Robert Snyder of Hagerstown, Maryland, in a three-lift bout. Then Steinborn, of whom Jowett had predicted at least one world record, faltered badly in the one hand snatch and two hand clean. The show concluded with a posing contest between two New Yorkers named Davis and Levine. In light of the competitive spirit and American records that were set, Jowett expressed confidence that "those who have spent years exploiting [sic] the merits of the 'iron game' are at last going to realize their dreams, and see weight lifting made a national sport."[18]

By no means the least important aspect of this new found recognition was the potential it afforded for international prestige. Admittedly only one attempt was made at Philadelphia to surpass a British record, an unsuccessful 175 pound military press by lightweight Marquis Losey of Jersey City. But Jowett promulgated the notion that "overseas nations who said that America would never be a weightlifting nation are rubbing their eyes in astonishment."[19] Striving also for personal recognition, Jowett (as Bradford) likened his role to the foremost spirit in the creation of BAWLA two decades earlier. "W. A. Pullum is to British lifters what George F. Jowett is to Americans. 'Nuff sed!'"[20]

Never could enough be said about his own organizational talent, however, to satisfy Jowett. Ensuing months witnessed a flurry of ACWLA activity not only in Philadelphia but in Jersey City where Losey and William Mills had formed a Jowett Athletic Association. An exhibition held at the latter on February 21 served as an opportunity for Jowett to show that he practiced what he preached.

DRESSED FOR TRAINING IN TIGHTS AND ROMAN SANDALS, JOWETT LOOKS POWERFUL IN THIS RARE PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE 1920s.

–THE TODD-MCLEAN COLLECTION

Despite a shoulder injury from wrestling which had forced his retirement three years earlier, he right hand military pressed 115 pounds. John Bradford described how "this come-back dazzled the boys, and they felt greatly honored to think the man after whom they named their club had performed this wonderful feat in their presence. . . George F. is sure a big favorite with the Jersey boys." Then in Philadelphia on March 7 he presided over a strength fest which included tumbling, wrestling, and some record setting performances by middleweight Frank Dennis of Birdsboro, Pennsylvania. But he was most proud of the dual international matches he had arranged between leading American and German lifters. "Many thought Mr. Jowett was wrong in making these matches, but we in the game, know he is never wrong." Obviously Jowett was pleased that the Americans won under strict application of ACWLA rules, but he took even greater delight in describing his own importance to the iron game.

> As the leader of the strongman movement Mr. Jowett stands foremost in our sight. There is no lifter in the country who does not owe something to him. The weight lifting public owes him all, and the body culturists the world over, owe him much for his successful investigation and elightened teachings.[21]

At an April 4 outing Jowett seized on further opportunities to display his lifting prowess. The significance of the pressing movements he performed was cast into relief by constant references to his ailing shoulder and relative lack of preparation. But it was in the one hand swing that Jowett rose to heroic proportions. He

first attempted 162 l/2 pounds.

> But in lowering to the ground, he allowed it to strike the platform too heavily, which badly buckled the bar. Unfortunately there was not another swing bar, but nothing loth the veteran increased the weight on the same bar by 10 pounds. At the first try, the crooked bar twisted in his hand and foiled him, but quickly analyzing the trouble, he corrected it by a greater back pull. Then throwing all his power behind the effort. he heaved the bar and with beautiful timing he applied his 'body thrust' and stood erect with 172 l/2 pounds. The crowd went wild, tickled to death to see the old favorite come back and preserve for his followers and the A.C.W.L.A. his former world's records with a still higher poundage . . . One could readily understand why Mr. Jowett has risen to be a master 'iron man' and hailed as the cleverest lifter in the world.

Noble sentiments, but immortality still seemed beyond his reach. Further confirmation of his patriarchal status was sought by relating how Jowett's admirers, after the exhibition, "bid for the bent swing bar"—much as if it were a religious relic![22]

On May 2 Jowett provided his followers with a glimpse of another side of his extraordinary athletic talents by staging a wrestling exhibition with Einer Johanson, alleged to be the world's heavyweight champion, from Sweden. It was a "comparison of opposites," observed Bradford, "Johanson tall beautifully formed, in the pink of condition, a lithe opponent of formidable appearance, and George F. Jowett, short and powerfully constructed, with a heavy tapering body that almost dwarfed his big arms and legs." Again superlatives hardly sufficed to describe the latter's wrestling skill. "The Swede was thrown on his back with a standing arm roll and outside leg stroke, but he quickly spun out and countered with a head-lock, which was broken by a powerful neck and kick-out. Two masters of the grap pling game. they writhed and twisted like huge snakes. Johanson was like lightening, but the great strength of the president was too much for the clever Swede." In contrast to Jowett's prodigious feats of strength was the lackluster performance of a future father of sport in the ensuing weightlifting competition. Heavyweight Robert Hoffman, though city champion of York and an outstanding canoeist, pro vided little challenge for Baltimore's Albert Manger whom Jowett predicted would become "one of our most brilliant heavies." In fatherly fashion. Jowett boasted of the many prodigies he was grooming for national and international glory. "Whenever a likely product is heard of Mr. Jowett goes after him, and with the wealth of information that he possesses, loses no time in developing his abilities . . . When the right man is behind, ready to teach a willing person, the rest is easy, and nobody has ever found our president anything but eager to do all he can to put the boys on the road to success."[23]
Culminating his efforts to raise American standards to international levels, Jowett published his ***Rules, Regulations and Records of Weight Lifting,*** first advertised in the August 1925 issue of ***Strength.*** Its ulterior purpose was to provide a historical record of the accomplishments of the ACWLA founder "who has indelibly inscribed his own name on the world's honor roll by his mighty achievements, known to the world as the 'Iron Man's' best friend.[24] Having thus committed his name and records to perpetuity, Jowett decided that he could safely rest on his laurels. "I have no intention of going back to the Wrestling game, or lifting," he declared to Coulter on June 3. "I am positively through with it all, for my shoulder certainly goes up on me afterwards.[25]

Although Jowett did not discontinue all exhibition work, he increasingly directed his efforts to projecting his organization beyond the northeast corridor. In the previous winter, shows were held in Connecticut New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia Michigan, Georgia, and California. With ***Strength*** as his mouthpiece, Jowett perceived himself as being in the center of a revival that was not only sweeping the United States but extending to "the far comers of the world."[26] In line with this broad thrust were the dual tourneys conducted in the late spring in Philadelphia by Jowett and in Los Angeles by Al Treloar and Ben Price. Easterners—Mark Berry, Robert Snyder, and Frank Dennis—won the three lighter divisions while westerners—Marion Betty, David Willoughby, and William Burns—carried the heavier weight classes. "This is the first time that lifting has ever been decided in this manner," remarked Bradford. "It is another tribute to our President's genius, making it possible for all who desire to gather at their nearest center and compete."[27] Aside from a meet in mid-July in which Jowett wrist-wrestled Canadian strongman Arthur Giroux to a draw, there was relatively little activity in the summer. On September 4 Jowett presided over the first ACWLA national convention with such notables as Teddy Mack, Mark Berry, Bob Hoffman, Sieg Klein, Harry Paschall, Anton Matysek, Roy Smith, and Arnold Schiemann in attendance. They decided that the five ACWLA lifts for 1926 would be the bent press, the one hand swing, the left hand snatch, the two hands continental jerk, and the two hands anyhow. A secondary list included the three modern Olympic lifts—press, snatch, and clean & jerk. Only the former would be contested for national titles. while the latter would be employed in lesser meets. In other business, the board of directors approved the appointment of Jowett as "life-long president" and granted him virtual dictatorial power to dismiss any officer deemed to be "not helping the cause." Coulter and Willoughby remained as vice presidents and John Bradford (also Jowett!) secretary. In the lifting that followed more records were set, all of which Jowett dutifully listed in his official record book. He took even greater delight in reporting records that were being set at meets across the country, all seemingly inspired by the interest he had generated. "Every event shows that our boys are stepping higher up the ladder of weight lifting fame. With it goes the American Status which a few years ago was nil, and now is the race for world's supremacy."[28]

What is most evident in Jowett's regular reports of ACWLA activities from fall 1925 to spring 1926 is a lessening of egotistical bombast and a greater emphasis on the accomplishments of others

he wished to enlist to his cause. When Warren Lincoln Travis of Brooklyn appeared at his October 10th show, Jowett deferred to him as "the one connecting link between the days of Louis Cyr and the revival of heavy athletics in our own time." Likewise John Y. Smith of Boston, at 59, stepped out of the past on January 9 to smash records in every class with one handed deadlifts of more than 400 pounds.29 These venerable figures added credibility to Jowett's fledgling movement. But his most impressive catch was the 5'2", 220 pound German wonder Karl Moerke, conqueror of Karl Swoboda and Henry Steinborn. At the December show Moerke commenced by lifting a 165 pound barbell about a foot off the floor with his right hand. He paused, observed Bradford.

> Then, like lightening, he snatched the weight to arms' length overhead without allowing it to touch the floor. Five times he repeated this in succession, without lowering the bell further than the waist. His dips were perfect, and hardly believable for a man of such stature. Snatching it five times, he finished by pushing it to arms' length twice in a style that was nearer to a One Arm Military than a One Ann Push. Satisfied with this succession of warming-up movements, as he called them, he deposited the bell on the floor and snapped to attention in the old time military style. . .Without further hesitation he grabbed a 220 pound bar bell and Military Pressed it three times with great ease. This was followed by a Two Hands Jerk of 330 pounds which he jerked from the shoulders thrice, with no difficulty.[30]

Moerke's 330 was five pounds more than Steinborn had earlier struggled to negotiate only once. So much did these splendid performances add to the luster of Jowett's organization that it no longer seemed necessary to dwell so much on his own personal feats of strength.

Further signs of real progress were evident in the many reports of exhibitions and meets which streamed into Strength offices from across the country. Jowett responded by conjuring up various organizational ploys. Conscious of the "vast number of lifters in the country now controlled by the A.C.W.L.A. and lack of official referees," he instituted a national referees test which would not only standardize records verification but provide a means for "educating each person in knowing what is right and . . . wrong in lifting." Response to this appeal for greater regulation was gratifying, showing that there was a cadre of responsible leaders emerging throughout the country who were willing to support Jowett's groundbreaking efforts. Especially singled out for praise was Mark Berry who was "every bit as strict as President Jowett." Uniform standards and strict judging thus infused meaning to the many records that were being set but as always, Jowett was the ultimate arbiter of perfection. Certificates with an official gold seal, designed by Willoughby, provided further incentives to prospective record holders. They "make a beautiful picture to adorn a den wall, and become a lasting testimony to the lifter's qualification," argued Bradford. Status was also recognized through an "order of degrees" whereby members received jeweled insets for their lapel buttons according to their level of mastery in physical culture and weightlifting. Red signified the first order, green an intermediate level, and blue the highest. The object of this hierarchy which "at first sight announces the degree of order from one brother to another" was to instill pride and encourage "the study of health and the body."[31] At the same time Jowett was constantly devising gimmicks to capture new prospects. Membership cards, cups, pins, pennants, medals, and trophies were offered as tangible inducements to the average weight trainee to join the fraternity of strong men. In the March 1926 issue of ***Strength.*** ACWLA prospects were given four possible membership options, including such inducements as a Jowett swing bar and gauntlet, a cambered bar, a year's subscription to the magazine, and Jowett's book on rules and records. High-mindedness effectively concealed any pitch for money. "Most organizations are business institutions," protested Bradford, "absorbing the big membership fees in high salaried officers, or making a big bank balance . . . The A.C.W.L.A. rises above all mercenary projects. It is vitally interested in its members on pure altruistic principles, because we are governed by an ideal. "The perfect body."[32]

Concurrently, however, these high-blown ideals were being undercut from an unexpected quarter. The man who had conceived the Milo organization and laid the initial basis for weight training and organized lifting in the United States experienced a change of heart by the mid 1920s. That something was not quite right must have been evident to Jowett soon after his arrival in Philadelphia as Alan Calvert became increasingly remote, did virtually no work for Milo, and grew infatuated by the more natural system of physical training developed by Edwin Checkley. Bob Jones, the hand balancer from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, who became a mainstay at Milo, explains that

> Calvert unquestionably was a sincere physical culturist, although actually ashamed of his 'engaging in trade' in such a lowly capacity. He came from a very prominent Main Line family and generally represented around town that he was a business man or a broker. . .Redmond was no physical culturist and his interest was solely that of a commercially minded man. He was wise enough to retain Calvert as 'front' and the business was so legitimate and so productive of results that it went ahead by leaps and bounds. Later SUPER STRENGTH was written and from subsequent experiences with Redmond, I am inclined to think that he had a verbal agreement with Calvert of a more or less vague sort, which he later tried to convert more favorably to himself. At any rate, I understand that this was the last straw and I actually believe that Calvert was so disgusted and perhaps jealous with the great success Redmond had made when he himself had failed-yet he had been sincere, while Redmond was but a few jumps ahead of Charlatanism-and the situation to me seems to have had pretty much a 'sour grapes' complexion.[33]

Denial of royalties were understandable grounds for bitterness, but another view of Calvert's defection comes from Ray Van Cleef. In the early twenties, he explains, there were many "newcomers" who

"had such unbounded enthusiasm that it was difficult to restrain them to adhering to a rational application of weight lifting. Some became extremists. Such individuals greatly concerned and discouraged Calvert for he felt that he was responsible for the origin of their active participation in this then relatively new form of training."34 Whatever *arriere pensee* he harbored for Redmond, Calvert's pique was outwardly directed against Jowett in two booklets he published soon after leaving Milo.

The first, entitled ***Natural Strength versus "Made" Strength,*** undercut Jowett on philosophical grounds. Calvert argued that extraordinary feats of strength were often just "feats of skill" or "merely illusions of strength." Professional strongmen (like Jowett) had scant interest in true lifting or bodybuilding. "All they wanted to talk about was 'tricks' which 'would knock the audience dead.'" Calvert felt that he was "no longer justified in recommending a system in which I had lost faith." What especially troubled him was the lifters' tendency for overexertion which allegedly could lead to rupture. broken blood vessels. heart strain, or simply a wastage of muscle from loss of recuperative powers. He believed that naturally acquired strength was far more preferable to "made" strength. Indeed "the public, which worships strength, prefers to see real strength, and not knack: has more respect for the man who can load one thousand pounds into a wheelbarrow, and then push that barrow up hill, than for another man who can 'put up' a 200 lb. dumb-bell with one hand." He insisted that "the way to get strong is to train for build, and organic vigor: rather than just for showy muscles.[35] Thus Calvert fostered the debate that would be waged in succeeding decades between contending father-figures over strength and shape. 'Train for strength and shape will follow" was inherited by Hoffman from Jowett, whereas a lineage extending from Calvert through Klein to Weider argued the opposite. Notwithstanding the supercharged egos that fed the flames of iron game feuds in later decades, the philosophical bases for discord were laid by Calvert in these early years.

In ***Confidential Information on Lifting and Lifters,*** Calvert is more explicit in his reproach of heavy lifting and Jowett. After exposing some of the "tricks"employed by Eugen Sandow and other strongmen, he harshly condemned the use of weights, the unscrupulous methods of promoters, and the fetish for setting records. Although Calvert had staged the earliest exhibitions in Philadelphia, he no longer attended them. But others, known for their "judgment and honesty," told him how

> half-grown boys are being urged to outdo each other at such body-racking stunts as the dead-weight lift, where the compression of the abdomen is terribly dangerous. That a man was cheered-on to make a record in the 'wrestler's bridge' lift—in which the violent contraction of the neck muscles impedes the return of the blood from the head. That in that particular case, the popping eyes and engorged blood vessels in the lifter's temples made my informant fear his instant death. I sincerely hope that such things do not take place. If such is the policy of the promoters, it is not just a mistake; it is a crime.

The dangers of football, Calvert warned parents, were mild compared to the life-threatening injuries attendant upon lifting heavy weights. Furthermore the harmful effects of lifting were not always immediately evident—"after five, ten, or even fifteen years, the heart goes wrong; wears out before it should wear out.[36] Virtually all the myths that exercise scientists have spent most of the twentieth century refuting were perpetrated by this father of sport.[37]

In the final portion of this tract Calvert not only rejects what he had recently written in ***Super Strength*** (denying that he even owned a copy), but he attacked the concept of "scientific lifting" that Jowett was projecting to the public.[38] Though his arguments were novel in the 1920s, he opposed such well accepted techniques as employing barbells with revolving sleeves, dipping in the snatch and bending the body in the one arm press. The bent press was the object of special condemnation by Calvert for providing endless possibilities for "chicanery." All of these heresies could be traced back to the English lifting tradition on which Jowett's ACWLA was largely based.[39] "On the European continent, the home of lifting, they absolutely bar the bent-press as a lift," Calvert noted. "They consider it a trick, a gymnastic feat, and deny reputation to the lifter whose sole stock in trade it is." In England "the bent-press is something wonderful." He thought the English were "intensely insular when it comes to athletics . . . Their record books are studded with 'world's records' in lifts that no other country practices to any extent." It seemed a pity to him that

> the American Association has apparently swallowed the English school of lifting hook, line and sinker. It really is a pity. I see less merit in the English style than in any other national style of lifting.
>
> I note that the Americans are copying the English in their idolization of Saxon. Perhaps that is not extraordinary, since the lifting situation in America is now controlled by a Briton. I have been reading a 'record book' published by the American Association. I got quite a kick out of it. I noticed, for one thing, the statement that I had requested the author [Jowett} to form the association. That was news to me. My recollection is that time after time I was urged to sponsor such an association and always declined; that it was suggested to me 'that of course I would be president.' and I declined again. In fact, I wrote an article for their magazine, mentioning the formation of the association and plainly stating that I was not connected with it.

Not content to slam merely the organization, Calvert questioned the sanity of those involved in it. "I tell you, from the depth of my convictions, that training with weights is wrong. It puts muscle on the upper body—big muscles—sometimes huge muscles: but unless great caution is observed it saps a man's vitality." He also argued

that such exercise leads to premature aging and possibly even insanity, and he claimed that "four well known 'muscle men' were now safely confined to insane asylums."

> Each and every one of them literally went crazy in their effort to cover their bodies with huge muscles; it was not just the effect of their physical overwork, but what is apparently a peculiar mental condition resultant upon the diverting of physical energy, and the anti-aphrodysiacal effect of excessive exercise and cultivation of the muscles on and around the upper extremities.
>
> The first symptom (as I observed it) is an access [sic] of megalomania (excessive egotism), of conceit carried to a disgusting degree. The poor fellows become enamored of their own muscular development, display their muscles to every one they meet, talk of nothing else, and soon get into a mental state where they are convinced that they are the most remarkable of men (simply on account of their muscles): and insist on every one else believing the same thing; and from that to actual mania—insanity—seems to be only a step.[40]

That this parting zinger was aimed at Jowett is evident from its focus on the egomania that so much characterized his ebullient promotional style. Equally obvious is Calvert's "sour grapes" at being relegated to a lesser role in the development of the iron game.

Not surprisingly, Jowett was bewildered by this seemingly unprovoked assault from the person whose footsteps he had supposedly been following since arriving at Milo. "For some reason or other," he told Coulter in April 1926, "Calvert has taken a bitter hatred to the weight lifting game, and me in particular, to such an extent that he is circulating propaganda, making allusions to myself and without any scruples as to the truth. It seems this was going on long before I knew anything about it."[41] From his detached perspective Coulter brought enlightenment. He rightly suspected that Calvert was "bitter towards Redmond because of business matters and I suppose any dislike to you, if such be the case, is the outgrowth of your association with Redmond in reaping the profits."[42] Jowett agreed that "there would be no use knocking Redmond as no one knows him, so he has to knock me," but he was deeply hurt and even paranoid over this personal affront. He believed that Calvert had spies writing to him and attending his exhibitions in order to secure material that could be used for misrepresentations. Yet Jowett insisted that he had never been less than honest and forthright. At his April show he

> threw out a challenge that anything I had done I will do again, and anybody who was there and wanted to come up and try my stuff, was welcome to come and I would beat any man in an all round contest with our methods against others, but they backed out.
>
> The funny part of it is, when he [Calvert] was here, he use to tell me what a bum Checkley was, and his method was no good, he was simply carrying it on to help Checkley's son or daughter. Honestly Ottley, I have found him to be the most consummate liar. Where at one time, up to just recently, I had always admired him and spoken well of him even when he was leading this campaign against me, but now I have nothing but contempt for him.

Jowett was confident that his adversary was "cutting his own throat" and that it was he who "must have gone crazy."[43]

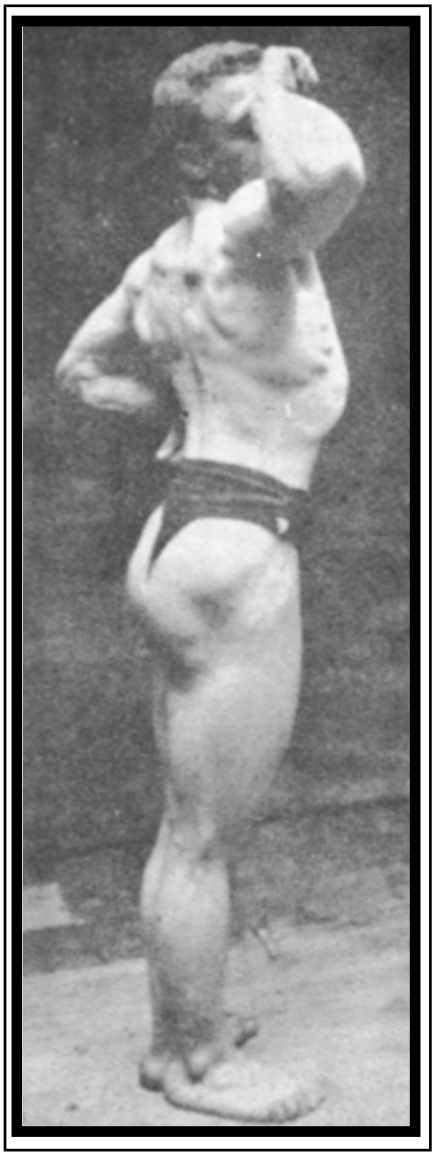
Soon Jowett recovered his stride with the publication of his ***Key to Might and Muscle,*** touted to ***Strength*** readers as even surpassing ***Super Strength*** as the best treatment on the development of the human body.[44] He portrayed himself not only as "the outstanding practical authority on barbells" but as a kindly mentor to all current strength athletes.[45] Commenting on the Klein-Matysek showdown at his May exhibition, Jowett attributed the former's victory to the "touch of a master hand behind it." Klein supposedly expressed his 'gratitude for all Mr. Jowett has been to him in acquiring his weight lifting honor and fame." Jowett predicted that his charge would eventually perform a 275 pound clean & jerk. Further evidence of his predictive powers was cited during the visit to America of Tromp Van Diggelen, who had guided the great Herman Goerner to fame. Hearing that the latter had recently one hand deadlifted 727 pounds, Jowett (as John Bradford) reminded readers that in a 1925 article, "Can I Name the World's Strongest Man?" he had selected Goerner. "When it comes to estimating strength and physical ability our president does not go wrong." Like Van Diggelen. who was "associated with the best men in the world . . . if any one can bring out the best of a man George F. Jowett can. No man in this country ever developed as many stars as he has." Now, Jowett reminded ACWLA members, this font of wisdom was available permanently for everyone. "If you have a friend who wants a little encouragement, show him your copy of our president's new book The Key to Might and Muscle. That will land him when all other methods have failed."[46]

Self-promotion reached an even higher pitch when Jowett negotiated sponsorship of a weightlifting championship between "three of the largest sport bodies in the country"—the ACWLA, the AAU, and the Sesqui-Centennial sports committee—at Philadelphia's municipal stadium in August 1926. It was to be held outdoors in conjunction with a track and field competition, thus making it "possible for our lifters to perform before the largest athletic turn-out ever brought together in one place in this country." Thus Jowett could say that "the sport of weight lifting is more definitely established as a recognized sport at the present time, than it ever has been." For what appeared to be a sure success, he took full credit. "I do not believe that any man ever worked for his sport as our president has worked for the sport of weight lifting. You might say that, single handed, he did it all."[47] Additionally Jowett was planning to hold the 1926 national championships (including state championships) in September and a "national open" in November where he would donate a "magnificent belt" to be worn by the overall winner during the succeeding

year. By such means he hoped ultimately to make inroads with the AAU. Further to enhance his stature within that organization he heaped praise on the chairman of its weightlifting committee, Colonel Charles Dieges. At the extravaganza recognizing the nation's 150th birthday, wrote Bradford, "the eyes of the A.A.U. will be upon us, and the showing our boys make is what is going to impress the A.A.U. committee. . . to do more of this sort of thing in the future."[48]

Unfortunately Jowett had not anticipated the possible problems of an outdoor venue. The day broke perfect on August 21 and remained that way until about noon when clouds set in, and it commenced to rain. It poured so hard all day that the other events were canceled. The weightlifting was contested, but for Jowett the results were less than heartening. "Under such adverse conditions it is only to be expected that the lifting was not of a high order, for, although under cover, we were exposed to the wind and dampness that swept through he porticos like an Arctic blast. The boys were cold, and it was hard for them to pep up."[49] Other meets in the ACWLA fall schedule fared little better. Jowett showed little enthusiasm over the conduct of the national championships, in which only nine states participated, and the national open meet in November had to be canceled for lack of entries. Some progress was made towards AAU affiliation, but monthly shows for October and December were poorly attended and uninspiring. Jowett did at least receive some consolation. underscoring his paternal role, when he was presented at the Sesqui-Centennial Exposition with a "beautiful loving cup" inscribed with words of "appreciation from the boys.'"[50]

Otherwise support was croding for Jowett and his organization from a critical quarter, and he should have seen the handwriting on the wall. For at least the previous six months, Milo had been less than pleased with the ACWLA as a business proposition. Concern is evident in successive "association notes" over lagging membership rolls. "Recently new members have not been as plentiful as we would like to see them," Bradford wrote in the September 1926 issue of ***Strength.*** "How many people did you impress this season when you were on your vacation, or on the beach, with the A.C.W.L.A.?" he queried in October. "Boys, we must never ease up. Now, more than ever we need cooperation in order to get more members to put this organization over."[51] After the disappointment of the Sesqui-Centennial affair, a new note of urgency set in. It became increasingly evident to the parent company that the ACWLA, instead of being a boon for business, was proving to be a liability. Admitting that it was "only thorough the generosity of others [Milo Barbell] that we have been able to keep our expenses paid up," estimated to be "thousands of dollars" for 1926, Jowett announced plans to set the ACWLA on a separate business footing. Henceforth dues would be reduced from $4.00 to $2.00, effective 1 January 1927. Members would still be entitled to all the previous privileges, including card, lapel button, and Jowett's book on rules and records. Not included would be the $2.50 subscription to ***Strength*** or the cost of various other diplomas, medals. and entry fees to ACWLA functions. Jowett rationalized that "we are giving <u>all</u> the same chance now and are running a bigger chance to lose more money. What we have to rely upon now is a greater membership to give us a balance side." In subsequent advertisements he tried to convince ACWLA prospects that membership was being dropped by $2.00 when, in fact, it was being increased by at least 50 cents. "Now, boys please put your shoulder to the wheel and help make this Association what we all want it to be."[52] Despite Jowett's dubious claim that ACWLA membership had once reached the thousands, the critical perception of "the powers that be" was that it had never pulled its own weight. It seems more likely that the ACWLA appealed to little more than the relatively small number of weight trainees who entered competition. and the removal of the subscription to ***Strength,*** Jowett's propaganda organ, could only have lessened its appeal to the public. Now the message, in stark contrast to his strident remarks only a few months earlier. was that "our president cannot do it all." Further evidence of the demise of Jowett's organization within the corporate structure can be seen in the decision to remove the ACWLA headquarters and exhibition site from the Milo building to the Philadelphia Academy of Physical Training at the outset of 1927.[53]



NOTE THE THICKNESS OF JOWETT'S BONESTRUCTURE AND MUSCULATURE IN THIS PHOTO TAKEN WHEN HE LIVED IN INKERMAN, ONTARIO.

Less evident but no less critical to Jowett's fall from grace were some organizational decisions he had taken at the Sesqui-

Centennial meet. As general supervisor of appeals and decisions, he overturned a ruling by Mark Berry, the referee on platform two, who wanted to allow ties in two of the classes. Jowett stated that "no ties are permissable in competitions of any kind. The man exhibiting the best style, or making the nearest efforts to success, must be given precedence." Especially since no specific rules could be cited to support this decision, it appeared as arbitrariness against an upstart who coveted Jowett's status in the iron game. Further possible bias against Berry was evident at a meeting of the ACWLA Board of Directors during the 1926 national championships. Jowett stressed that there was "no place for slackers" in the organization and that "no man should accept a post, no matter how much he likes the game, unless he is willing to work for it." He forthwith removed the ambitious Berry from the Board and gave him the honorific title of "president's representative," perhaps sensing that he would better be able to keep a rein on him in this subordinate role.[54]

Only gradually did Jowett realize that he was riding for a fall. His latest book, ***The Strongest Man That Ever Lived,*** an account of the life of Louis Cyr, was offered to Strength readers for $2.50 in early 1927. and the frequent repetition of his name gave the impression that he and his organization were the soul and body of American weightlifting.[55] But uneasiness is evident in his correspondence with Coulter. Jealousy was the "biggest trouble" at Milo, he reported in February.

> MacMahon is so jealous and Miss Kosyk is worse that they keep it going hell upon earth and make it bad for me. You never know when you are going to be here for they are always firing. Honestly Ott you are better off not here, for he is apt to get dissatisfied at the least thing and fire you
>
> Redmond is terribly queer. He never gave me a penny for the books I wrote though he promised me, and I worked night and day on them. In fact I was tied up ever since last April and that's the thanks. . . He promised me a spending allowance for the shows because I told him it cost me more than I could afford to entertain the boys when they came, but I never got a penny. He is terribly ungrateful, but what can I do. I just have to take and let it go. It is a good job and I must hang on to it.[56]

A month later Jowett received news of his dismissal "without a moments warning" and of his replacement by Mark Berry. He blamed it on the machinations of Miss Kosyk. "Accidentally I know too much," he told Coulter. "I certainly was never happy here. I understand also that Berry double crossed me to get my job for less money." He claimed that "Redmond used me like he did Williams & Calvert & others . . . I feel awful bad over it."[57] Coulter seemed no less stunned, not comprehending how Berry, who lacked Jowett's standing, could possibly sustain the reputation of the ACWLA. Furthermore Berry was hardly in any condition to teach by personal example. "Can we take the association to another magazine or has ***Strength*** obtained too tenacious a hold?"[58]

A struggle for rights over the ACWLA proved unnecessary as Berry, somewhat awkwardly, started his own organization, the Association of Bar-Bell Men. He promoted it in Jowett's old "Association Notes" under the pen name of Mike Drummond. In the July 1927 issue Dmmmond explained that Jowett was no longer connected with ***Strength,*** "and when he went the Association went with him at his own request." Understanding the financial problems that plagued the ACWLA, Berry's ABBM was designed to appeal more broadly to the lucrative bodybuilding and general health clientele. "We believe that the A.C.W.L.A., although a very worthy movement, has been limited in its possibilities by the fact that it was primarily interested in weight-lifting." The new association, on the other hand, was "interested chiefly in encouraging the cultivation of a well-developed body, manly strength. and all health-promoting exercises with bar bells. dumb-bells, and related apparatus." Yet such was Berry's enthusiasm for weightlifting and commitment to the concepts originated by Jowett, that he kept virtually all of Jowett's incentives and gimcracks. He also retained a Board of Control, official referees, and the desire to stage lifting contests. To attract prospects, ABBM membership and a year's subscription to ***Strength*** were now made available at the bargain price of $2.75.[59] To stamp the imprimatur of tradition on this new order, a list of American records in all lifts was published in successive issues. To allay any confusion, Berry assured readers that the ABBM "has no connection with any other Association and will henceforth conduct all Official Lifting in America."[60]

These resolute measures effectively destroyed the ACWLA and were a serious setback to Jowett's physical culturist aspirations. "Redmond is doing all he can against me," he told Coulter. "He stopped my mail and has practically ruined the A.C.W.L.A."[61] Most seriously Redmond, as he had done with Calvert's ***Super Strength,*** denied Jowett any share of the profits from the books he had written. Many years later Bob Jones reckoned that the reason for Redmond's draconian measures was almost solely financial. Berry, through Jowett's paternalistic influence, had gotten a job at the company

> probably making $25 or $30 per week. Redmond never was a man to hire and pay for talent. I understand that Jowett wrote under both his own name and a pen name and that some of his pen name articles went to considerable length telling what a great guy Jowett was. Redmond was quick to realize the value of this and also the fact that he could repeat the same stunt with an unknown person. So between the scrap over Jowett's two books and his desire to save himself about $50 per week salary, he supplanted Jowett with Berry at perhaps $35 or $40 per week. I do know definitely that at no time did Berry make over $50 per week and I know also that his various book writings and articles were included as a part of his regular job and salary.

Like Jowett, Berry could continue to project Milo's image to the public as America's strength capital: unlike his predecessor, he became "a wonderful 'yes man.'"[62] Real power at ***Strength,*** noted in a

small print insert in the November 1927 issue, lay in the hands of D. G. Redmond, as publisher and editor, and O. H. Kosky, managing editor and business manager.[63]

Jowett was understandably bitter over his dismissal and vowed to get revenge. He told Coulter that he had engaged the services of "the cleverest lawyer in the city" to sue Redmond for "$17000 damages for overtime, books & other things. As long as he is trimmed I don't care if I get a penny."[64] He also vented his anger on Berry who "thinks he is a big man holding my job. I imagine he is a sucker enough to try it for 35.00 a week when he knew I got 80.00. But he has not any brains, like MacMahon, he is a copier. But I am out to show them & I hope, ruin them."[65] Why Jowett failed to mount any serious reprisal is veiled in mystery, but a scenario of possible blackmail can be gleaned from related bits of surviving evidence. When he took up residence in Philadelphia Jowett left his ailing wife Bessie and daughter Phyllis in Canada. Contrary to his boss's admonition about fraternizing with the girls in the office, he developed a close friendship with a secretary named Irene Kosky, likely the daughter of Milo's business manager. Charles Smith relates that Jowett was having an affair with a secretary, "Iris or some such" and that "Redmond used this as an excuse to ease Jowett out" and bring Berry in for less pay.[66] Phyllis Jowett never suspected that her father was disloyal. but she confirms that Irene Kosky insisted on leaving Milo with him. She remained Jowett's secretary for many years in his other physical culture endeavors, and "he was very good to her family later on."[67] Whether Jowett's relationship with Irene was sexual remains unclear, but he did make himself vulnerable to the pitfalls of office politics—hence the curious references to the machinations of Miss Kosyk in his letters to Coulter. Redmond was thus able to act with impunity, knowing that any questions raised concerning Jowett's dismissal could lead to far more damaging insinuations concerning his personal conduct. Neither as a husband nor as a father-figure to his "boys" in the iron game could he afford the taint of scandal. Not surprisingly, Jowett made a clean break from Milo.

He soon landed on his feet as physical director at the Breitbart Institute of Physical Culture in New York City. Then he founded the Jowett Institute of Physical Culture where (with Coulter's assistance) he published a series of ***Man Power*** booklets. When these instructional guides did not catch on, he pursued various other schemes with International Correspondence Schools which included the possibility of instigating another official organ and exclusive affiliation with the AAU for his now defunct ACWLA.[68] But Jowett was not successful in securing a rival mouthpiece, and Redmond and Berry had no intention of allowing him to regain control of American weightlifting through the AAU. In a preemptive move they secured a statement from its secretary. published in the December 1927 issue of ***Strength,*** that the AAU was not allied with Jowett's organization.[69] Coulter lamented the falling fortunes of his pal, not fully comprehending how it could happen that the founder of the association and originator of regulated weightlifting in America could have been brought so low. He surmised that Berry was merely being set up, and "in the end he will walk the plank along with the rest." He could "not understand the policy of letting good men go one after the other. Calvert with a reputation without equal at that time. Williams a man with considerable editorial experience and yourself and to think a man like Berry is substituted in place of illustrious predecessors."[70] Nevertheless Jowett survived and eventually seemed capable even of leaving the past behind. "As far as I know Redmond and I have buried the hatchet." he concluded in May 1930.[71]

Redmond, however, was by no means finished with Jowett. Angered by the advertising claims (and perhaps the success) of Jowett's mail order institute in 1933, Redmond launched a devastating editorial attack on his character. It first questioned the legitimacy of the medals he claimed to have won while ACWLA president. But the most damaging revelations came from another father-figure, W. A. Pullum, whom Jowett had formerly held in high regard. In a 1927 letter to Berry, Pullum claimed that Jowett, as his American agent, had tried to cheat him out of money on the sale of his equipment to no less a personage than David Willoughby. Then Jowett allegedly plagiarized an article Pullum had written on Arthur Saxon and published it in ***Strength.*** "It was one of the most bare faced 'lifts' that I had ever seen; there was not even the faintest semblance of disguise." Similarly the fundamental ideas behind some of Pullum's "appliances and accessories began to be boasted as creations of Jowett's own brain." Most galling to Pullum was the discreditable system of rules and records created by Jowett. It was

> a moral certainly (indeed, a physical certainty) that he never performed the lifts credited to him . . .Comments on these lifts is a matter of commonoccurrence in this country. . . It was only yesterday that I had a very wellknown American down in the Camberwell Weight-Lifting Club. . . [who] told me quite a few things about the way some of the lifting had been conducted in the states under Jowett's direction. Twenty years ago people were doing similar things over here. . . In weight lifting matters, America sadly needs some expert and kindly instruction.[72]

It seemed an ironical turn of fate that the man and tradition on which Jowett had based his movement for regulation and honesty in lifting, like Calvert, should so viciously be turned against him.

Damaging testimony from such an impeccable authority as Pullum enabled Redmond to question with confidence the validity of Jowett's lifting records. It was commonly known

> among the more experienced bar bell men of this country and Canada that such record claims are 'phoney.' At least, we have never heard nor seen printed the name of a single individual who witnessed the records said to have been performed in Canada. Obviously, at that time there existed no official lifting body to witness or pass upon the correctness of the performances. If, indeed, ever they did take place it is furthermore a matter of common knowledge that of the three or so 'records' which were made in our building here

> in Philadelphia, not a single weight was placed on the scales, nor is there any evidence of the lifter having himself stepped on the scales.

Further proof of Jowett's phoniness, according to Redmond, was his appropriation of such iron game notables as Herman Goerner, Jim Londos, Frank Dennis, Robert Snyder, Harry Paschall, Emmet Faris, and Albert Manger as Jowett Institute pupils, when most of them had cut their teeth on Milo barbells and methods. Faris resented these misrepresentations, assuring Berry that "Jowett is up to his old stuff talking about himself. Most of all the old timers know him and his million records made in Canada—I have heard lots about Jowett and I think him a big fake." Claims that he had known Sandow and the Saxons were cited as simply more evidence of Jowett's influence peddling. The French magazine, ***La Culture Physique,*** revealed that Jowett was too young to have known Sandow, and Pullum insisted that "he did not know personally the Saxon Trio from Adam." Redmond concluded that "the misrepresentation is so bared-faced that we at last feel impelled to place all these facts before the public in this manner."[73] However damaging this screed must have been to Jowett's already flawed public persona, one suspects that it was motivated largely by underlying commercial designs and carried out, again, without fear of retribution.

Posterity has remained sharply divided over Jowett's relative worth. "No one ever saw Jowett make the lifts he claimed." was the view of Sieg Klein. Despite Jowett's self-adopted label of "Young Hackenschmidt" and much vaunted connections with other greats from the past. George Hackenschmidt told Klein the "he never saw him—did not even know who he way!"[74] John Valentine, an early ACWLA competitor, told Coulter that he

> always had serious doubts as to his integrity. This is based on personal experience and certain evidence from such high-principled persons as W. A. Pullum, etc. I do not believe for one moment he ever achieved anything worthwhile in the realm of weightlifting. Nor has anyone met anyone of impartial authority to testify he'd actually observed Jowett perform any worthwhile feat—let alone the Records he claimed in his plagiarized ACWLA handbook.[75]

Perhaps the fairest assessment of Jowett as an iron game icon comes from the man who, after exchanging hundreds of letters with Jowett over a half century, could finally speak with candor after Jowett's death in 1969. Ottley Coutler recognized him as "a man of considerable natural strength," but he had "more interest in getting ahead financially than he did in establishing any unquestionable records." When they trained together in Pittsburgh for a short period in the early twenties, he had seen Jowett perform an easy one arm military press with 100 pounds and a two arm military press with 212. Still doubts remained about his integrity, and Coulter was "somewhat astonished" when Jowett's book on rules and records appeared in 1925 by how many records were held by George F. Jowett.

> Personally, I would have to agree that he appeared to have a very good understanding of how the lifts should be performed, although I doubt that he had ever trained on most of them, let alone establishing any records with them. He appeared to be able to convince the portion of the physical culture public that was interested in weight training that he was not only an authority but was THE AUTHORITY on weight training. . . I would believe that many of the lifts claimed by him in the ACWLA booklet would have been possible to him with a reasonable amount of training-but why bother with training when it could be accomplished much quicker. His natural powerful build should have enabled him to do more than there appears to be any proof that he actually did do. I assume that he realized that also and consequently believed that the weightlifting public would also believe it for the same reason.[76]

Unlike others, Coulter never called Jowett a liar outright, but such testimony hardly constitutes strong support for his honesty and forthrightness. "As for Jowett," reckoned Bob Jones, "my feeling toward him is that he is vastly more to be criticized for his past conduct than Hoffman-and I feel also that the general public has the same opinion that I hold for him."77

Noted iron game authority Vic Boff, on the other hand, provides evidence supporting the validity of Jowett's claims. The most extensive documentation is an unsigned letter addressed to F. W. Jefkins of the British Advertising Association in 1952 attesting to Jowett's reputation as a strongman, wrestler, weightlifter, and physical culturist. Vividly recalling his many feats and honors, it applies the appellation of "father of American Weightlifting" to him and even alleges that Calvert called Jowett "the father of the modern Bodybuilding technique and the most scientific lifter and teacher in the world." His legitimacy had supposedly received official blessing when the Jowett Institute was set up in 1927. "Mr. Jowett produced evidence to support his claims, such as medals, trophies, press clippings, magazine articles and write ups, diplomas and other documentary evidence attested to by athletic bodies, besides other endorsements" for the Federal Trade Commission. This account, however, like Martin Franklin's hagiography several years earlier, betrays the hand of Jowett in its conception as well as an intent by his advertising agent, Roberts and Reimers, to secure for him a stake in the British physical culture market. "Hope you like it as represented for British eyes" reads a cover note on the copy sent to Jowett.[78] More convincing are recollections. from the 1980s, of his early strongman feats in Canada, and testimonials from Lew Dick, former secretary of the Metropolitan Association of the AAU, and Wilfred Diamond, former vice president of BAWLA. His record was "unimpeachable," according to Dick, and Diamond vouched for "all his records being true in wrestling, weight lifting and for winning various Best Physique contests."[79] The hardest evidence of Jowett's weightlifting integrity comes from some newspaper reports of his world record 310 clean & jerk (at 154 bodyweight) at a 1919 Victoria Day gala in South

Mountain, Ontario. Under official conditions. including tested scales and "authentic officials," Jowett "stepped up to the weight, pulled it to his waist, then tossed [it] to the shoulders. One mighty heave and the enormous weight was tossed to arms' length overhead and held there until referee Frank Miller passed the lift by counting one, two.. . . it is a marvelous feat. One which all present recognized, and warmly applauded."[80] Boff is quick to point out that this published evidence as well as regular reports in Strength of Jowett's lifting prowess in the mid 1920s would have disallowed any chicanery. "Surely the officials and fellow lifters who were there and saw the lifts would have protested any distortions of the truth" in print. "Jowett could not have gotten away with it."[81] Final vindication, ironically, comes from the late sage Charles Smith in a 1955 ***Muscle Builder*** sketch. Though it falls short of endorsing his record lifts, it recognizes an indebtedness to Jowett and salutes him as "The Father of American Weightlifting."[82]

Father-figures abound in the early history of the iron game, and Jowett makes a strong bid for immortal recognition, As editor of Strength from 1924 to 1937, he propagated widely the gospel of developing manly strength through the use of barbells. Most importantly, he virtually realized his dream of organizing and unifying American weightlifting under a single body, the ACWLA, and infusing it with a standard set of rules and records. That he did not always live up to his own high ideals and grasped too eagerly for fame and fortune contributed to his undoing, but these failings should not detract from his otherwise creditable achievements. George Jowett introduced thousands of young Americans to the healthful benefits of resistance training and to the excitement of athletic competition—and for that he deserves a permanent place in weightlifting's pantheon of heroes.

Much of the confusion and controversy surrounding Jowett stems from his inability to sustain the body of myths he had created around himself in Philadelphia. An historical reconstruction of his life and times suggests strongly, in line with Coulter's judgment, that Jowett was both father-figure and fraud. Though highly visible to the public as the foremost authority on physical culture of the era. Jowett was ultimately answerable to a higher power whose interests were wholly commercial. Arguably the man who most shaped the course of American weightlifting in the 1920s is a shadowy interloper, virtually unheralded by historians. who had no real liking or loyalty for the sport. After seizing control of Milo Barbell Company after World War I, D. G. Redmond was able to raise and lower at will the fortunes of weightlifting's so-called fathers—Calvert Jowett, and Berry—and to play the roles of kingmaker, or perhaps wicked step-father! Commercial considerations, fed by undercurrents of jealously and innuendo, inspired successive assaults on Jowett's reputation by Calvert, Berry, and Pullum, but it was Redmond's behind the scenes influence that sealed his fate. These lessons were not lost on the next generation of iron game promoters. Jowett, who later helped launch the careers of both Hoffman and the Weiders, no doubt communicated to them, along with a goodly dose of zeal and promotional technique, many of the hard lessons he had learned at Milo.[83] Future fathers were in a position to learn from Jowett's bitter-sweet experience the precept that responsibility without power is a dangerous ploy and that weightlifting is not just a sport but a serious business pursuit.

Notes:

[1]Coulter to Ben Weider, 17 December 1956, Todd-McLean Collection, The University of Texas at Austin. [Unless otherwise indicated, all correspondence citated in this article is from the Todd-McLean Collection.]

[2]Smith to the author. 26 July 1989, Author's Collection.

[3]See ***Iron Game History*** (especially articles by Al Thomas and Terry Todd); Osmo Kiiha's ***Iron Master,*** Vic Boff's ***Newsletter,*** David Webster's ***Sons of Samson*** (Irvine, Scotland: 1993). David Chapman's biographical sketches in ***Ironman,*** and Randall Strossen's ***Milo.***

[4]See John Paul. "The Health Reformers: George Barker Windship and Boston's Strength Seekers." ***Journal of Sport History*** 10 (Winter 1983). 41-57; Jan Todd, "'Strength is Health': George Barker Windship and the First American Weight Training Boom." ***Iron Game History*** 3 (September 1993): 3-14; David Chapman, ***Sandow the Magnificent: Eugen Sandow and the Beginnings of Bodybuilding*** (Urbana and Chicago: 1994); William R. Hunt ***Body Love, The Amazing Career of Bernarr Macfadden*** (Bowling Green: 1989); Robert Ernst, ***Weakness Isa Crime, The Life of Bernarr Macfadden*** (Ithaca: 1991); and John D. Fair. "Bob Hoffman, The York Barbell Company, and the Golden Age of American Weightlifting. 1945-1960,"

[5] ***Journal of Sport History*** 14(Summer 1987): 164-188.

See Raymond Van Cleef. "Builder of Men, A Tribute to the Accomplishments of the Late Alan Calvett," ***Your Physique*** (December-January 1950): 10-12; Siegmund Klein to Osmo Kiiha, April 10, 1983, ***The Iron Master*** (August 1993): 28; City Directories of the United States. Philadelphia, 1927-28; and Bob Jones to Ottley Coulter, 26 July 1939.

[6]Calvert to Coulter, 31 January 1919.

[7]Alan Calvert, ***Super Strength*** (Philadelphia, 1924).

[8]For some sense of Philadelphia's vibrance see Robert L. Jones, "Wm. J. Herrmann, Health Builder," ***Strength & Health,*** 15 (April 1947): 16-17, & 31-33, and (May, 1947): 28,30-33.

[9]For sympathetic portrayals of Jowett see George F. Jowett, "The Story of My Life," ***Athletic World*** (September 1924): 20-21 & 45; Martin Franklin. "The Life Story of George Jowett" ***Your Physique*** (September 1928): 13, & 37-39 (October 1948): 7,45-57, and (July 1949): 23 & 32-33, and Wayne Riley, "Inkerman's Herculean Blacksmith." ***Winchester Press*** 31 October 1984.

[10]Jowett to Coulter, n. d. [September 1924].

[11] Alan Calvert, "Enthusiasm Breeds Enthusiasm." ***Strength*** 9(Novetnber 1924): 32 & 89.

[12]Jowett to Coulter, n.d. [October 1924].

[13]Jowett to Coulter, 27 October 1924.

[14]"With the Men of Iron." ***Health and Life*** 4(Febtuaty 1925):71.

[15]"The A.C.W.L.A. Will Hold Lifting Contests." ***Strength*** 9(November, 1924): 19. and John Bradford. "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes,' ***Strength*** 10 (January 1925): 43.

[16]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes, ***Strength*** 9(Decetnber 1924): 39 and 10(January 1925): 10.

[17]"Future Weight Lifting Contests," ***Strength*** 10(March 1925): 13, and "Special Limited Time Offer," ***Strength*** 10(February 1925): 10.

[18]George F. Jowett "Strong Men of 1925." ***Strength*** 10(March 1925): 34-37 & 79-80.

[19]"Special Limited Time Offer," ***Strength*** 10(February 192.5): 10.

[20]John Bradford "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** (February 1925): 61. For a description of Pullum's role in the orga-

nization of British weightlifting, see David Webster, ***The Iron Game, An Illustrated History of Weight-Lifting*** (Irvine, Scotland: 1976). 65-69.
[21]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 10(May 1925): 40-41, 76 & 78.
[22]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 10(June 1925), 80.
[23]John Bradford "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 10(July, 1925), 52-52 & 81.
[24]See: "The World's Weight-Lifting Rules and Records," Strength (August 1925): 12, and George F. Jowett, ***The Rules, Regulations and Records of Weight Lifting*** (Philadelphia, 1925).
[25]Jowett to Coulter, 3 June 1925.
[26]See editorials in ***Strength*** 10(July & August, 1925). 17.
[27]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 10(July & August. 1925): 17.
[28]John Bradford "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 10(December, 1925): 48-49 & 80. Jowett also sought, through Coulter, to have Redmond make him "legally the permanent President of the Association," but there is no indication that the wily businessman ever carried it out. See Coulter to Redmond, 24 July 1925, and Redmond to Coulter, 29 July 1925.
[29]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association," ***Strength*** 11(January 1926): 45, and (April 1926): 47.
[30]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association," ***Strength*** 11(March 1926): 50.
[31]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association," ***Strength*** 11(January 1926): 71, and (February 1926): 58 & 75.
[32]"Make Your Own Selections from These Rare Offerings," ***Strength*** 11(March, 1926): 12.
[33]Jones to Coulter, 26 July 1939.
[34]Van Cleef, "Builder of Men." 12.
[35]Alan Calvert, ***An Article on Natural Strength versus 'Made' Strength Preceded by An Explanation of Why I Abandoned the Field of Heavy Exercise*** [pamphlet] (Philadelphia: 1925). 4-5, 8, 10, 16 & 15.
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[39]See John D. Fair, "George Jowett, Ottley Coulter, David Willoughby and the Organization of American Weightlifting, 1911-1924," ***Iron Game History*** 2(May 1993): 4-5.
[40]Calvert, ***Confidential Information,*** 18-19 & 22-23.
[41] Jowett to Coulter, 10 April 1926.
[42]Coulter to Jowett, 3 May 1926.
[43]Jowett to Coulter, 8 May 1926. Also see "Sports, Body Building and Weight Lifting," ***Strength*** 11 (June 1926). 21.
[44]George F. Jowett, "A Few Chapters from the Story of My Life." ***Strength*** 11(June 1926): 25, and ***The Key to Might and Muscle*** (Philadelphia: 1926).
[45]"The ***Key to Might and Muscle*** Opens," ***Strength*** 11(July 1926): 10.
[46]John Bradford. "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes." ***Strength*** 11(July 1926): 44-45 & 77.
[47]John Bradford "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 11(August, 1926). 53.
[48]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 11 (October 1926): 50, and "Strongmen of the World are Agreed," ***Strength*** 11(November 1926): 17.
[49]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 11(November 1926): 49-51. In its reports of the festivities. the local newspaper was more upbeat. Despite the chilling rains, attendance in general was soaring, and the weightlifting exhibition featured record-setting performances by Art Levan and Harry Paschall. ***The Philadelphia Inquirer,*** 22 August 1926.
[50]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 11(November 1926): 52 & 71 & (December 1926): 52-53; and ***Strength*** 12 (March 1927): 50, & (February 1927): 55.
[51]John Bradford. "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 11(September 1926): 54, and (October 1926): 66.
[52]John Bradford. "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 11(November 1926): 73, and "Go Over the Top With Us, Boys," ***Strength*** 11(December 1926): 14.
[53]John Bradford "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 11(December 1926): 54, and John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 12 (March 1927): 47.
[54]John Bradford, "American Continental Weight Lifters' Association Notes," ***Strength*** 11(November 1926): 72.
[55]George F. Jowett, ***The Strongest Man That Ever Lived*** (Philadelphia: 1926).
[56]Jowett to Coulter, 10 February 1927.
[57]Ibid., 15 March 1927.
[58]Coulter to Jowett, 17 March 1927.
[59]Mike Drummond, "Association Notes," ***Strength*** 11(July 1926): 52-53 & 77-80, and "Bar Bell Users and Strength Enthusiasts," ***Strength*** 11(July 1926):12.
[60]The Association of Bar Bell Men." ***Strength*** 11(August 1927): 10.
[61]Jowett to Coulter, n. d. [June, 1927?].
[62]Jones to Coulter, 26 July 1929.
[63]"Publisher's Statement," ***Strength*** 11(November 1927): 94
[64]Jowett to Coulter, 26 n.d. [April 1927?].
[65]Ibid., n. d. [June 1927].
[66]Charles A. Smith to the author, 12 January 1990, Author's Collection.
[67]Interview with Phyllis Jowett, 12 July 1994, Morrisburg, Ontario.
[68]Jowett to Coulter, n. d. [July 1927?].
[69]Mike Drummond, "Association Notes," ***Strength*** 11(December 1927): 50.
[70]Coulter to Jowett, 23 June 1927.
[71]Jowett to Coulter, 13 May 1930.
[72]D. G. Redmond, "An Editorial, Advertising Methods of the Jowett Institute of Physical Culture, Inc.," ***Strength*** 17(February 1933): 37-38 & 49.
[73]Ibid., 49-51.
[74]Klein to Osmo Kiiha, 15 May 1982, and 10 April 1983, ***The Iron Master*** August 1993): 27-28. See also Jowett. "The Story of My Life." 20-21.
[75] Valentine to Coulter, 6 November 1969.
[76]Coutler to Valentine, 3 December 1969.
[77]Jones to Coulter, 5 April 1947.
[78]See letter to F. W. Jefkins, 1 August 1952, and Robert Power Reimers to the Investigation Department, British Advertising Association, 24 July 1952, Vic Boff Papers, Cape Coral. Florida.
[79]See Riley, "Inkerman's Herculean Blacksmith," and letters from Lew Dick and Wilfred Diamond, 25 & 26 July 1952, Vic Boff Papers.
[80] [***Mountain Herald?***] clippings in Vic Boff Papers, 24 May 1919.
[81]Telephone interview with Vic Boff, 28 March 1994.
[82]Charlcs A. Smith, "George F. Jowett," ***Muscle Builder*** (April 1955): 5.
[83]Charles Smith once noted Redmond "was from the same mold as Hoffie and Weider but not as sharp." Smith to the author, 4 December 1987.

The Roark Report

A History of the Mr. Universe Contest, Part Two: 1948–London, England

Apparently, none of the seventeen men who competed in the first Mr. Universe contest in September 1947 in Philadelphia crossed the Atlantic to compete in the second Mr. Universe event which was held on Friday, 13 August 1948, in conjunction with the 1948 British Empire Weightlifting Games. London's two thousand seat Scala Theater was packed. Posters advertising the event featured two-time Mr. America John Grimek who "has asked us to announce that he is doing all he possibly can to be present at this most representative of contests. . ." Grimek's July fifth letter indicated "Things at the moment all seem favorable. I hope I can live up to all the expectations." Not to worry.

In all, depending on the account, men from eleven, thirteen, or sixteen countries participated. Bodybuilding was interspersed with weightlifting, with a weight class of lifters alternating with a height class of bodybuilders in five segments, beginning at three PM:

1. Empire Bantamweight: 2. Mr. Universe Class 4: Up to 5'5.75";
3. Empire Featherweight: 4. Mr Universe Class 3: 5'6" to 5'8.75";
5. Empire Lightweight; 6. Mr Universe Class 2: 5'9" to 5'11.75";
7. Empire Middleweight: 8. Mr Universe Class 1: Over 5'11.75";
9. Empire Light-heavyweight: 10. Mr. Universe—winners of four classes; 11. Empire Heavyweight; 12. Mr. Universe declared.

Bob Hasse wrote in ***Iron Man*** 8:4. page 44, "The second Mr. Universe was staged in conjunction with the First British Weightlifting Championships before a sellout audience of over two thousand stomping, cheering fans at the Scala Theater, London, on Friday the thirteenth of August, under the auspices of the BAWLA." [British Amateur Weightlifting Assocaition] Please note that BAWLA is not the same as NABBA which was formed in 1950.] Stanko, last year's winner, did not defend his title, and only two Americans were in the contest which was open to "both professional and amateur athletes."

In the afternoon, classes two, three and four had pre-judging and all but two finalists were eliminated. Each man posed with two spotlights breaking through the otherwise darkened stage:

Class Four: 1, Mahmoud Namdjou—Iran; 2. Don Dorans—England
Class Three: 1. John Grimek—USA: 2. Andre Drapp—France
Class Two: 1. Charles Jarrett—Britain: 2. Ted White—England
Class One: 1. Steve Reeves—USA; 2. Reub Martin—England; 3. Oscar Heidenstam—England: All three men were allowed in finals because they were the only competitors.

The nine finalists came back on stage. Ron Chifney wrote in the ***British Amateur Weightlifter and Bodybuilder*** ". . .one was over-awed as muscle, muscle and still more muscle piled up on the stage." When the nine had been sifted to three, each man was allotted three minutes individually to "perform as he pleased-muscle control, agility, posing or what have you." (Bob Hasse asserts four minutes were allowed for each man.) While the heavyweights were lifting, the final judging decisions for the physiquemen were being made. Each judge handed George Walsh a piece of paper with first, second, and third placings indicated, so even the judges did not know at this point who had won.

Andre Drapp was first on stage and performed some handstands with some slips, and apologetic shrugs of his shoulders. Grimek's posing brought the reserved British to feverish pitch standing. shouting, as his muscle control act made it appear as though "The whole of his magnificent physique appeared to disintegrate part by part, like some complete jig-saw puzzle being shaken on a tray, only to be magically recompleted when this master of muscular motion wished." Reeves had to follow this. And though he "had an advantage in appearing last and he, too, had a terrific reception. . . The man has not been born who could have followed Grimek's great display without suffering a little by comparison."

George Walsh announced: "Whether you agree or not, our decision is Mr. Universe 1948—John Grimek." The audience agreed. Reeves was second, Drapp dropped to third. Walsh honored the judges request that their individual placings not be revealed but he allowed that, "It is only fair to John, however, to state that he won the title by a decisive margin." Grimek received a silver statuette, Reeves a silver loving cup. Silver medals went to all finalists. Class winners received a silver plaque, runner-ups a bronze plaque.

Judging criteria: Forty points for "harmonious proportions." forty points for muscular development, five points for posture, live points for muscular efficiency, five points for vitality, and five for organic condition. Measurements were supposed to be taken, but were not. Also scheduled but thwarted were "a severe medical examination" and a double bodyweight deadlift. Each contestant posed by "straight standing front, back, and side pose," then performed some optional poses. The judges were: George Hackenschmidt, Tromp Van Diggelin, K.D. Arax, Dr. Bankhof (a Russian surgeon) and George Greenwood. Bob Hoffman withdrew as a judge because of his closeness to Grimek.

In an attempt to find a fifth judge, George Walsh included the obviously sarcastic comment regarding the IFBB: "I had been reading quite a lot about physique and bodybuilding associations springing up on the American continent; I thought I remembered that one of them was not only American but International. Either the 1948 Olympic Games weren't important enough to warrant the attendance of members from these bodies or the term International applies to their claims and not to their activities." [The Olympic Weightlifting competition had been held earlier that week-September 9-11 in London.] Indeed, Walsh does not indicate if the IFBB had been asked to participate, and in fact, Joe Weider told this author that his photographers were literally escorted out of certain weightlifting contests in an unwelcome fashion. It was made clear to Weider that he was not to take pictures of lifting events sanctioned by certain parties.

Reeves stepped to the microphone when Grimek was announced winner and spoke words which some bodybuilding fans would even these days echo: "I think that John Grimek is the greatest body-builder who ever lived."

Grimek went west; Reeves went east, where before he slept four more times he would be declared Mr. World.

Reflections on The Twelfth Annual Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen's Association Reunion

by Dr. Ken "Leo" Rosa

Those of us who were present at the 12th annual Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen's Association reunion in New York City's Downtown Athletic Club on October 8, 1994 were privileged to have Slim Farman with us and to witness this great strongman doing what he does better than anyone else in the world.

Slim Farman. He to be one of the most thrilling strongman performers of all time. Wherever he performs the audience watches his unmatchable exhibition of intensely concentrated physical power with bated breath. No matter how many strongmen one has seen, none can surpass Slim The Hammerman for engendering sheer unadulterated excitement. Slim Farman's very unusual feats of strength are a most unforgettable experience. It's amazing to realize how quiet the room becomes as this giant of a man focuses his mental and physical force.

The annual Olde Time Barbell and Strongmen's Association reunion is the premier of the gatherings to honor the greats and the not so great of the Iron Game. It is to be happily noted that other such reunions are taking place in California and England following the example set by the New York association. Infinite appreciation is owed to Vic Boff, the person behind the Oldetime Barbell and Strongman reunions. Three cheers for Vic Boff and Johnny Mandel.

Among the many distinguished Iron Game personalities seated at the dais was a fellow who I remember about four decades plus ago was a radiant youth with a deep tan who one gorgeous summer day was comparing muscular thighs with Al Berman on Orchard Beach in the Bronx. Honoree Dave Sheppard. Did I say deep tan? Okay. Deep tan. Huge muscles. Superlative physique. Great strength. That sounds like Bill Pearl four decades ago. It was and still is as he too sat at the dais to be honored. It was fitting that Bill was seated next to the inspiration of us all. There is only one and there never will be another, John C. Grimek.

When I was a kid I remember seeing a fine color photograph of Leo Stem on the cover of ***Strength & Health*** magazine back about 1946. And now there was Leo Stern being honored at the reunion.

It was good to see Mabel Rader. Immediately we thought of Mabel and Peary Rader's much missed ***Iron Man*** magazine which was universally respected by us all. The real ***Iron Man.***

Jan and Terry Todd, Alex Godo, Laurie Fierstein, Marvin Eder, Al Thomas, Dave Webster, Dr. Zovluck, Izquierdo and Sansoli, Johnny Ogle, Joe Ponder and a cast of seemingly hundreds of Iron Game brethren and ladies were present at this eagerly awaited annual event. I even found myself in a discussion about Gracie jiujitsu, with which I fell in love once I became active in it three years ago.

Somehow I felt that I was not alone in reflecting back through the decades to a time which doesn't always seem to be so long ago until one stops to think about it and to calculate. As I circulated around the room greeting and being greeted by old friends and acquaintances, as I was greeting the people on the dais, the decades drifted away in reverie to the fanciful dreaming of youth. Frankly. I don't feel a heck of a lot different now than when I was training with Al Berman in a basement gym in the Bronx back around 1951. There was no heat and we froze in the winter as we used a 110 pound barbell to do front deltoid raises with our overcoats on. Al Berman had a marvelous physique with a perpetual lat spread and first rate abdominals.

We remember when we were forever young, yesterday. John Grimek was the reigning monarch of muscledom, seemingly an ageless immortal who belonged in the same category as Superman, the man of steel. Pudgy Stockton was the breathtakingly beautiful musclegirl who was every muscleguy's fantasy. Joe Louis would rule the boxing world forever. Frank Sinatra would always be the romantic young crooner. Steve Reeves would forever be Mr. America age twenty-one. John Davis could not lose. And when he finally did it was to Doug Hepburn and Paul Anderson who would join the other ageless immortals and go on forever. Or so we thought.

Bill Pearl appeared on the cover of ***Strength & Health*** magazine in 1953 and after we recovered from being overwhelmed we immediately set about trying to match the astounding muscular girths of this incredible wonder. Gallons of milk and the then very new Hoffman's protein tablets or powder. That was the answer. Dave Sheppard was a young and handsome physique star photographed by Lon. We remember when Sheppard went to "Muscletown," as York, Pennsylvania, was then known, and became an American Olympic weightlifting legend. Terry Todd, with his huge stature, girth and immense strength out powerlifting into the vocabulary of players of the Iron Game. Leroy Colbert had attained twenty inch upper arms. Then called the largest muscular arms in the world. George Paine was an incredible muscular marvel the likes of which had not been seen before.

The halcyon days of youth would never end. Or so we thought. The three hundred pound bench presses would climb to four hundred and beyond. And continue that way. The coveted eighteen inch muscular upper arm, once attained, would always be that way. Or so we thought.

Suddenly I was back in 1994 at the Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen's reunion. Bill Pearl was looking as good as ever. I touched Ken Hall's legendary abs and they were like steel, as they were four decades ago. It's amazing how many people still appear to be in outstanding shape today. The reunions are a way of paying homage to the pioneers in the history of the Iron Game and it's gratifying to see how many young people are in attendance. Attendance is a way for younger people to actually reach out and touch the past and many are taking advantage of that opportunity.

The twelfth reunion left me in a more reflective mood than the previous gatherings. Attendance is definitely an extraordinary experience. The camaraderie is wonderful. All Iron Game people should attend because they'll be glad they did.

And for any really young iron pumpers who might be reading this and who, consumed by the "wisdom" and invincibility of youth, erroneously assume that the reunions are only for the doddering, a devastating lesson was to be taught about three weeks alter the reunion by a professor named Big George Foreman.

And some there are who still revere all the dreams of their youth. *—Attributed to George P. Bradford.*