



IRON GAME HISTORY



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Siegmund Rejoins the Professor

In the years before Sig Klein's death, he and I spoke several times on the phone concerning a painting of his late father-in-law, Professor Attila. The painting was one of the few iron game artifacts Sig had saved from his marvelous collection, and it still hung in the front room of the Manhattan brownstone he shared with his wife, Grace. Although he had never visited our collection, Sig often encouraged us in our efforts to capture as much as we could of the history of the game. Thus it was that as he was dying of cancer, Sig decided that it would be fitting for the painting of the Professor to come to Austin and be in the company of so many of the luminaries in the field to which both he and Professor Attila had given their lives.

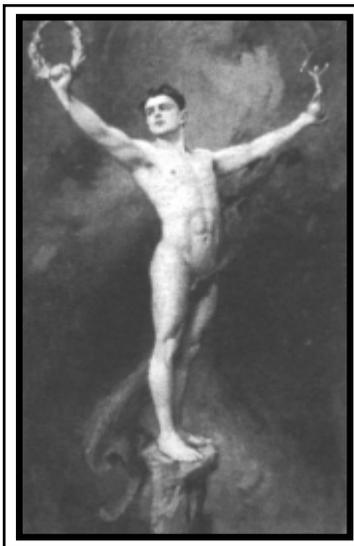
Both Sig and Grace told us that the oil painting of Professor Attila had been done in 1887 in London by a "court painter" who had done several portraits for the royal family. The story they got from the Professor was that in the late 1880s he had been engaged by members of the royal family to serve as what would today be known as a "personal trainer." According to the Professor, the royal family was so pleased by his work that they commissioned the "court painter" to do a portrait of him dressed as a strongman and then presented the portrait to him as a gift. In fact, he even told them that the leopard skin costume he wore had been made from the skin of a leopard shot by one of the royals he had been training. In any case, when the Professor came to this country in the early 1890s and opened his famous gymnasium in New York, he brought the large, virtually lifesize portrait with him, ornate frame and all.

Sig told us that the wonderful painting, which depicts the Professor standing with his right hand placed lightly on the small end of a large club, was displayed for years at Attila's gymnasium, which closed at his death in 1924, and for many more years in the Professor's gym once Sig reopened it, and for even more years in Sig's own even more famous, gym. So much did Sig love the painting that he

refused many offers for it, and he told me that it pleased him to see it every day and to reflect on the glory days of the game. So when he told us that he thought the painting should come to Texas and join his and the Professor's friends, we were inexpressibly grateful.

Once the decision was made, we agreed that we would come to New York and take possession of it in the fall of 1987 on the occasion of our annual trip to The City to take part in the Oldtime Barbell & Strongmen Association dinner. We knew Sig was weakening, of course, but we were still surprised and shocked when, just days before we were to leave, Vic Boff called with the sad news that Sig had died. But still we came, of course, and after the dinner we went with Vic to pay our respects to Grace Klein and to collect the painting of the Professor, along with his scrapbook.

To ensure the painting's safety, we drove it to Texas and today it hangs in and dominates my office, where it has been seen in the years since by thousands of people. Since that time, as I would look up from my work and see the good Professor, I would often wish that we had a panning of Sig to keep the Professor company, and then one day we learned that Sig's daughter had sent a small oil painting of Sig to be sold at the renowned New York auction house, Sotheby's. Distaught that we hadn't known that Sig's daughter had owned such a painting and that we weren't in the financial league to bid for an oil painting at Sotheby's, we decided to call someone who had both the informed interest to want the painting and the money to buy it. We called Joe Weider. I told him



what was afoot and passed along what we knew, hoping that he could acquire the painting and keep it from going to someone with no idea that the model for the depiction of Mercury was a famous lifter and bodybuilder. Joe was excited by the news and thanked us for the information, and within the month he called me to say he had managed to buy the painting. Jan and I were pleased by the news, as we

knew that Joe would enjoy it and that it would rest among his many other artistic treasures.

The painting of Sig as Mercury was done by C. Bosseron Chambers, a well known New York artist who specialized in religious and heroic figures. Born in 1883 in St Louis, Chambers studied at the Berlin Academy and at the Royal Academy of Vienna, and from 1935 through 1941 was listed in *Who's Who in America*. For years, Chambers maintained a studio in Carnegie Hall, and it was there that he painted a young Sig Klein in 1926.

Recently, on a trip to the West Coast, I took a few hours and drove out to Woodland Hills to visit with the Weider editorial staffs and to spend a little time with Joe himself. As it happened, Joe and I went out for lunch, then came back and said goodbye in the lobby, but before I left I stopped to see Dr. James Wright. About fifteen minutes later, I was back in the lobby again when Joe walked by and said to me in passing, "Thanks again for that tip about the Klein

painting." I told him he was welcome, and then he asked if I had ever seen it, to which I answered, "No, but I'd very much like to." So into his huge office we walked, and over to the painting. He then picked it up and handled it to me and asked me what I thought. After a moment of admiration, I told Joe that it was truly beautiful, and then he looked at me and said with a smile, "You like it? Well, then take it. Add it to the collection." To say I was surprised hardly captures my feelings. In all my years of collecting, I doubt that anything has come to me so unexpectedly. Clearly, the gift was a spur of the moment heartfelt thing on Joe's part, as he thought I'd already left, but for a man who loves both art and the iron game to give away so precious an artifact says a great deal about the wisdom and perspective of age.

Today, Professor Attila still has the place of honor over my big leather couch. Looking at him now is his son-in-law who, although they never met in life, honored the Professor by following the old man's footsteps into the heart of the *kraftsport* they both revered.

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HIPPOLYTE TRIAT

From: Edmond Desbonnet's
Les Rois de la Force

[*The Kings of Strength*]

Paris: Librairie Berger-Levrault, 1911

Translated and introduced by David Chapman

Weight training is the child of gymnastics. We sometimes forget that before strongmen lifted weights, they went to the palestra to race, vault, climb and practice all the other traditional forms of gymnastics. These early athletes gradually discovered that they could grow stronger and shapelier if they began lifting and working with weight. Gymnasts had trained with primitive weights the days of the ancient Greeks, but no one had created a rational system for using them. Like most endeavors, weight training was not an immediate discovery, rather it evolved over many years. But the quest for health, strength, and beauty received a dramatic impetus in the middle of the nineteenth century largely through the agency of an extraordinary man named Hippolyte Triat.

In many ways, Triat's biography reads like one of the "ripping yarns" that Victorians were so fond of: he was orphaned as a child, then kidnapped by gypsies who forced him to wear a dress and perform as a girl. In Spain he rescued a rich lady from a runaway horse, and she rewarded the plucky lad by paying for his education in an aristocratic school. Triat then went back to show business and worked as a strongman until he landed in Liège where he opened his first gymnasium in 1833. From there he opened other establishments in Brussels and Paris. He knew great success but also bitter failure and after falling afoul of the authorities for supporting the Paris Commune, he died alone and forgotten. As his biographer, Edmond Desbonnet, correctly notes, "Triat's life is a veritable romance. He knew the greatest joys and the most abject suffering, the greatest fortune and the most lamentable misery."¹ But

Triat's genius is derived not from his life, as colorful as that might have been. He is worth remembering for his pioneering work in introducing weight training to the fashionable, middle class world and in making a business success out of his enterprise. Triat's techniques in both realms were later imitated by other practitioners. His unfortunate end is a bitter example of a man who is ahead of his time; Triat's was the voice of the prophet crying in a world that had tired of listening. It would not heed his ideas for many more years to come, but by then his words came from the mouths of other men.

In order to understand Triat and his achievements, it is



HIPPOLYTE TRIAT'S BODY, SHOWN TO PERFECTION IN THIS EARLY PHOTOGRAPH, COMBINED POWER, SYMMETRY AND MASSIVE MUSCULARITY.
PHOTO COURTESY DAVID CHAPMAN

necessary to take a look at his times. The first decades of the nineteenth century were very unsettling. Napoleon Bonaparte was in the process of ravaging Europe, but he was also awakening victor and vanquished alike to the necessity of producing strong, reliant young men who could endure the many physical hardships of battle. It was amid this unrest and violence that the gymnastics movement was spawned. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) began his Turnverein as a direct outcome of the Napoleonic Wars, and soon men in other countries likewise awoke to the possibilities of improving the potential recruits in their own nations.

Defeat in the wars slowed down France's interest in building strength and endurance among its soldiers, but France would not remain behind for long. It was at this time that an extraordinary Spanish immigrant named Francisco Amorós (1770-1848) appeared out of nowhere and convinced the French military to open a "normal school of gymnastics" in

1826. This organization was operated by the French Army which wanted the Spaniard to turn out fighting men who were fit and vigorous. The normal gymnasium operated until 1838 after which Amoros went to Paris where he opened a private establishment called the *Gymnase Civil et Orthopédique* which he oversaw until his death. The presence of this gymnasium in the French capital made the idea of working out commonplace to military men, but more important, to their civilian brothers as well. His was the first of many huge gymnasiums that were destined to become very popular.

Amoros put great faith in gymnastic apparatuses, especially the trapeze. This device had been invented by Italian tightrope walkers a century before, and had been appropriated by the Spanish instructor who believed in its ability to reform the French physique. Such was his faith in the device that Amoros reportedly had fifty-two ways to grip the trapeze, each producing a slightly different effect. The gymnasiums where these exercises were conducted were models of Spartan efficiency—comforts and niceties were rare. They were huge, drafty buildings filled with trapezes, ropes, beams, rope ladders, and masts. There were great piles of sawdust everywhere so as to break the fall of overconfident gymnasts, but an early visitor to the gym identified only as Dr. Wauquier, recalled that the sawdust was never changed, and thus was filthy with dust and other debris. The structure had many windows and skylights since gas lighting was in its infancy, and because of this the gym was icy in winter and baking in the summer. Wauquier was certain that the primitive building was responsible for his contracting rheumatism at the age of seventeen. “The workouts consisted of hanging by the hands or the knees on apparatuses suspended from crossbars. These gymnastics could be qualified as ‘monkey gymnastics’ and consisted of acrobatics and feats of strength; later there would be contests and public shows with parades accompanied by the sound of bugles and flags flying in the wind.”² By the 1840s Amoros had managed to prepare the French public for gymnasia and gymnastics, but it was Triat who was destined to put the sport into a palatable form of recreation for a much wider audience.

France in the mid-nineteenth century was still in great turmoil. There were political and social upheavals that threatened to rend the nation apart, but with the emergence of the Second Empire in 1848, a degree of stability was attained as the people of France settled down to make money and spend much of it on amusements. The tenor of the times might have been basically hedonistic, but Amoros had done his work well, and it soon became popular among the “yuppies” of the day to take up a course of gymnastics. Under the Second Empire, growing numbers of people were willing to submit to a grueling physical regimen in order to grow stronger and shapelier. The people who formed this fashionable pool of potential athletes were nearly all members of the newly enriched and enfranchised middle class. A sizeable segment of the population finally had the time and the money to spend on making muscles, and since they were ready to pay dearly to swing Indian clubs and lift dumbbells, Hippolyte Triat was there to cash in on this trend.

With a background as a theatrical strongman, Triat knew how to please the public. He had a finely tuned sense of showmanship, and he knew how to use it to attract large crowds to his establishments. But Triat was much more than simply a vaudeville per-

former; he was a man with a mission. He understood that exercise and fitness were salable products if the right marketing strategies could be devised, and that became one of his great contributions to the athletic world. Triat realized that people do not exercise simply to get strong, and he always maintained that his system was designed to encourage three things: strength, health, and beauty. Amoros and the other pioneers were only interested in making better soldiers; Triat knew that he could achieve much more than that.

As others saw the success Triat achieved with his fashionable gymnasium, they decided to do the same. Soon there were other establishments in Paris catering to the athletic needs of its well-heeled customers. The directors of these institutions became known as “gymnasiarchs,” and their word was law to the many pupils who came to them. This proliferation of gymnasiums was unprecedented, and would not be repeated again until the twentieth century.

One of the main ways Triat earned his great success as a gymnasiarch was to turn gymnastics into a sort of theatrical spectacle. As the architect Renard’s rendering of Triat’s gymnasium shows, his workout sessions were always popular even with nonparticipants since spectators were encouraged to stand in the galleries at the side of the vast room and to watch the show on the gym floor. There, they could see columns of barechested, uniformed men stamping out their rhythmical exercises to the sound of a rolling snare drum. In this way Triat had managed to combine elements of the theater and ballet in an impressive display of athletic skill.

The location of these displays was a huge, luxurious vaulted hall that was rich in detail and filled with every possible device that would strengthen the body. One Swiss visitor estimated that it had cost one hundred thousand francs to furnish the interior of the gymnasium? Because of these rich appointments, Triat’s middle-class patrons would feel at home there. In addition, Triat was one of the few gymnasiarchs who encouraged women and children to participate in his exercises. He took care to have qualified female instructors, and he devised separate routines for them.

The core of Triat’s method was what he called “floor gymnastics” (*gymnastique de plancher*). As has been noted, Amoros emphasized trapeze work, but Triat discovered that his customers enjoyed working as a group. Their workouts must have been similar to today’s aerobics classes where participants act in unison under the direction of a single leader. As dramatic and aesthetic as it all must have been, Triat’s floor gymnastics had a few drawbacks. They required a trained instructor to lead them, the exercises could not be performed anywhere but in the huge, expensive gymnasium, and as Edmond Desbonnet later remarked, “The number of movements which made up the floor lesson were so numerous that it was necessary to have a good memory to remember them all, and this required a great deal of cerebral work.”⁴ Furthermore, there were so many movements to run through that participants only had time to repeat them one or two times before going on to the next one.

Despite the problems inherent in his system, Triat was such a tremendous innovator, that the drawbacks can be overlooked. He was an extremely creative individual, and he often took existing equipment (such as dumbbells) and gave them a new, increased importance. More often, he simply invented his own devices. There is con-

siderable evidence to support the contention that Triat was the inventor of the globe barbell,⁵ and Desbonnet is insistent on Triat's invention and use of pulley devices.

Perhaps equal in importance to the use of weights were Triat's commercial innovations. Because of his huge overhead in running such a massive operation, Triat was forced to be very creative when it came to financing. To do this the great gymnasiarch became one of the first to sell shares in his company. Starting in July of 1855, Triat eventually raised five million francs by this method. This sum represented 250,000 shares at twenty francs each and divided into five series. Another proof of Triat's genius was that the sham could be redeemed for a quarterly course in gymnastics. So in other words, Triat increased his capital by proposing to collect in advance in the form of shares that could be redeemed by gymnastics lessons.⁶ The sale of redeemable shares became a common practice for gym owners for generations to come. Triat showed that running a gymnasium could be a profitable investment if it were done correctly. Unfortunately, the great man was continually strapped for cash because his expenses were so great. Had he downsized his operation, he might have survived longer.

Finances were not Triat's only problems, however. It was largely thanks to his political stand that the gymnastics master lost all during the turbulent days of the commune. After losing the Franco-Prussian war in 1871, Emperor Napoleon III abdicated and the Second Empire crashed to the ground. In the ensuing chaos, the people of Paris attempted a noble but doomed experiment known as the Commune. Triat had already been attracted to the political left, and he had allied himself with the half-mad radical Jules Allix (the two Allix daughters were instructors in his gymnasium). Some have also detected in the floor exercises themselves evidence of republican tendencies in the leveling effects of athletics where bourgeois and aristocrat both exert themselves in sweaty equality. "The fact is," writes Gilbert Andrieu, "floor gymnastics had an ideology. . ."⁷ Because of his leftist sympathies, Triat let his gymnasium be used as a meeting place for the Communards, and he paid dearly for this indiscretion in the bloody aftermath of the Commune when his beautiful gymnasium was confiscated by the vengeful Parisian authorities.

Despite the attempts to destroy him, Triat returned to the athletic scene with another (albeit smaller) gymnasium after the turmoil. But he might not have lasted long anyway since the era of the gymnasiarchs was rapidly coming to an end. He found his clientele falling off, and finally, in 1879 Triat was forced to sell his business at a loss. He retired to live out his remaining years in misery, depression, and poverty.

Although he has been largely forgotten especially in the English-speaking world, Triat left an enduring legacy. Thanks to his inspiration, a great many gyms opened in conscious imitation of the master. These included several in Paris and at least one in Liverpool, England, which was almost an exact copy of the original Triat Gymnasium.⁸ Triat constantly complained that his business rivals were copying his ideas and stealing his inventions, so there must have been considerable interest in building bodies using the great man's system. That borrowing continues, and to this day elements of his system are still detectable in gymnasiums all over the world.

Throughout his career, Triat had also been obsessed with

the concept of establishing a normal school of gymnastics. He wanted to turn out instructors who could then spread the good news all over France and Europe. His first attempt came shortly after opening his Brussels facility in 1840. Triat proposed to King Leopold I to found a normal school, but when that idea met with little success, the gymnasiarch went to Paris where he hoped for better fortune.⁹ His luck was little better when he attempted to build a massive sports complex on the Island of Billancourt many years later, but by then the era of the gymnasiarchs was waning, and France was interested in other things. Desbonnet boils with nationalistic rage when he contemplates what might have been, but it is difficult to believe that France's future could have changed much with the addition of this sports center located just a short distance from the capital.

So by putting his emphasis on strength, health, and beauty, Triat set the course that other bodybuilding entrepreneurs would later take. His floor gymnastics also showed a pioneering spirit by abandoning the trapeze work that was popular earlier. Finally, by putting his faith in dumbbells and barbells of graduated weights, Triat was clearly light years ahead of his competitors. Triat used all these elements to form a system of exercise that was popular with the rising bourgeoisie, and this in turn made the work of later gym owners easier. The era of the old gymnasiarchs had an early flowering in the 1830s and 40s. Their popularity then gradually decreased until it died out entirely in the 1880s, and Triat's name and deeds might easily have been lost to posterity. Fortunately, Triat's ideas were rediscovered by Desbonnet who revived the good man's reputation in the early years of the twentieth century.

Desbonnet enjoyed telling the story of his introduction to the work of his illustrious predecessor. Sometime around 1881, young Edmond was casually leafing through an old copy of *The Family Museum* from 1856 when he chanced upon the article by Paul Féval which he reproduces in his account of Triat Desbonnet was instantly fascinated, and in a blinding flash of recognition he realized that he had discovered his destiny. He, too, would devote himself to teaching physical culture. He would perpetuate Triat's unfinished work.¹⁰ Desbonnet never forgot his dedication to his long-departed mentor, and when he came to write his history of strongmen, *The Kings of Strength*, in 1911, he gave Triat a place of honor. Perhaps, as Desbonnet confirms in *How to Become a Strongman*, "(Triat) might have rested anonymously for all had I not respectfully plucked his name and his deeds from oblivion."¹¹ For the rest of us, Hippolyte Triat will always remain a brilliant but unlucky precursor of physical culture and bodybuilding, and if we remember him today, it is largely thanks to Desbonnet.

—David Chapman

"Hippolyte Triat"

from: *The Kings of Strength*

Those who nowadays enjoy the blessings of physical culture and owe to it health, beauty and strength, have as a primary duty to pay homage, appreciation, and respect to the originators of this method of physical renewal. The living honor themselves when they glorify their worthy benefactors who live no more, and few people deserve our praise more than the man whose life we now recount here.

Hippolyte-Antoine Triat was born in Saint-Chaptes, a little village near Nîmes (Gard) in 1813. He was the youngest in a large family. He was only four when his parents died, and he was taken to be raised by his eldest sister who lived in Nîmes. At the age of six he was kidnapped at a carnival by gypsies who either gave or sold him to a troupe of traveling Italian performers in Nice. He stayed with them for seven years, traveling to Italy, Austria, and Spain. During these years, Triat was dressed as a girl and performed in a wire-walking act under the name of "Young Isela."

In 1825 the troupe split up and the boy remained with a Spaniard named Consuelo. Together with the older man and his two sons, Triat formed a weightlifting and physique posing group called "The Alcides." Triat quickly took to this work, and he succeeded so well that shortly afterward he was known all over Spain as *l'Enfant* (the Child).

While he was in Burgos in 1828, Triat had an accident which forced him to remain in that city much longer than he had expected. The young man's left leg was broken by a horse's hooves when he attempted to stop it from running away. The lady who was thus saved was Mme. Montsento, and she interested herself in him, and after he recovered, his wealthy benefactor paid for the young man's education at the Jesuit college of Burgos where he remained until he was twenty-two years old.

During his stay with the Jesuits, Triat was educated in French as well as Spanish thanks to a French priest who taught at the school. Although Triat was able to send word to his family, and even to receive visits from his sisters, he chose not the return to France. He found several ancient volumes in the school's library which explained the gymnastic exercises of the old Greeks and Romans. Among these books were the works of Mercurialis, Plexotis, d'Andry, and a Spanish translation of the famous *Treatise on the Art of Tumbling* by the tutor of François I, the Chevalier Capriani. Triat was able to read these books and to profit by them. During his stay at the college, he continued to exercise and even instructed a few disciples, but all the while Triat was planning and putting together the ideas that later found their way into his plan for physical education.

When Triat left Burgos in 1834 he again took up his old profession as performer and strongman, and he had devised a new act consisting of physique posing which was very similar to the one that was later used by Sandow. One part of his turn featured a revolving column from which he would hang by his hands, feet, or chin and lift horses and men. Thanks to this device he garnered a huge success first in Spain and later in England where he had a considerable stay. Finally, he settled in Belgium.

In this last country Triat founded a gymnasium which became a great success in a remarkably brief period of time. All of fashionable Brussels frequented his establishment which was located at 7 Rue de Ligne where it stayed from 1840 to 1849. At that time he gave up his business and moved to Paris where he opened his superb gymnasium at 55 and 57 Avenue Montaigne which soon became all the rage. Triat's revolutionary methods and his scientific gymnastic exercises were suddenly in favor, and he had for customers all of Parisian high society. For a long time after the arrival of the Second Empire, Triat could boast that a large part of the court including the emperor himself was enrolled under his care.

His magnificent gymnasium measured exactly forty meters long, twenty-one wide, and ten meters high, and it contained a complete collection of weights and devices of all sorts. There was a collection of dumbbells, barbells, Indian clubs, and other apparatuses worth well over one thousand francs. Over the entrance to the gymnasium were inscribed the words "*Regeneration of Man*" (this motto had been approved at a meeting with Dr. Castel).

Because of the work that was necessary to keep up these premises, Triat decided to move his operation across the street to number 36. This gymnasium was much smaller but still extremely beautiful and adequate in every particular. The new establishment was begun around 1855 and was located on the exact spot where one now finds the Rue François 1er.

Then came the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and the Commune. Triat was implicated when he lent his gymnasium for meetings and especially for being named, at the instigation of Jules Allix (1818-1897), member of the Central Committee, as the director of gymnastic exercises for the City of Paris (see the *Journal officiel de la Commune* for April 7, 1871 in which the grounds for naming Triat to this post are quite curious).¹² He was afterwards taken prisoner by faces loyal to the National Assembly and imprisoned at Versailles for a time. He returned to Paris in July and took over the direction of a new gymnasium at 22 Rue Bouloi.

Triat left the profession once and for all in 1879, and he died in his home at 27 Rue Jean-Jacques-Rousseau in Paris on January 11, 1881 at the age of 68. His funeral was on January 13, 1881, and he was buried in the Cimetière du Nord [Northern Cemetery] (called the Cimetière Montmartre, boulevard de Clichy, Avenue Rachel) in the plot of the Allix family, 24th division, 17th line, Avenue du Tunnel, 5. We are grateful to Mr. Mouquin, the director general of research for the prefecture of police, for this precious information.

Christmann, the proprietor of the gymnasium in the faubourg Saint-Denis, wrote an obituary for Triat in *The Gymnast* for February 15, 1881. The funeral card which we currently have before us mentions that Triat was the widower of Marie-Françoise-Cornélie Pasquet.

The great novelist Paul Féval (1816-1887) was one of Triat's students and a great admirer of this little known genius.¹³ Here is the description of the Triat Gymnasium which he did in 1856 in a magazine of the time, *The Family Museum*.

THE TRIAT GYMNASIUM

The ox and the camel (apologies to Plutarch)—The body and the soul—The law of movement—Gymnastics: ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, Pre-revolutionary—True immobility—Its deadly results—Gymnastic rehabilitation—Col. Amoros Real modern gymnastics—Triat Gymnasium—Curious spectacle—Marvelous effects—Advice to families.

An ox and a camel walked together down a road, both driven by the same master. The ox, who was cruelly overloaded, observed the camel advancing with a light step toward him. The weary animal beseeched his fellow traveler to take but a part of his burden. The camel refused saying, "Every beast for himself."

"You selfish fool!" replied the ox. "You will soon find your-

self carrying not only my part of the load but the entire cargo, and soon after that I'll ride atop everything."

As he predicted, the next day the ox collapsed from overwork, and the master placed his butchered body as well as his former load on the camel's back.

The great Plutarch, author of that fable, thus explained the relationship of the soul and the body. The soul is the camel, and the ox is the body. If the first refuses to lend assistance to the second, the soul will end up losing its own freedom under a double burden of an overloaded body as well as its pains and fatigues. Plutarch thereby concludes that we must work our body and our soul together, driving them harmoniously as if they were two steeds pulling the same carriage. This is the principle and the origin of all known exercises gathered under the name of gymnastics.

Is it, in fact, possible to examine the admirable human machine without recognizing that it is constructed for movement and action? This, above all, has been an immutable law of nature ever since the constellations began revolving in their spheres and the humble ants first burrowed in the earth.

However, since man leads a life that is both corporal and spiritual, physical and moral, Plutarch's parable is thus made clear. The two natures that form this duality and which are so profoundly distinct in their characters, are however connected so intimately that the action of one is reflected in the other. While everything seems to prove that the spirit is the primary mover of the body, yet it is impossible to negate the reciprocal and permanent influence of the body over the spirit. It follows that physical exercise affects the entire man—body and soul—matter and spirit.

With that settled it is easy to understand that when it is rationally applied, this exercise system comprises the art which is gymnastics; this art, if it is developed seriously, affects man's physical, intellectual, and moral education; it contributes to the maintenance of health, cures a great number of maladies, and leads to the perfection of both the race and the individual.

Among the ancients, gymnastics formed a considerable part of education and of public and private hygiene. The *palestra* was the training school of movement where one was instructed in all the exercises of the body by studying strength, nimbleness, and agility. Military gymnastics included jumping, the discus, wrestling, the javelin, boxing, and racing on foot, on horse, and in chariots. The Thebans attributed their victory at Leuctra to their superiority in wrestling.

The purpose of athletic gymnastics was to prepare contestants for various combats in the circuses. These athletes were celebrated in rhapsodies and glorified in archives and historic inscriptions. The men were chosen from among free and honorable families and educated under the direction of a magistrate. They took an oath, fought in the nude, served as models to heroes and warriors. Their victory prizes included crowns of pine, laurel or olive as well as arms, clothing armor, horses, or slaves. The winners were adorned with flowers and other presents in the amphitheater and then returned to their homes in triumphal chariots, escorted by the populace through a breach knocked into the wall surrounding their native city.

Theseus, Hercules, Jason etc. were none other than athletes like these. Milo of Croton was one of the most famous. He truly did dispatch an ox with one blow of his fist, but he did not eat it for his

dinner as the rest of the story goes. So it was with all those like him, he maintained his strength by sobriety and temperance. These are the athletic virtues about which Saint Paul has spoken so highly.

From the Middle Ages and the Renaissance up to the time of the French Revolution, gymnastics consisted of tournaments, jousts, fancy riding, ballets, and all the exercises of horsemanship and arms, tennis, dancing, etc., etc. The invention of gun powder both before and after the Revolution supplanted nearly all these activities and left a gaping hole in education and in hygiene. This is a void which played a major role in both weakening and diminishing the health of the present generation.

For upwards of a hundred years, particularly in France, physical exercise has been relegated to soldiers, laborers, and peasants. With the possible exception of a little swimming, fencing, and riding, physical immobility seems to have become the rule among the upper and middle classes and among liberals and intellectuals. These are precisely the groups which have the greatest need to exercise their bodies in order to compensate their overworked brains and stomachs. These are also the same classes which at one time had the privileges of warring, hunting, riding, fencing, and so forth.

Even children in schools and other institutions hardly ever participate in ball games, hopscotch, climbing bars, leapfrog, ropes, or other healthy recreations. These are the same diversions which gave our parents the vigor which has perished in ourselves. Let each man look around him, and he will easily see the crowd of unhealthy souls which surround us. These are the invalids who walk about, go to work, and live with weakness every day. These unfortunates have accepted their physical infirmity as a natural and normal thing. They are people who have fallen so low that they view good health as an elusive dream.

You know them well—businessmen, artists, writers—all sad and pale victims of the poison which we call immobility. They are weakened daily by nervous emotion, artificial heat, vitiated air, and over-excitation of the brain. You recognize them! You know that they *look well*—aside from their neuralgia, their dyspepsia, their biliousness, their bronchitis, and a thousand and one other chronic miseries which afflict them. They look well. So why continually speak of these infirmities which have entered their lives and which they are incapable of curing? After all, they look well. They write, they argue cases, they produce, they compose, they use the bow, the chisel, the pliers, and they still look well; yet, it is not so.

It is true that men from the country also look remarkably well, but the difference is that when peasants look well, they are not ill. Peasants have the advantage of air and movement, they breathe fresh air and they use the muscles which God has given them. In Paris to *look well* means to *suffer out of one's bed*. In reality, good health consists of standing firmly on one's own legs.

Toward the end of the last century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and several German associates had warned humanity of the decadence that was rampant during the Restoration. Then, starting in 1830, Col. Amoros returned gymnastics to a place of honor in the army and attempted to introduce it in civilian institutions. Unfortunately, this venture achieved only a partial success because it was limited to a pitifully meager number of Parisian establishments. The fact is, the plans of Amoros and his imitators lacked a great deal in

terms of suitability. They were as far from promoting rational and productive gymnastics as a blind clarinet player is from keeping in time in an orchestra.

The tree rebirth of gymnastics, or rather the creation of modern gymnastics, was reserved for a man who is already famous in Brussels and Paris and will soon be just as popular all over France and Europe. In order to judge this innovator and his system, it is necessary for one and all to see his works. It is for this reason that we find ourselves on the champs Elysées. Coming from the Rond Pont, we turn left onto the Avenue Montaigne, and hem we are in front of Mr. H. Triat's monument.

"Monument," is certainly the right word, though such a curious and utilitarian monument never saw its like in this world. It is a theater where each participant can be an actor. It is a unique pleasure palace—unique because elsewhere self-indulgence drains the energy, but here the pursuit of pleasure restores and fortifies. It is a shelter for the idler, an altar to hard work, the arena of robust youth, the well where downtrodden virility can drink in new strength. It is, in short, a gymnasium, but a gymnasium in the largest and most beautiful sense of that term.

It is a vast cathedral nave designed for us by Mr. Renard with all the taste and amplitude so characteristic of him. The "transept" is airy and spacious with three ranks of elegant observation balconies encircling the exercise floor. The ground floor is divided into two sections. The first has hardwood floors while the second is filled with a carpeting of sawdust a foot deep thus forming an immense and downy mattress.

What strikes one first of all is the profusion of ropes hanging in all directions. These ropes extend across the hall like a curious lace curtain and the spectator finds himself delighted and intrigued by this pulsing network. This maze of ropes is worth the fortune of a lifetime. The cordage hangs in the form of ladders and garlands as they stretch around the exercise floor and scallop across the gymnasium, ascending and descending in decorative festoons. You can see them from below as the rope bundles follow the bold curve of the vault and descend to the floor. These rough cords, however, dangle lazily at the slightest pressure, as when brushed by a mere child, thereby resembling birds lost in the void. Many other cables hang down for use by the acrobats, still others descend vertically for the "iron arm" (gymnast extends his body horizontally while gripping the vertical rope) and horizontally as barriers. Some of the ropes have shining leather rings attached to them and are used for the hanging exercises that Mr. Triat has developed to the supreme degree of perfection.

On the other side of this hempen tracery one sees from the entrance a masterpiece of carpentry in the form of a monumental wooden stairway. This is built to resemble a Gothic trefoil with all its usual decorative embellishments. If one were to place the steps of this stairway end to end, they would rise higher than the tallest spire atop the cathedral of Notre Dame. The portable parallel bars (invented by Mr. Triat) are at the foot of the stairway. By varying the position of these bars, one can perform over 150 different exercises.

Finally, in the middle of the floor stands a horse of immense proportions who daily witnesses the miracles of strength and agility which surround him. We will not speak of the poles, the horizontal

iron bars, nor the instruments which one would recognize from less magnificent gymnasiums. Because they beggar our descriptive power, we will likewise pass in silence over the many different devices of the greatest ingenuity which Mr. Triat has invented for those who are too weak to follow his regular regimen.

Such is the nave, but only in its purely material aspect. When eight o'clock sounds, however, and the innumerable gas jets flood the exercise floor with light, the portals of this temple of rejuvenation open to admit the throng of students. The observation galleries fill up and are quickly adorned with flowers, lace, and admiring female smiles. It is then that the great, immobile nave awakens with a start,

Suddenly, the silent palace takes voice, and the inanimate weights begin to move and breathe. The activity resembles at once a carnival and a battle as this bold and audacious army advances to capture health and strength! Adolescents, adults, and middle-aged men all wearing red tights and with bare chests tumble into the arena and commence their work on the ladders, the poles, and the ropes.

Onward! The pliant ash wood of the parallel bars glistens and bends, the polished poles squeak under the hands, the hanging rings swing back and forth while the skilled gymnast performs an aerial somersault. Athletes vault over the horse in a single bound while laughing wrestlers thrash about in the sawdust.

Onward! Onward! Here are happiness, life, and renewed youth! Here is healthful activity: stiffen your soft muscles, find your balance, touch your foot lightly on the springboards elastic surface, build up your chest, fill your lungs with air, strengthen yourself, work, live.

Behold the master, himself. Stop and look at him. Here is a man much like yourself, but why is his strength triple or quadruple that of yours? Why does his physique rival ancient statuary in muscularity and suppleness? Why does his heroic vigor shame our own decadence? Because he has learned from experience what he attempts to teach you. This peerless athlete, this modern day Hercules is the legitimate son of his own method. By working on himself, Mr. Triat has literally been able to strengthen his own muscles and harden his selfsame flesh.

But observe: where even the most agile hesitate, Triat advances. He launches himself in the air like a bounding tiger and seizes a rope and then rapidly mounts it up to the ceiling. Then he seems to swim in midair, but as if to equal these aerial antics, Triat alights onto one of the balcony railings and from there he vaults head first to the floor below. With a terrific clamor, his feet strike the parquet, and he rebounds by jumping over the horse, his torso at full meter above the animal's hindquarters.

But the sound of the whistle brings us back to our duties. The time for play is over, and the signal for the lessons to begin is given. While the busy students are choosing their exercise equipment, let us go down to the door and cast an eye on that well stocked arsenal of peaceful weapons. It is here that the visitor will find a veritable fortune in cast iron alone. Judge for yourself whether Mr. Triat should fear his competitors! There are dumbbells, rowing weights in all shapes and sizes, and iron bars with globes of carefully graduated size attached to the ends.

The curious visitor might then catch sight with a mixture of admiration and terror of the mass of cast iron called *Mr. Triat's*

weight. It is thus named because Mr. Triat is the only person in the world who has ever lifted it to arm's length overhead. Many who have seen the modern Hercules accomplish this prodigious feat cannot forget that their hearts pounded in their breasts as if they were witnessing the most moving scene of a heart-wrenching tragedy.

The normal lesson or the floor exercises are always led by Mr. Triat himself. The director's purpose is to exercise one by one and in a logical and therapeutic order all the muscles of the human body. This lesson elicits much admiration from men of art. In addition to being of superior utility, these exercises are beautiful and seductive as a performance. Fifty students arrange themselves in two rows, and at the sound of the master's voice, they bow to him. Triat, clad in an unusual though splendidly elegant costume, takes up his position in the middle of the arena. Indeed, he cuts a striking figure with his head carried high while in his right hand he waves a staff covered in silver filigree. His vibrant and sonorous voice fills the hall like a trumpet fanfare.

Each exercise leads to the next with fiery rapidity: large and small dumbbells, the gladiator's dance, running in long lines that double back on themselves like the coils of a serpent, the short bar, fighting with the bar, club swinging, and finally the heavy barbell. Every movement in this series is done with an energy which seems almost magical. Many of the participants are overcome by fatigue, but they do not even have the time to wipe the sweat which drenches them. A magnetic current seems to run from the teacher to each student. The power of the master separates them and causes them to pour out the last drop of energy. Every student hears a mysterious voice within



A SATIRICAL CARTOON FROM THE FRENCH MAGAZINE *LA VIE PARISIENNE* 1863 POKES FUN AT THE TWO DANDIES WHO HAVE COME TO SEE THE WOMEN TRAIN AT TRIAT'S GYM. TRIAT WAS A PIONEER IN WOMEN'S PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ENCOURAGED WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN VIGOROUS, STRENGTH-PRODUCING EXERCISES.

him that says, "Keep going! Keep going!" And, in fact, no one stops until the gymnasium assistants turn on the taps of cool water which soothe the eager, steaming bodies.

Without taking up a question that has been resolved a thousand times by experience, let us say that these ablutions with cool water after the workout are one of the most refined pleasures which it is possible to imagine. Not only is there no danger whatsoever to this behavior, there is, in fact, a decided advantage. After bathing, fatigue departs and one can continue with great heartiness.

Such is the establishment and such is Mr. Triat's gymnas-

tic system according to the testimony of a man who adds *experto crede Roberto* (“Believe Robert who has tried it.”)

This system combines all the experience of the past with all the science of the present. Triat’s plan is marvelously appropriate to the needs of our era where time is so precious. The fact is that in less than an hour Mr. Triat has concentrated all the work and all the pleasures in a series of logical and harmonious movements. He has combined all the challenges and results of the Greek palestra, the Roman circus, the Medieval jousts, of fencing, riding, hunting, tennis, diving, climbing, dancing, and every exercise which builds strength, suppleness, grace, energy, good humor, and health. Already Triat’s experience has accomplished just this with the most salutary results for thousands of young men and girls (for he also has a women’s class in his gymnasium). Many hundreds of weakened men and even aged grandfathers who believed themselves to be at death’s door have also benefitted from Triat’s guidance.

It would be difficult to count those who have been returned to vigor and productivity by frequenting Triat’s gymnasium. The list includes princes great personages, financiers, generals, administrators, magistrates, and illustrious writers who in informal groups have improved their physical and intellectual faculties. Witness the dumbbells, the barbells, and the rowing weights which one sees in the antechamber and gardens of certain mansions and even of certain palaces which we could name here.¹⁴

One example will suffice to prove our statements. The Maréchal de Saint-Arnaud was worn out and near death, but after he began training under Triat’s guidance, he recovered his strength. Eventually, he was strong enough to mount his horse once more, and he later went on to win the victory of Alma and to lead the French Army to the ramparts of Sebastopol.

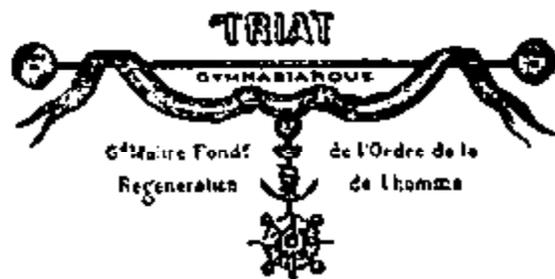
We are therefore not at all surprised to learn that an eminent organization comprised of the most important and enlightened people in the scientific and official world has dedicated itself to disseminating Triat’s ideas. They wish to elevate his gymnasium to a national institution and create similar establishments all over France.

Just like the illustrious adherents of modern gymnastics, we are convinced that the day will come when Triat’s system will operate in military barracks, in schools, in boarding houses, in towns and population centers. Then the strength and well-being of our soldiers and our young people will double, and our teachers and doctors will have found one of the most effective remedies to the physical and moral plagues of our generation.

It was the duty of this little work to remind parents of the antiquity and effectiveness of gymnastics. This is a lesson that has been forgotten in our time, so we wish to recommend the method of Mr. Triat which can attach the greatest happiness to our habits and our morals.

At some point, everyone can go and judge for himself with his own eyes. The lessons of the Triat Gymnasium are public and open to every passerby, and Mr. Triat himself is a devoted apostle to his mission. He regards the fallen state of our poor species much as an athlete would view a dwarf, but he is ever ready to lend a hand to whoever can assist him in regenerating nineteenth-century man.

[Part One of “Hippolyte Triat”]



1. Edmond Desbonnet, *Comment on Devient Athlète* 8th ed. (Paris: Librairie Athlétique, 1938), 5.
2. Dr. Waucquier, “Il faut simplifier pour perfectionner,” *La Culture Physique* 28(1 November 1924): 302.
3. Gilbert Andrieu, *L’homme et la Force* (Joinville-le-Pont: Éditions Actio, 1988), 107.
4. Edmond Desbonnet, “Les Origines de la Culture Physique,” *La Culture Physique* 31(September 1937): 262.
5. See Jan Todd, “From Milo to Milo,” *Iron Game History* 3(April 1995): 10.
6. Andrieu, *L’homme et la Force*, 107.
7. *Ibid*, 106.
8. *Ibid*, 107.
9. Roland Renson, *Le corps académique Stadion* XVII (1991), 1: 87.
10. Georges Dardenne, *Historique de la Culture Physique* (Ayeneux, Belgium: author, 1986), 21.
11. Desbonnet, *Comment On Devient Athlète*, 5.

12. Jules Allix was one of the most amazing eccentrics to emerge from nineteenth-century France. His early life gave few hints of his coming madness. In 1848, at the age of thirty he entered politics by being elected to local office as a Communist, and he was shortly thereafter mixed up in the insurrection of 1849. He was pursued by the police and was eventually banished for eight years. When he returned, his behavior was noticeably more peculiar.

He was confined to a lunatic asylum in 1869, but he was released after a short stay. Apparently, his eccentricities were of an endearing kind, and he remained popular in left-wing political circles. During the Paris Commune of 1871, he was appointed mayor of the eighth arrondissement and colonel of a regiment. When the advancing Versailles retook Paris, Allix was judged incompetent and confined to the asylum at Charenton.

In 1880 he was back at his old tricks when he displayed at the Triat Gymnasium a “perpetual motor. . . freely usable by all industries.” Allix might have remained another anonymous madman had the public not heard of another “invention,” his *sympathetic snails*. This was supposedly a long-distance communication machine which he claimed was better and cheaper than Mr. Morse’s device. All one needed was a wooden type case with one snail for each letter of the alphabet. This would be placed in Paris and a similar device in Peking (or some other remote location). When the sender touched the snail marked “E” in Paris, the corresponding snail in Peking would twitch; it only remained to mark down the ensuing twitches to read the message. Allix died convinced of his invention’s value. J. Balteau, M. Barroux, and M. Prevost (eds.) *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1936), 222-224.

13. Paul Féval suffered from a sickly childhood and an overprotective mother. He later broke away from his family’s influence and came to Paris where he found little success as a writer. At one point, he nearly starved to death. His first great success came with the publication of *The Mysteries of London*. This marked the first success in a long and prolific career as a novelist. Later, Féval became one of Hippolyte Triat’s greatest champions and he described the basics of Triat’s form of gymnastics in several of his works, most notably in his novel *Coeur et acier (Heart and Steel)* published in 1866. *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, 554. Also, Gilbert Andrieu, “La Gymnastique de Plancher,” *Stadion*, XI (1985), 1: 53.

14. **Desbonnets note:** Tuileries Palace where the Emperor Napoleon III took lessons in gymnastics from Triat.

The European Corner

William Pagel: Circus Strongman

David P. Webster

Herman Goerner's exploits have been well documented, but less well known is the debt of gratitude he owed a fellow German strongman who helped shape his career before Goerner came under the management of W. A. Pullum. Herman Goerner's sponsor for many of his South African appearances was the unassuming circus proprietor, William Pagel, who had himself been the star of a "strength act" for many years. In his heyday, Pagel had been an exceptional strongman and it was only when his own powers were diminishing that he looked for a replacement. At the suggestion of Tromp Van Diggelen, Pagel contacted Herman Goerner and the rest is iron game history.

Pagel was born to North German parents in February 1878. Christened Frederick Wilhelm August Pagel, he was the second of eight children. While still a lad he left his homeland to become a sailor and part way through one voyage he bid farewell to his ship mates and left seafaring forever. He settled in Australia and although those were tough times he was well able to take care of himself, always being healthy and strong. At age nineteen he was a solid 230 pounds and he got himself a job in a licensed restaurant where he became indispensable to the owner by peeling potatoes, washing dishes and, most important of all, being a most effective bouncer and dealing quietly with any drunken or unruly customers. The perquisites of the job included four good meals daily and that meant a lot to Pagel who, when in hard training, could devour two pounds of bacon and twenty eggs in a day.

He was beautifully built at 6'1", and when he had fully matured he tipped the scales at between 240 and 280 pounds. He possessed huge wrists, much thicker even than the heavy-boned Goerner. When the opportunity occurred, around 1902, Wilhelm joined the Worth Brothers Circus in Australia as a strongman. Finally, after two years of hard work to get firmly established in Australian show business, Pagel bought a tent holding two hundred people. Then, in February of 1905 he sailed to Durban, South Africa, where he set up at agricultural shows in the most southerly part of the African continent. He personally topped the bill as a strongman and he became very much admired not only in this capacity but also as an animal trainer, specializing in presenting a thrilling lion-taming act.

Often he would do ten or more shows a day, each time carrying a 1,050 pound horse up two vertical eighteen-foot ladders placed side by side. He also resisted the pull of four horses, two on each arm. At one time while working for the Fitzgerald Circus, he did this tug o' war stunt using two fairly large elephants. The most thrilling part of his presentation was when he wrestled with an unmuzzled lion. His huge forearms carried hideous deep scars and one of his arms was badly mangled by a lion which mauled him and wouldn't let go until he punched it with his free hand.

In his lion-taming role he never carried a whip or a stick,

but would direct his beast with an ordinary lead pencil, which at the end of his act he would present to a delighted child in the audience. Before the advent of Goerner, Pagel often included other strongmen in his circus: Limudkin the Finn during World War I, and Jan Haven-ga, a Transvaaler he discovered doing extraordinary feats in a field.

The best weightlifting feat we can find credited to Wilhelm (or William as he became known) Pagel is a bent press of just over the hundred pounds. Perhaps if Pagel had been less modest and more publicity conscious we would know much more about this extraordinary German Kraftmann.

Each night he did a right hand bent press with a genuine 250 pounds. F. A. Hornibrook, a knowledgeable athlete who knew Pagel well described him as a singularly modest performer who would not exaggerate weights lifted.

A man of great courage, Pagel once saved "Captain" Rudolph Miller from a mauling but picked up injuries himself. In fact was animal-infected wounds he incurred during a tour of Netherland Indies which eventually led to his retirement in 1933.

Pagel married a small woman thirteen years older than himself. Mary Dingdale was born in 1865 in Leeds, Yorkshire, England, and she became very well known and popular in the circus world because of her personality and spirit. Said to be vulgar but vital, she had been married before and had some money which she gave to Pagel to help him start his circus. Stories of her abounded whenever international performers met and one of the favorites was an incident when they appeared at Gatooma, a Rhodesian mining town. The tough audience there were badly behaved during the first part of the program and then cat-called one of the acts.

Little Madam Pagel flew out of her box office and into the center of the ring and bawled so all could hear her clearly, "If you don't stop your bloody row I'll turn the bloody lions loose." The audience took her to their hearts and gave her a great reception and accorded the same treatment to all the acts which followed.

Madam Pagel's favorite pet, a young black-maned lion, would be driven around by her as she traveled to various pubs publicizing the show. She fed the animal with chocolates as it sat on the front passenger seat of her car and it waited patiently while she delivered posters and downed a few Guinness's at their various stops. The Pagels were quite a contrasting but compatible pair. Mrs. Pagel died in December 1939 at the age of seventy-four.

Pagel, scarred and battered, was still performing with lions at seventy years of age. Suffering a cerebral hemorrhage, "the Old Lion," as he was called died peacefully in his sleep at 5:30 PM on 13 October 1948 at Knysna, Cape Province and, as he would have wished, the show went on as usual.

Profile—Height: 5'11.25"; Weight: 238 lbs. (later 332 lbs.); Chest expanded: 48"; Neck: 17"; Biceps: 18"; Calf: 18"; Thigh: 27".

TOM MINICHELLO

OASIS IN MANHATTAN

EXCERPTS FROM AN ACCOUNT OF THE “GOLDEN YEARS” OF BODYBUILDING

I've been bodybuilding since 1945—in the gym business since 1957. Living and growing up in New York City, I was able to see and meet some of the top bodybuilders of the Forties and Fifties.

When I opened my own gym in the heart of Manhattan, I not only met most of the bodybuilders in the Northeast, but also, worldwide. There were two reasons for this—one was the location of my club, which was in the Times Square section of Manhattan. Most anyone visiting New York (no matter what their final destination was) would certainly see the Times Square area. Every New Year's Eve, we saw that ball coming down—my gym was diagonally across the street. The other reason was that for many years Joe Weider was kind enough to publicize my club in his magazine. We even had our own “gossip” column in his *Muscle Builder* publication. This exposure gave my gym worldwide attention and Mid-City thus became a “port of call” for all traveling bodybuilders.

I've recently completed a manuscript which is really my autobiography of the years in the gym business. Most of my story is of a personal nature and isn't really in the realm of the physical culture world. However, I thought that the readers of *Iron Game History* would find some of my experiences interesting.

In my early teens, I was constantly active with sports—or really, I should say, ball playing. But even though I was actively involved with sports, I remained extremely thin. All my relatives would comment about this, but my Aunt Jennie in particular would ask my mother, “Margaret, Tommy-boy is so thin; doesn't he eat?” My mother knew I ate well and didn't worry about my health. She felt in time the weight would come, but I was very conscious of my thinness. I spotted a magazine on the newsstand and the cover had a photo of a muscle man. Inside I found an advertisement on “gaining muscular weight.” As soon as I got the money, I went back to purchase the magazine. It was called *Physical Culture* and it cost fifteen cents.

I read the article and it piqued my interest, but it wasn't until I bought a copy of *Strength & Health* magazine, published in York, Pennsylvania, by Bob Hoffman, that I became serious about this new sport. The photograph on the back cover is what convinced me. It was of John C. Grimek, the top bodybuilder of the day. Grimek was curling a barbell and his two biceps looked like balloons. I envisioned myself with such arms.

I got a job delivering groceries after school and as soon as I saved enough money, I sent for my first set of barbells from the Good Barbell Company out of Reading, Pennsylvania. I think I paid twelve dollars for a 175-pound set. From that point on, an entirely different world opened to me. In little more than two years of training, my bodyweight went from 112 to 158 pounds. In addition to the weight gain, I was stronger, faster and had more endurance

than ever before. In school I was like a monkey. I was able to go up and down the ropes in an “L” position. My nickname had changed from “Skinny Guinea” to “Muscles Tom.”

It was the dream of all young bodybuilders to have their own gym. Training and making money at it. . . how could anything be better than that? Or so I thought. After I'd been training a little more than a year, I typed up cards that read:

TOM'S GYM
91-38 113th Street, Richmond Hill
Queen, New York
Phone: VI 7-9138

During the winter, I trained in my basement at 91-38 113th Street. In the warmer weather, we moved all the equipment to the garage. My friends Bob Henckel and Lou Prevete trained with me.

I soon learned there were very famous gyms in Manhattan. One summer day, Bob, Lou, and I took the subway into the city. The first gym we visited was on 42nd Street, just off Eighth Avenue. Ironically, seventeen years later, I would have my own gym just one hundred feet away. This gym, however, was called “George Bothner's Gym” and was located in a second floor loft, right over one of the many automats that were then still in existence.

That flight of stairs led us into a wonderland of athletes. The room was amaze of physical activity. We were amazed and fascinated, watching jugglers performing. Grunts and groans were coming from the one corner where professional wrestlers were practicing holds on their mat. Several men were using the high bar, rings and horizontal bar. Others were using the barbells for their Olympic lifting. Unfortunately, this great arena of athletes would disappear in a few more years. Vaudeville was on its last legs and Bothner would soon be forced to close.

Our next stop was at “Sig Klein's Physical Culture Studio,” then the most famous bodybuilding gym of the day. It was located at 717 Seventh Avenue at 48th Street, also in Manhattan. On our walk over to Sig's we passed the then famous Paramount Theater, where we had watched the crooner, Frank Sinatra, perform in person a number of times. As we approached Sig's building, we saw that he hid a display of his strongman and physique pictures in glass showcases mounted on the front of the building.

Sig operated his gym for *forty-eight* years. Although Sig is long gone, the building that housed his famous gym still stands today. That loft is empty now but whenever I pass I automatically look up to the third floor window, smile, and nod to Sig.

As we approached the third floor, we could hear the sounds of heavy equipment being moved and smell the odor of sweating bodies. As we stepped onto the carpet in the gym, we heard this loud



PROMOTER TOM MINICHELLO (CENTER) POSES FOR THE CAMERA WITH THREE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MEN IN BODYBUILDING—LOU FERRIGNO, BEN WEIDER, AND ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER— FOLLOWING ONE OF MINICHELLO'S SUCCESSFUL NEW YORK SHOWS.

shout, “Got out a hair! Go, go, go!” It scared the shit out of the three of us. We raced down the stairs and when we reached the sidewalk, we tried to figure out why he had chased us away so fast,

I knew it was Sig himself. I had gotten a look at him and recognized him from his photographs. He wore black pants and a tee shirt with the sleeves rolled up tight on his deltoids. Although he was only 5’4”, this German-born athlete looked like a giant to us. His physique was outstanding. We figured that since his gym was in the Tunes Square area, a lot of kids (like us) were probably always going to see his gym. Some years later when I operated my own club, I found out just how accurate we were. I also learned that we were in good company. Many other young physical enthusiasts had followed in our footsteps as they ran down those stairs—among them was Marvin Eder, who was to become the “Best Built Youth” and a legendary strongman during the 1950s.

Sig’s gym was opposite the famous Latin Quarter, and many stars trained with him, including Zero Mostel and Montgomery Clift. Whenever Steve Reeves was in Manhattan he’d be at Sig’s. In 1930, Sig had made an important discovery when a young man walked in who was to eventually influence the lives of thousands of men, worldwide. That young man was John C. Grimek, the same gentleman whose photo I had seen in *Strength & Health* magazine, a man who would soon inspire thousands of others to start weight training.

It was not only that Grimek was a master bodybuilder. More than that, he was also proficient in weightlifting, swimming,

handbalancing and tumbling. Nor did his talents stop there. He was also skilled in the art of muscle control and he was decades ahead of his time in the art of physique posing. And talk about endurance! Years later, Grimek and I were at a surprise retirement party for our friend, Ed Jubinville. Events started at around eight that night. There was continuous dancing. Grimek only stopped to have a drink and chow down a little; then it was back to the dance floor. His beautiful wife, Angela, couldn’t keep up with him, so he had a number of partners. At around twelve that night, I heard two ladies at the next table comment, “Have you been watching this man dancing all night? He must be about sixty-five. I bet he’s got a motor up his ass.” It just so happened that Grimek was close to eighty at that party. He danced ‘til the end of the party, which was about one-thirty in the morning.

I was lucky enough to see Grimek give a posing exhibition at Manhattan’s Carnegie Hall in 1949. Before I saw that exhibition, I thought it was unusual to have this type of show at Carnegie Hall, which is noted for musical entertainment. That night, however, as I watched Grimek, I understood why he belonged on that stage. His posing was music. As he moved from position to position, each of his muscles had remarkable shape. The result *was* music—not for the ear, but music for the eyes.

When years later I finally did get to see Sig’s studio, I was impressed. He had a small gym area, but it was very complete and contained all the equipment that was really necessary. All the barbells were of the globe-type and had been chromed. On the wall were

photographs of all the old strongmen. And on a shelf that went around most of the gym, Sig had a marvelous stein collection, which was later featured on the center page of the *New York Daily News* Sunday magazine.

I also noticed how close the members were and their attitudes toward one another. I decided then that if I should be lucky enough one day to have a gym of my own, this is what I wanted. Later, Sig and I became good friends. We had many dinners together and it was fascinating to hear him tell his tales of the oldtime strongmen and the feats he had performed.

Sig and I also agreed on the philosophy of weight training: bodybuilding isn't just for appearance; it's for health and well being. I believe it's the best way to attain and preserve your health, despite your age. It isn't just that you'll live longer. That's not up to us. Bodybuilding improves the quality of your life. Through my years of training and working with people, I've seen some remarkable results in weight loss, weight gain, faster and more complete rehabilitation from illness and surgery, and from all this, I've seen these people develop new, stronger, more confident personalities.

By 1957, I was working as an IBM proof operator for the Chemical Bank of New York and training at the American Health Studios at 833 Sixth Avenue, near 32nd Street in Manhattan. (This site, just five years later, would be my first gym location.) Then one day I spotted an ad in the *New York Times*. The Vic Tanny Gym System was coming to New York.

I knew that in California, Vic had been very successful with his gyms. By this time (1957), his West Coast business had thirty-five operating clubs. (Vic's brother, Armand, was a well known figure in the physique world, having won many bodybuilding titles and written articles for some of the muscle magazines.) According to the *Times* ad, Vic wanted to expand his operation to the East Coast. He had picked Plainview, Long Island as his first East Coast location. The Plainview club would turn out to be a fantastic success. I decided to answer the ad and see what it was all about.

I was interviewed by Harry Schwartz, their number one salesman. He was also their top administrator and they picked him to head their East coast operation here in New York. Harry was also a well known bodybuilder. He had won several titles in California, but like so many of the top bodybuilders of that day, he was from the East Coast. To be specific, the Bronx New York. Harry had gone west to get into the movies. A few bit parts had come his way, but not enough to eat on. To make a buck he had taken a job at one of the local Vic Tanny gyms while waiting for that one special movie role that would catapult him into stardom. However, Harry used his acting ability on his sales pitch to perspective members coming into the gym. He was so good at sales that he soon worked his way up from salesman to manager, supervisor, and district manager. Now he was given his "starring role"—to make Vic Tanny successful on the East Coast. And this he did.. . like no one else could have done.

After talking with him, I soon decided to leave the banking business, which I found very boring, and start a new career in the gym business. This was 1957. I was lucky in those early days of the Tanny gyms. Schwartz himself worked with me on sales and management. I couldn't have had a better teacher. Years later, when I had my own club and many times when business was hurting, I would remember ways Harry had taught me about getting that gross up.

After working in the Tanny chain for four years, I had an opportunity to work at a private bodybuilding gym—Abe Goldberg's Empire Health Studio. Abe was a fun guy to be with. I first heard of Abe Goldberg just after I started weight training. That was in the spring of 1945, just before the war ended. He was one of the best bodybuilders of the late-Thirties, the Forties, and the early Fifties. He made the cover of muscle magazines a number of times and had won several big titles. The highest was the "Mr. North America." His gym was located (as most were in those days) in a second-floor loft. It was on Clinton Street, just off Delaney in Manhattan. You could find all of the top bodybuilders of that period training at Abe's gym.

At that time I was living in Ozone Park, Queens. It was in the section known as City-Line, just a few blocks from Brooklyn. One summer I commuted by subway to train at Abe's gym in Manhattan. I saw the top bodybuilders of the day, men like the great Englishman—Reg Park, Marvin Eder, Artie Zeller, Bruce Randall, Davie Sheppard, and LeRoy Colbert. The gyms then had no air conditioning; some didn't even have fans. But they had lots of barbells and dumbbells various benches and some pulley machines. They had none of the specialized selectorized machines we have today.

Going into Manhattan was just too much for me. I was still in high school and it didn't leave me with time for anything else. So I started training at Dan Lurie's gym. This was on Pitkin and Rockaway Avenues in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, only minutes away from Ozone Park. The area looked much like that around Clinton Street in Manhattan where Goldberg had his gym. Pushcarts lined the streets of Brownsville, as they did in the Clinton neighborhood, and the streets were always filled with shoppers. Like Goldberg's, Lurie's Gym was in a second-floor loft. As I entered the hallway I could hear the radio blasting from the second floor. It was a strong voice, singing opera.

The door to the gym was open. I had thought the singing was from the radio, but it was Dan, himself, singing opera and he really sounded great. As soon as he saw me, he stopped singing and said, "What can I do for you, kid?" This wasn't the first time I'd met Dan. Some three years earlier, friends of mine from Middle Village, Queens, had rented out a store for a clubhouse and decided to outfit part of it for weight training. I read that a strongman, Dan Lurie, was selling weights and so six of us took the train from Metropolitan Avenue to Rockaway Avenue in Brooklyn. At that time, Dan was selling weights from his home and Dan took us down to his basement where the weights were stored.

I'll never forget that sight. The area was a maze of columns of plates stacked from the floor to about six feet high; there was just enough room to walk. We talked to Dan for a while, bought a set, and we were on our way. Dan looked very impressive and his smile seemed to relax you. He handled the plates like pieces of paper. We talked about him on our way home. What a sight that was, six kids, thirteen and fourteen years old, carrying weights on the subway from Brooklyn to Queens. What the hell, we were young and could do anything.

Years later, when I told him I wanted to train at his gym, he invited me into his "cage" and pointed to a chair next to his desk. From his office you could see the entire gym floor. No one could come in without passing Dan's view, so if a member was due with his payment Dan was there to greet him. As I looked into the gym

area, I spotted two huge guys. They both looked like they'd been training forever. Later I learned that one of them was Walter Bookbinder, a regular at Dan's. The other was a transient, Bob McCune, who was one of the first to bench press four hundred pounds. Walter was also amazingly strong. I saw him one-arm curl a hundred pound dumbbell. He and McCune both became professional wrestlers. McCune was known as "Lord Carlton," and Walter as "Ray Thunder."

Dan was explaining the monthly dues to me when a member came in and headed for the locker room. Dan called out to the member and said, "Where is the money you owe me for that phone call you made?" The member looked puzzled, and he said, "What phone call?" "You know, the one you made about a month ago," Dan responded. "You asked to borrow a nickel from me to call your house. You were in the gym and didn't want to go in your locker. You never paid me back." The member reached into his pocket, came into Dan's cage, put a nickel on the desk, looked at Dan and said, "Thanks." I must have had a funny look on my face. Dan looked at me as he put the nickel in his pocket and said to me, "Look, kid, remember this always. It'll help you later in life—*Business is Business!*"

I enjoyed training at Dan's. Everyone had great workouts. We had weights, benches, a lat machine, and squat racks. That was it. That's all we had, and that's all we needed. The atmosphere in Lurie's was great for training. Almost any gym in the mid-to-late-Forties was like that I'm sure the reason for that was that we were sincerely interested in strength and health and had a personal commitment to attain and maintain that goal.

During that period, Lurie promoted a "Mr. Brooklyn" contest at the Loew's Pitkin. This was the second competition that I had seen. The first was at the RKO Madison in Ridgewood, where I saw an unbelievable teenager win that night—Marvin Eder. He was totally fantastic. To me, I believe that bodybuilding's greatest loss was when Marvin stopped competing at an early age. Those who were fortunate enough to see Marvin in person share my undimmed admiration for his great strength and phenomenal physique.

Dan had many other top bodybuilders and wrestlers training at his gym—such as Buddy Gilbert, Thomas Manfred, and Tommy Fitzsimmons. And, of course, Dan himself was a physique star and strongman. I'd catch him on some of his workouts, pressing heavy dumbbells. One of his favorite movements was jumping on the dip bars, pushing out twenty reps, then nineteen, eighteen, seventeen, all the way to one rep. I thought that those potato knishes, franks, and Cokes he ate and drank were potent nutrition.

In late 1962, I opened my own gym, and in 1963, I incorporated The Mid-City Health Club during a time when professional wrestling was being promoted all over the New York Metropolitan area. As it happened, many of the wrestlers were close to our gym in Manhattan, and just about every day, there would be a number of them at the gym.

At that time Bruno Sammartino was one of the top wrestlers in the country, and at a time when wrestling was more believable than today's slap-punch-and-jump comedy. Bruno was truly one of the strongest men in the world, and he certainly looked it, with his trapezius so thick between his shoulders and neck. He was a 260-pound locomotive engine coming out at his opponent; in May of that year, Bruno defeated Buddy Rogers and became the World Champion.

For all the years that he held the title, Bruno did it with great dignity. Over the years, we had many dinners together, after which he would enjoy a cigar. Whenever he did this (after a few years he totally stopped the cigar smoking), he would make sure that there were no teen-agers around to see. For this reason, we always got in the corner, and he had his back to the view of everyone. He knew he had a responsibility that went with his title and he handled it admirably.

I would always spot Bruno in his bench pressing; then I started benching with him. He was patient and very encouraging with me. We both always did ten sets, starting light, going to heavy, and then dropping down to light again. But the last two sets, we went to maximum repetitions. He was responsible for me doing my best bench press of 360 pounds at a 165-pound bodyweight. He pushed me hard, and always had encouraging words. One day we had a contest between the two of us. It was for the most repetitions. I used 220 pounds and was able to get out twenty-four reps. Now it was his turn. Bruno would use 330 pounds. All the members gathered around to watch our little exhibition. After twenty-five reps, everybody started counting aloud, and we counted up to *thirty-eight* repetitions. And this he did at a time when he was traveling and wrestling every night. And, folks, this was done with *no drugs*. Obviously great genetics. And I can tell you he consumed the very best of meals. He never took any supplements. The only addition to his meals was an occasional protein drink that Paul "Zazu" would make for him at the gym. Sammartino stands as one of the world's greatest natural strongmen.

In 1963, when Tony Marino first came to train at my gym, I knew I had seen him before—where, I didn't know. He was a professional wrestler and came to the gym a lot with his friend, Sammartino. He was also very powerful, benching close to 500 pounds. He had beefed up so his body could take the punishment of his trade. However, you could see the symmetrical appearance that his body had. I knew he had done a lot of bodybuilding.

Physique photographer Doug White made a weekly visit to my gym in those days. He came to see who was at the gym and also to let me look through his photo collection. From time to time I'd buy an 8 x 10 from Doug to put up on our reception room wall. Years later I had a great collection of physique photos. Some I took myself, some I purchased, and many were given to me.

In going through Doug's collection one afternoon, I came upon some photos taken at an AAU Mr. America competition. There was Tony Marino. He competed that year. Looking at the line-up, he was fantastic. Of course, it's not fair to judge only from photographs. However, Tony appeared to be the outstanding competitor. This I concluded from over a dozen photos of the competition. Doug said that Tony had come in second place and also won two of the subdivision awards, Best Chest and Best Legs. In those years, trophies were awarded for the best body parts, and overall most muscular.

I hadn't recognized Tony because he now was Tony Marino, the beefed-up wrestler. When he competed as a bodybuilder, it was as Tony Silipini. On his next visit to the gym, I told him that I had seen the photos of the America competition he had entered. It seemed that he was reluctant to talk about it. But I pushed him to and asked him why he stopped competing in bodybuilding and turned to wrestling. Tony by then had been training at my gym for over a year

and we had become friendly. He told me:

"Tommy, after the judging for the America, most of the competitors came over to me and congratulated me, saying I had the title won. Then second place was announced and they called my name. Yes, I was disappointed, but that's the way the judges saw it—or so I thought. Tommy, later I found out that the winner's manager had made a very large purchase of York equipment a month before the competition, and this was the deciding factor in the America. Politics, what else?"

When Tony competed it was still at the time that the York organization had total control over the AAU Mr. America. I know a number of times that the winner was questionable, and one time in particular that it was obviously outrageous. I would have been ashamed to have been on the judging panel when Vern Weaver was picked over Harold Poole. After the death of Bob Hoffman, those at the York organization lost interest in the America competition, and for that matter, it appeared that interest was gone for promoting bodybuilding any further. I can't give an explanation for this, except that those left in power after Hoffman died were totally satisfied with what they had and just didn't seem to pursue it any further. There are people that I'm sure know more of these answers than I do.

During my years in the game, I often judged AAU competitions, and I judged the America contest for several years. There was no control from York, and the winner was picked by the national AAU judges. The AAU committee had a number of very loyal people working for them—Dave Mayor, Pete Miller, Bob Crist, Cliff Sawyer, Jack O'Blenes and his wife, to name a few. I also judged or promoted competitions for Joe and Ben Weider. For the record, I must say that in all those years never did either Joe or Ben try to influence any of the judges. I remember one time that Joe expressed his opinion to me on a particular decision, but this was after the competitions were completely over.

The *only* incident I saw occurred during the 1966 Mr. Olympia contest, at the famous Brooklyn Academy of Music. This was the second Olympia competition. Larry Scott had won the first Mr. Olympia the year before, in 1965, and he was outstanding. He received, I recall, a unanimous decision. In 1966, things were some what different. That night Harold Poole was at his very best. Standing next to a relaxed Scott, Poole's muscle separation was unbelievable, all with the right symmetry. The judges voted a tie, four for Scott and four for Poole. It was up to the head judge to break the tie. The tie-breaking vote went to Larry Scott and for the second year he was awarded one thousand dollars and the Olympia crown. Backstage I was with Ed Jubinville, Kimon Voyages, and Harold Poole. Poole, was taking his defeat like a good sport until the head judge came over and grabbed his hand, telling him how great he looked. Harold looked a bit puzzled and said to him, "If I looked so good to you, why didn't I win?"

I was stunned when I heard the head judge say, "I contracted with Scott a few months ago to take him on a tour of exhibitions in Europe, and I've got to take a winner with me."

Poole looked at me. I looked at both Jubinville and Voyages and again at Harold. I didn't know if he was going to cry or punch this guy out. I felt horrible, especially after his Mr. America loss in the AAU some years back. To my surprise and relief, Harold

controlled himself. He looked at me and said, "Tommy, I've got to get the hell out of here." After the competition, I went over to Ben Weider and told him what had been said. Ben was genuinely disturbed. I told him I would never use this person for any competitions of mine.

Harold Poole was also a great athlete, good at football and sprinting, and he had competed successfully in AAU-sponsored Greco-Roman wrestling. Up to the late Sixties, he was an outstanding natural bodybuilder. He trained at my gym for over fifteen years and I never saw anyone train with more intensity, although Rickey Wayne was a close second.

While training at my gym, Poole became friendly with pro wrestlers Bruno Sammartino and Tony Marino, and he asked them if they would help him break into wrestling. Both Sammartino and Martin liked Poole and agreed to help him, but they told him, "Just because you have a great looking physique doesn't mean you got it made. You gotta be tough on the inside and able to take it. It's not easy." They agreed to try Poole out in a "dark match" to see if he had the guts to make it as a pro wrestler. (A "dark match" takes place in the ring with no spectators.) Bruno came into the gym a couple of days after the dark match and I said, "Well, tell me, how did it go? Was Poole okay?" Bruno replied, "Tommy, let me tell you, Marino and I threw him around like a wet rag. He took a lot from us. His elbows and knees bleeding, he dragged himself up on the ropes and looked at us and said, 'more I'll go again more.' There was no doubt. Poole has what it takes to be a pro wrestler and to be accepted by the veteran pros."

What Poole didn't have was *patience*. He started wrestling under the name of Prince Poole. Unfortunately, at this time in pro wrestling, only a very few were doing well financially (like Sammartino). Things weren't going fast enough for Harold. So after a few months, he packed in his short career as "Prince Poole," professional wrestler.

There were many pitfalls in pro wrestling, and not all of them from one's opponent. Juan Rivera was from the Bronx, New York, and his dream was to be a professional wrestler. Juan was five foot eight and weighed 225 pounds. He trained at my gym a short time before he had the fortune to meet and become good friends with Kenny Ackels (Cowboy Ken). Ackels was respected by all the promoters and he himself was one of the better "technicians" in his craft—having been in the business for over twenty-five years.

Within a year, Juan was getting some matches in outlying areas and picking up valuable experience. An offer to wrestle in a number of Mexican cities came to Rivera, and he was very excited to be on the international scene. But all his dreams came to a tragic end. He played his part as the "bad guy" only too well. After he defeated the local hero, as he came out of the ring, Juan was fatally stabbed by a spectator who was out of control with rage over his hero's defeat.

In early 1963, I was contacted by Bud Parker, then the editor of the Weider magazines, who asked if I would be available to judge the physique competitions of the IFBB. I thought this would be a good move for me to get publicity for my club. It was. I agreed to do judging in the New York metropolitan area for the IFBB. Bud Parker was very kind to me. Whenever possible, he would mention

my club in the pages of *Muscle Power* and *Mr. America* magazines. After I judged a few shows, Joe Weider told me he would place free ads for my club in the magazines. All this magazine exposure was good for the club. Every month for the next several years I would send in information about some of our members and about stars that came in to visit. Joe always told me if I wanted anything in his magazine, to just let him know. He was always good to me.

Joe was also kind enough to print an announcement of our move to 42nd Street in *Muscle Power* magazine, and we kept getting plugs on TV from the pro wrestlers. Bruno Sammartino was instrumental in starting the ball rolling and he influenced others to do the same. Years later, Hulk Hogan just about every Saturday morning on local TV, would mention our club somewhere in his attack against the villains he would be facing in upcoming matches. He really did a job for us. So when Bud Parker appointed me as the Director in the New York Metropolitan area for the IFBB, we were getting our roots into Manhattan.

My good friend from Holyoke, Massachusetts, Ed Jubinville, was the IFBB director for the New England area. Ed would have two or three competitions a year. He held them all in Mountain Park, a popular amusement park at the foot of Mt. Tom. There would always be two or three carloads from our club to compete there, and two or three from Julie Levine's famous R & J Club in Brooklyn. For years, there was a very friendly competition between Julie's club and mine.

Up to that time, Bud Parker produced all the big competitions for Joe and Ben Weider and their IFBB. Early in the year, it was Mr. Eastern America, then the first Saturday after Labor Day, Bud would run the Mr. Universe and the Mr. Olympia competitions.

The Weider offices were in Union City, New Jersey while Bud Parker lived in the Village in New York City. Since the Port of Authority was only a block from our gym, Bud would many times come over and talk with me, get some current news of the members, and print it in the next issue of *Muscle Power*. But Bud didn't like working for Joe. He told me that one time when one of the shows lost money, Joe made him wallpaper the bathroom in their office the next week. I thought it was very funny, but Bud didn't share my view. He was the editor of two magazines, he said, not a wallpaper hanger. He said that this was Joe's way of punishing him for not making money at the show. There were many incidents like this and it was getting to Bud. He soon left Joe, but was always totally loyal to him and gave him one hundred percent of his ability.

This left a question of who would be producing the shows in the New York area. I soon received a phone call from Ben Weider in Montreal, his home and headquarters for his business (the distribution of the Weider products in Canada and worldwide), and the seat of the IFBB. Ben wanted me to take over where Bud Parker left off. He asked me to produce all the competitions under the sanction of the IFBB. He said the pages of *Muscle Power* and *Mr. America* magazines would always be open to me for whatever I wanted in them. Ben said it would be more exposure for my club. He said he would be in Manhattan the following week and we could talk more about it then. I told all this to a friend of mine from Westchester, New York, Peter Vita. Peter thought it was a great move, and he was willing to produce the competitions with me, which was great. Running the gym and doing shows was just too much for

any one person, especially here in Manhattan. There were so many different problems in producing big shows, and having the various unions on top of you all the time was one of them. I will never forget one time, when we did our first show at the Felt Forum at Madison Square Garden and I was taking the trophies out of the boxes and placing them on the sides of the stage. I was told by one of the union men that I couldn't do that: it had to be done by union men. So we hired two men to do this job. The fee—eight hundred dollars!

Ben and I finally met for lunch. He had called me and I had agreed to meet him at his hotel, the Plaza. Ben certainly lived the good life, the best of everything. That day he told me of the struggle he had to get where he was. He said Joe knew how to handle the bodybuilders, but that he, Ben, took care of the business. Yet for all the years I knew them, the brothers seemed to have a great working relationship. I'm sure this was one of the reasons for their success. I was soon to learn about Ben's passion for the history of Napoleon Bonaparte. Ben had become a collector of Napoleonic memorabilia. He told me he had just purchased a hat that was once owned by Napoleon and he seemed thrilled just talking about it. Years later, Ben co-authored a book, the *Death of Napoleon*, which was eventually purchased for the movie rights by Jack Nicholson. In any case, I told Ben I would agree to produce the IFBB shows in New York. He was pleased, and replied, "Tom, I'm going to give you my private number in my office at home. If ever I'm not at work, you can reach me there. And if ever you have a problem, call me."

Before we produced the big competitions, Peter and I put on some shows in a smaller way. We had run a show in a union hall, then at the County Center. This was in Westchester County, New York. And finally, we ran a competition at the New York Coliseum. We had produced successful shows, and we planned for the big ones. The next four competitions were held at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. This location and theater had proved to be the best for bodybuilding. There was a lot of space backstage which was needed for the competitors to warm up, and also for the entertainers we had for the night-time show. The Academy was old, but very beautiful, and there wasn't a bad seat in the house.

I had two of the top bodybuilders of that time training at the club, Harold Poole and Freddy Ortiz. They had both been with me since our beginning on Sixth Avenue. There were many articles on both of them in all the magazines and our club was almost always mentioned. When we produced our show in the fall, it was always either Mr. World or Mr. Universe, along with the American championships and Mr. Olympia. The World and Universe competitions drew contestants from all over the world. Jose Brisco from Buenos Aires, Argentina, had competed two years in a row. In his second competition, he won the Mr. World title and he and his wife still operate one of the largest health spas in that country. We still communicate with one another. Another friendship I've kept over these many years and that I value, is with one of the truly greats in bodybuilding—Reg Park. I had seen Reg training years ago at Abe Goldberg's gym but didn't become friends with him until he was in Manhattan and trained at my club. He had won top honors in the physique world and also made a number of Hercules-type movies. How good it would be if all athletes could get along the same way their athletes do.

[Part One of "Oasis in Manhattan."]

The Roark Report

Measuring the Arm of Manfred Hoerberl

Joe Roark

Generation by generation, the iron game is degenerating. Our sport is being populated by some whose motives do not include health, or fitness, or any lifelong search for well-being. There is among us an element whose participation only lessens the goals of old—those people whose influence can be likened to singing along with the radio as they drive along. The passengers in the car can discern that the song is lessened, weakened by their accompaniment, not enhanced. We now have many out-of-tune wannabees flexing all over America.

But whereas when we sing along with the car radio we know in our reality that were the radio suddenly switched off the oddity of our voices would be immediately noticed, some wannabees are now driving, some riding as passengers, and the voice of the critic is nowhere in the car. The destination is uncertain even unnecessary, to these nomads for muscle, whose sole goal, not soul goal, is to become big, to reach the big-time, land a contract, pose hem and there and who somehow extrapolate that the subculture of muscle is noticed outside the bounds of spandex and baggy britches, when actually those uninvolved in our activities immediately file all our achievements in the file marked “Steroids.” It is only we who equate bulkier traps with deserving more trappings.

The nomads are now mad, very angry, claiming that the current champs on ‘roids would be the champs anyway—the level of genetics is simply amplified. There is no proof or precedent or probable trial for such a acclaim—but it soothes the heart of the pumper, who can now return to singing along with the radio on his merry way to Justbecauseville. Besides, the average non-ironhead doesn’t understand. Right? And all the passengers say yea.

At the least (a word repelling to pumpers) we can, and should, maintain some accurate measurements. Poundages lifted and girths measured should be strictly recorded; on the other hand, lifts not weighed—especially if near or beyond record lifts—should not only be ignored, they should not be reported in our mainstream publications. Who can ever hope to equal Sri Chinmoy’s claimed one-arm lift of seven thousand pounds? We should not even be aware that he claimed such a lift. And, in case you were not aware that such a lift was claimed, never mind—the passengers in that car were singing WAY off key.

Must we write that persons standing 5’4” who weigh less than two hundred pounds can claim a biceps measurement of twenty-two inches? Is anyone silly enough to believe this? When the bench press record stands at about 740 pounds, why do we give column space to those who, by means of something called a “forced rep,” claim a lift nearly twice as high? Does not Anthony Clark when he benches 740 use all the force at hand when attempting the record? why insult him by saying his “force” and his world record (done with no one else touching the barbell) are only fifty percent of someone else’s unproved, unjudged, unweighed attempt? Jan Dellinger calls this a tag-team bench press. Indeed such claims should be wrestled

away from our prim. In the early days of *Strength & Health* magazine, such drivel would appear in the *S&H* Liar’s Club column. Have our magazines become an extension on this old humor? No one is laughing.

This is not to say that there was no exaggeration in the old days. In fact, it went on around the globe. Globe barbells that is. Old-time strength performers would sometimes mislead the audience by asserting that the large spheres lifted were heavier than they, in fact, were.

Perhaps the bells to be lifted at the afternoon or evening performance would be on display in the lobby so that those who wished could have a hand at hefting them. Then, sometimes when those bells traveled from lobby to backstage, some lead shot or sand was drained, and when those in the audience who had failed in the lobby testing ground watched the performer hoist the weight easily, applause followed.

On other occasions, a performer would lift a weight which was not filled, and then place the bell near the stage curtain where it was being filled as audience members were summoned to try their luck at duplicating what they had just witnessed the performer achieve. Another trickery used was to literally attach the weight to a cart or a platform so that the neophyte would never know that budging the weight was impossible.

If the performer was able to lift the weights claimed, then, perhaps grace can be offered to the many performances daily in that era and the need to preserve some strength for each show.

Another deception that was present in the infant years of our spat was the exaggeration of muscular girths. The prime believe-it-or-not claim belongs to Charles A. Sampson, for whom, in 1896, a wrist to upper arm ratio of 4.2 was advertised. That is, his wrist was said to be 45 inches and his upper arm 19 inches, or 4.2 times the circumference of his wrist. If your wrist measures 7 inches, you’ll need an upper arm of 29.4 inches to match Sampson’s claim. Such claims are indeed enough to make serious students of strength history pull their hair out—no Delilah needed. [Sampson actually had a 17 inch upper arm and of course, a newborn baby’s wrist might measure close to 4.5 inches.

Why do those in the public eye in our sport feel the urge to exaggerate their lifts or girths? It is simple. If I wrote a training book entitled *How to build Seventeen Inch Arms*, no one who already has that dimension would feel the need for the product. If the book was entitled *How to Bench Press Three Hundred Pounds*, same situation. Indeed, even if your arm is only sixteen inches and your bench press 250, if on the market there are books for guidance to the land of twenty-three inch arms and thirteen hundred pound bench presses, the aspirant will buy those, reason& that all the sub-achievements leading to those dimensions will be by-products in the overall path. Of course, the book about a thirteen hundred pound bench will have several co-authors or assistants.

The following is my attempt to report accurately what happened when I measured Manfred Hoerberl's arm at the Arnold Classic earlier this year. I had warned Bob Wolff that I would walk off the stage if any misrepresentations were allowed during the measuring, that I would supply the tape measure, that I would want to take some measurements before the public measuring. The measurement I got was so large that I have now been relegated, by some whom I thought were friends, to the category of exaggerators. Not so. The following is fact and witnesses were present. . .

At the 1993 Mr. Olympia contest in Atlanta, Georgia, after Mike Matarazzo failed to make the cut, he came to sit beside Sandy Riddel in the audience, which also placed him beside me. I introduced myself, asked if I might measure his arm, and he emphatically, immediately replied, "NO!! NO MEASUREMENTS OUTSIDE THE GYM. NO MEASUREMENTS OUTSIDE THE GYM."

There's gold in them thar Gold's Gyms, I guess.

Jerry Brainum tells the interesting story of interviewing a world class bodybuilder who was speaking into Jerry's tape recorder, and when asked his arm measurement, the reply was "Twenty-three inches." Jerry calmly reached forward, clicked off the tape recorder and told the man, "Look, if you want me to write that you claim twenty-three inches I will. But the fans know generally how tall you are and what your weight is, so do you wish to change the figure?" The bodybuilder pondered for a moment and then offered, "Oh, okay, nineteen inches." Where did those four inches go in those twenty seconds? They traveled to the land of make believe. Where they belong.

There is a framework within which and without which certain girths cannot be obtained. Without a length of limb and a bodyweight approaching three hundred pounds you can discount any claims of twenty-two inch arms. It is humorous to think the humerus can accommodate such size on a small-boned individual. It truly becomes funny business.

It is, however, obvious to anyone with comparative vision that the arms of Manfred Hoerberl may not be the most vascular, may not be the most cut, or ripped or shredded. They are simply the most huge looking arms I have ever seen on a human. They look bigger than anyone else's—to my knowledge—have ever looked. Talking muscle here, not the girths of the obese.

But I really don't care how big they look. I care how big they are. So, hoping the world contained the technology to achieve that elusive fact, and hoping I did not have to travel to a gym somewhere to measure Manfred, the quest began.

It was 8:18 PM on 9 September 1994. The final competition for Mr. Olympia was to be posed down soon. But sitting at his vending table selling his book and displaying the largest muscular arms found at any latitude or longitude was Manfred Hoerberl. All 6'5" and three hundred plus pounds of him.

Though his book *10 Minutes to Massive Arms* was selling well, there was a lull in the leering line, so I stepped up, requested a book, and answered "Joe Roark," to Manfred's request for a name to which he could autograph. Bob Wolff of *Muscle & Fitness* was near-

by and he re-introduced himself to me, and we chatted. Bob is co-author of Hoerberl's book.

With this, I literally allowed a tape measure to unfurl from my shoulder height as I asked Manfred if I could measure his arm. His reply was a question. "Why, don't you trust me?" To which I undiplomatically responded, "I don't trust anyone," meaning in reference to arm size claims.

My distrust is very well-founded. Having read in this field for forty years, and having filed data extensively since 1970, I am aware of the size claims that have been attributed to many of the stalwarts in muscledom, and able to rate these claims in the overall scheme.

Some of the claims are preposterous; some are worse than that. Imagine an arm of twenty-two inches being claimed on someone who stands 5'4". Remember the upper arm girth 4.2 times larger than the wrist? These have actually been claimed! (For Manfred to equal the 4.2 ratio would require him to have an upper arm of 35.2 inches!)

Only twice that I am aware of have ironmen been willing to put their money where their measurements are: Sig Klein offered five dollars to Johnny Bracken if his upper arm measured less than fifteen inches and John McWilliams offered a thousand dollars for a measurement of his at less than 195. Neither Sig in 1939 nor John in 1950 transferred funds.

In any case, in the months between the 1994 Mr. Olympia and the 1995 Arnold Classic, Bob Wolff acted as intermediary between Manfred and me. It was agreed that I would measure Manfred's arm—publicly—at the Expo held in connection with Arnold's physique competition.

The original plan was for me to get some measurements and photos in Manfred's hotel room Friday night. But speaking to Bob that afternoon, it was revealed that those plans had been thwarted, and Manfred told me we would get the measurements at four o'clock the next day. Also present would be Marla Duncan, the beautiful fitness model who had agreed to have her waistline measured for comparison with Hoerberl's upper arm size. Accordingly, I arranged for Marla to meet us at three-thirty Saturday, backstage.

Saturday arrived, I packed my briefcase with two metal circles—one of twenty inches and the other twenty-five inches—two empty Pepsi Cola cans, a plastic tape measure, and a steel construction-type tape measure. By matching the steel tape to the plastic tape, I learned the plastic tape was accurate.

Trying to reach Marla at three-twenty proved hopeless—the crush of fans around her booth seeking photos and autographs prohibited me: I hoped she would remember to meet us backstage in ten minutes.

I circumvented the crowd, found Manfred backstage, unpumped. He and Bob—who had been in Manfred's presence since about two o'clock—assured me that Manfred was ready for a cold measurement. What happened next is even now difficult for me to realize: Manfred asked if I wanted to get some practice measurements before we went on stage. I did, and the results were:

Wrist: 8 3/8" or 8.37"

Forearm straight (fist clenched but not goose-necked): 16"

Forearm goose-necked at right angle to upper arm: 17.5"

upper arm: 25 3/4" or 25.75" COLD!!

We were called to the stage. Manfred then curled a 150 pound dumbbell for a few reps with his right arm, and Anja Schreiner asked me to hurry to measure his arm before the pump was lost. "What pump?" I asked myself. I had in mind alternate sets of curls and French presses, a minute wait, and then the measurement. But I was not in charge, so the hurried—one set only for biceps and nothing for triceps—produced a public, twenty-six inch measurement. First I had showed the twenty inch metal circle, explaining that this was probably the size of some of the heavier champion bodybuilder's upper arms—in spite of claims of larger girths. Then the twenty-five inch circle was placed around the twenty inch circle to show the overwhelming difference. Backstage I had placed the twenty-live inch circle around Manfred's upper arm, and he filled it—his arm being more oval than circular. It was now time for the Pepsi Challenge.

Through the years, various photos have appeared in bodybuilding magazines purporting to reveal accurate measurements. Scrutiny reveals that the portion of the tape on the lee side of the arm—out of sight—had to have been altered. Anyway, one cannot easily alter a soda can without it being obvious.

So, two Pepsi cans, one sitting atop the other stand 9.25 inches tall. Manfred's arm was taller! Backstage, using calipers, his arm height proved to be ten inches. When I placed the calipers at Marla's waistline, she was ten inches wide, and her waist circumference was twenty-six inches—at first a little over twenty-six inches—but a second measurement indicated twenty-six inches—so the audience was seeing a woman's waistline which was the same size as one of Manfred's arms!

Manfred thus became the first man in history to have an upper arm girth three times the size of his wrist circumference. Indeed, some measurements ratio charts published over the years indicate a ratio of 2.2 or 2.3 is a solid goal. By those standards, Manfred would need only 19.3 inches. I suspect many of the champion bodybuilders have a ratio of no more than 2.6 or 2.7. I still have my tape measures, and can come up with two cans of Pepsi anywhere in America with two minutes notice. All I lack is the cooperation of the top bodybuilders who henceforth have a standing invitation to contact me for verification of arm size.

Moments after I measured Manfred I had occasion to see two of the men who have claimed twenty-three inch arms or had the claim made for them. Their arms, though huge, are a world away from Manfred's plateau. so, thank you Manfred, for your cooperation.

or to hide. From anybody on the globe.

Ed Note: Manfred was involved in a serious auto accident this past Spring but is uow recovering at home. We wish Manfred all the best in his recovery.

**Ed Notes:**

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

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

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

Dear IGH:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

strength abilities.

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

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

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

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

Vic Boff
Cape Coral, FL





Dear *IGH*,

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

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

Grover Porter
Huntsville, AL

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

Dear *IGH*,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Allen Smith
New Orleans, LA

Dear IGH,

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

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

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

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

Lou Tortorelli
Howell, New Jersey

Dear IGH,

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

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

Alton Eliason
Northford, Connecticut

Dear IGH,

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

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

Curd Edmunds
Glascow, KY