IRON GAME HISTORY

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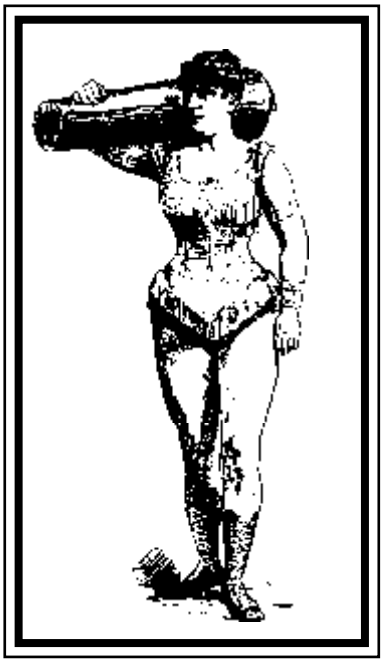
Honoring Al Thomas

Through the years, the Oldetime Barbell and Strongman Association has honored a number of amazing athletes, successful promoters, and dedicated officials of the Iron Game. At this year's Hall of Fame dinner, held 7 October 1995 at the Downtown Athletic Club in New York, Joe Abbenda — Mr. America 1962 and Mr. Universe in 1962 and 1963; Dr. Hy Schaffer, who, in the 1930s, snatched two hundred pounds at a bodyweight of 132 pounds: and Al Berger, gym owner and strongman, were recognized for their many contributions to the Game. A special presentation was also made to Dr. Charles Moss, of Los Angeles, for his unflagging support of the Association and its ideals.

However, in discussions over the past year, the Association had decided that there was another aspect of the Iron Game that deserved recognition and respect. That aspect is the power that the written word has had in our lives. And so, to honor the story-tellers of our game — the writers and journalists who string together the sentences that lift our hearts and fire our enthusiasm for the weights — the Association decided to honor one person each year who has made a significant contribution as a writer. We are honored to tell the readers of ***Iron Game History*** that the first recipient of the OBSA's Writing Award is Dr. Al Thomas, who (according to the speech commemorating his achievements at the OBSA dinner), "more than any other person, is responsible for providing the philosophical framework that caused the explosion of interest in women's bodybuilding and powerlifting that began in the 1970s and continues to this day."



Allow me to explain. In July of 1973, Dr. Al Thomas, then an English professor at Kutztown State College in Pennsylvania, began writing a series of articles for ***Iron Man*** magazine that explored the world of women and weight training. Unlike earlier magazine articles which generally just praised the benefits of weight training as a means to a slender figure, Thomas' articles explored the boundaries — real and imagined — of femininity and strength. He argued that women should be strong, that women should (if they wished) be muscular, and furthermore, that, like men, women should find joy and pride — not shame — in their strength and physicality. Thomas wrote approximately sixty such articles for ***Iron Man.*** Some articles featured athletes who had chosen to defy convention and pursue strength some articles were philosophical essays in which Thomas took aim at our society's aversion to muscular women. But for the women who read them — including me — the articles were a revelation. They gave me — and the other women who crowded into America's gyms in the 1970s —visible, contemporary role models as well as a philosophical center that allowed us to follow Thomas' call to muscular arms and tight our way onto the lifting platforms and posing daises of America.

Few men (or women) have ever had such an impact on a sport. When Charles Gaines wanted to write a book and then create a film documentary on women's bodybuilding, he turned to Al Thomas for assistance. Again Thomas helped Gaines see through to the center of the problem of women's bodybuilding — that women had as much right to strength and muscularity as men did and that women could possess these attributes without somehow "becoming men." It was — and is — a significant point, and one which, without Thomas' insight, Gaines would not have made the central theme of his documentary film.

Although Thomas ended his ***Iron Man*** series in 1985, he continued to write and contribute articles to a variety of magazines ***—Body and Power, Strength & Health, The Pallas Journal,*** and

of course, most recently, ***Iron Game History.*** With Steve Wennerstrom, in 1983, Thomas also co-authored an encyclopedic history of women's bodybuilding entitled ***The Female Physique Athlete.***

At the beginning of the past semester, in my course on sports and ethics, I explained to my class that what we call "philosophy" is actually made up of several sub-disciplines: Metaphysics asks questions about the nature of things: Aesthetics asks questions about beauty and proportion; Epistemology asks questions about how we learn things: Axiology asks questions about valuing things: and finally, Ethics ask questions about the morality of things. In thinking about Al Thomas' body of work, I am struck by how he has devoted his energies and intellect to tackling *all* these big questions. What is the nature of bodybuilding? Is it immoral to deny women their right to muscle? How should an ideal physique look? And so on. In this issue of ***IGH,*** for instance, Thomas once again tries to get at the philosophical heart of the Iron Game. In "Some Thoughts on Spirit," he explores ideas which are, admittedly, complicated. They are, however, also extremely important. Thomas asks us to think about how we value and understand what we do, and how, unlike other sports, the Iron Game is, in large part, a matter of the spirit.

Years from now, when historians chronicle the growth of weight training, Edmond Desbonnet and David Willoughby will be remembered for their efforts to preserve our early history. Alan Calvert, Bemarr Macfadden, Bob Hoffman, Joe Weider, and the Raders will be remembered for giving the Game its great magazines. And, if history is accurate, Al Thomas will be remembered for his attempts to give the Game a philosophical heart.

The speech honoring Thomas at the OBSA Dinner concluded, "Every woman bodybuilder, powerlifter, and weightlifter in the English-speaking world owes Al Thomas a debt of gratitude. We have done what we've done because of him; we have become who we are because of him. He opened the doors."

Congratulations, Al. And thanks, from all of us.

—Jan Todd

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GAMA THE WORLD CHAMPION:
WRESTLING AND PHYSICAL CULTURE IN COLONIAL INDIA

Joseph S. Alter, Ph.D.
The University of Pittsburgh

Around the turn of the century in colonial India there was a loosely formulated, but nevertheless dramatic, concern among India's growing middle-class with the articulation of an ideal of indigenous masculinity, and with the embodiment of that ideal in the population at large. In many parts of the country groups of men established local *akharas* (gymnasiums) for the propagation of indigenous martial arts, physical fitness programs, and wrestling in particular. In this paper I will examine some of the features of this "modern tradition" through a study of Gama, the early twentieth-century world champion, and a number of his nationally ranked compatriots.

Although the art of wrestling and physical culture in Indian civilization dates back thousands of years, the history of most contemporary gymnasiums dates back less than a century. Even so, these gymnasiums were built on a so-called ancient traditional model. The key elements of this model are still found in many contemporary gymnasiums: a large square or rectangular raised earthen wrestling pit, a flat hard-packed floor for doing exercises, a collection of *mugdals (Indian clubs), gadas (maces)* and *nals* (stone weights) for weight lifting, and often a rope for climbing and a *mallakhamb* (wrestler's pillar) for strength and technique training. The revival of interest in indigenous physical culture late in the nineteenth century focused on wrestling in the earth (loose dirt) and doing distinctly Indian exercises at these gymnasiums.

Measured in terms of demographic statistics, it is doubtful that this predominantly urban physical fitness movement was ever a main-stream socio-political phenomenon, but what does seem clear from the scant evidence available is that a significant number of middle-class men saw physical culture as a means by which to redefine Indian national character in the face of British imperialism and in light of the perceived hegemony of western ideas about fitness, health and strength.

TAKEN THE DAY AFTER HIS VICTORIOUS RE-MATCH WITH THE POLISH CHAMPION ZYBYSKO IN 1928, THIS PHOTO SHOWS THE POWERFUL GAMA HOLDING THE GOLDEN CLUB PRESENTED TO HIM BY THE MAHARAJAH OF PATIALA.

--TODD-MCLEAN COLLECTION

Parallel to the largely urban middle-class movement was the development of a much more pervasive tradition of wrestling and physical culture among the semi-urban lowerclass in general, and the rural North Indian peasantry in particular. Most certainly before, but also, significantly, after the middle-class revival, the majority of Indian wrestlers had been peasants or first generation working class migrants to urban areas who started training in their village or neighborhood gymnasium. Although a majority of these wrestlers trained on their own and competed in small regional tournaments, a small percentage of highly skilled, talented young men were successful enough to earn the patronage of rajahs and maharajahs. As patrons, the rajahs and maharajahs provided their lower-class, often relatively poor, court wrestlers with training facilities, housing, and, above all, high-fat, energy producing food. In turn, wrestlers competed for their patrons against other court wrestlers in large, well organized tournaments. Champion wrestlers quickly became famous in the context of inter-princely state competition and gained national recognition when more lavish tournaments were staged.

Although the tradition of royal patronage for wrestling dates back to antiquity, there seems to have been a significant increase in the scale of royal wrestling in the early part of this century. Certainly in rhetoric and contemporary memory at least, royal patrons from Indor, Kolhapur, Rampurl Patiyala and elsewhere are lionized for the personal care they gave to training, feeding, and looking after as many as two hundred wrestlers in their royal gymnasiums. Whatever its empirical dimensions were in fact, the increase in royal patronage corresponds directly to the middle-class revival of interest in physical culture. Most likely it was the elite Indian princes who played a key role in the convergence of middle-class interest in physical culture on the one hand, and the strategic creation of powerful, lower-class heroes on the other. In other words, the Indian princes provided the ways and means by which it was possible for upper and middle-class urban Indian men to see themselves — or an image of what they wanted themselves to be — in the hard, down-to-earth training of young peasants.

The dramatic life of Gama Baksh [**Ed note:** According to David P. Willoughby's ***The Super Athletes,*** Gama was born Gulam Mohammed], a lower-class, illiterate Muslim from northwest India, who was a champion wrestler from 1910 until his retirement in the early 1940s provides a dramatic case in point. Gama's national and international success, however, only makes sense within the context of a particular, historically situated tradition of wrestling in which there were numerous other local, regional, and state champions who were trained in the same way. Having written elsewhere about Gama's unique biography, I will restrict myself in this discussion to an analysis of that class of wrestlers to which Gama belonged, and reflect briefly on how this class of wrestlers came to embody — through exercise, diet and training —middle-class ideals regarding masculinity in modern India In doing this I have drawn heavily on Barkat Ali's ***Pahalwano ki Duniya*** (1984), a spectacular photo anthology of Indian wrestling; Ratan Patodi's ***Bharatiya Kushti,*** an excellent journal devoted to Indian wrestling; and Govardan Das Malhotra's in depth research on the history of wrestling and the biographies of numerous North Indian champions.

Gama was born into a family of famous wrestlers from the Punjab in northwestern India His father, Aziz Baksh, himself a court wrestler, started taking Gama to the gymnasium of Rajah Bhawani Singh of Datiya from an early age. However, when Gama was only six years old, his father suddenly died. In recognition of Aziz Baksh's status as a court wrestler, Barkat Ali reports that all of the gymnasiums in the Datiya were closed for a week and a half, and the court itself was shut down for a few days. For some time Gama was taken care of by his maternal grandfather, Nun Pahalwan, who continued to take him to the gymnasium. Unfortunately, his grandfather also died leaving Gama in the care of his eldest maternal uncle, Ida Pahalwan, who vowed that he would see to it that Gama became the champion wrestler his father had wanted him to be. Ida Pahalwan devoted himself to looking after Gama. Intent on impressing upon him the desire to be a great wrestler, he constantly pointed out to the young boy that this is what his father wanted above all else. As Barkat Ali makes clear in his short biography of Gama, Aziz Baksh's death left a deep impression on his young son. Gama was, in fact, not told of his father's death for almost a year, during which time he is said to have gone searching for him through the neighborhood lanes where he and his extended family lived, following the routes he had travelled while being carried on his father's shoulders in hopes of meeting him along the way or finding him at a friend or relative's house. Being told that his father wanted him to become the world's greatest wrestler, and that "he could keep his father alive through disciplined training," gave Gama a deeply rooted, driving ambition to be the best.'

Gama's first great accomplishment came at a national exercise competition held by the Rajah of Jodhpur, Jaswant Singh, around 1888. Although only ten years old, Gama persuaded another maternal uncle, Buta Pahalwan, to take him along, and then managed to convince his skeptical uncle to introduce him to the Rajah so as to get permission to compete. After hearing that Gama was the son of the great Aziz Baksh, permission was granted.

The main contest in the competition was to see who could do the most *bethaks* (deep knee-bends), one of the most common exercises in a wrestler's regimen. Indian wrestlers regularly do hundreds if not thousands every day, and even at ten years old Gama's daily routine included five hundred. Over four hundred wrestlers from around the country had gathered in Jodhpur for the contest, and at the Rajah's signal the competition began. As wrestlers became tired they left the field until only one hundred or so remained. As more and more retired, all eyes turned on Gama, until, after a number of hours had passed, only fifteen wrestlers were left exercising. At this point Jaswant Singh ended the contest saying that the ten year old boy was clearly the winner in such a field of stalwart national champions. Later, upon being asked how many *(bethaks)* he had done, Gama replied that he could not remember, but probably several thousand. In any event he was bed-ridden for a week.

Starting at the age of ten, Gama's daily exercise routine included not only five hundred *bethaks,* but five hundred *dands* (jack-knifing push-ups) as well. Most importantly, according to Barkat Ali, Gama regularly engaged in the hard exercise of pit digging, wherein the hardpacked earth of the wrestling arena is dug up and "turned" with a heavy hoe-like implement called a *pharsa* which can weigh as much as twenty or thirty kilograms. Digging is done between spread legs with back and legs bent. Starting in one comer of the pit, wrestlers dig from side to side in curving arcs moving as quickly as possible. Often the pit is dug twice or three times, starting each time from a different comer. In addition to building stamina, this

exercise develops hand and wrist strength in particular, but also lower back, buttock and thigh muscles. While still ten years old, Gama's special diet consisted of milk, almonds and fruit, three primary ingredients in any wrestler's diet. He did not start eating meat, butter, and clarified butter until he turned fifteen, around 1893.

After his success at the exercise competition, Gama's fame spread throughout the princely states of India, but he did not start wrestling competitively until he was fifteen years old. Very quickly, however, he proved to be virtually unbeatable and formally became a wrestler in the court of Datiya soon thereafter. At this time Gama's exercise routine increased significantly. He is said to have regularly done three thousand *bethaks* and fifteen hundred *dands* and run one mile every day with a 120 pound stone ring around his neck.[2] With this increase in workload, Gama's paternal uncle Mohammed Baksh, along with Ida Pahalwan and his guru Madho Singh, added meat and butter to Gama's diet. He was also given *yakhni*, the boiled down gelatinous extract of bones, joints, and tendons which is regarded by many Muslim wrestlers as being a source of great strength, and being particularly good for the development of knees, ankles, and other joints. According to Rajindarsingh Munna, at this time Gama was consuming twenty liters of milk, half a liter of clarified butter, 3/4 of a kilogram of butter, and four kilograms of fruit per day.[3]

In 1904 Gama won a number of spectacular bouts held in a tournament organized by the Maharajah of Rewa, and subsequently accepted a position in the Rewa court. Then in 1906 Gama wrestled in a tournament organized by Maharajah Pratap Singh of Orcha, and upon winning the title bout accepted a silver mace, a five hundred rupee award, and a permanent position in the royal court. Out of Orcha, Gama wrestled with the champions of Indor, Amritsar and Lahore, finally meeting with the famous Rahim Sultaniwalla in Datiya sometime in 1907. In this tournament, Gama and Rahim Sultaniwalla wrestled for twenty minutes in what is described by Ratan Patodi as a perfect match in which there was a counter grip for every grip applied, a counter move for every move made and a counter twist for every twist employed.[4] With no one being clearly the winner, the contest was declared a draw. Rahim and Gama met twice again prior to 1910, once in Lahore where they wrestled for three hours, and once in Indor where the contest lasted for two hours and twenty minutes, but again no clear winner was determined in either bout.

In 1908, two years before he went to London to compete for the world championship belt, Gama's regimen was increased to five thousand bethaks and three thousand dands. Every morning he would also work out by wrestling with forty compatriot wrestlers in the royal court. Added to this, he began weight-lifting with a one hundred pound grind stone and a *santola* (wooden bar-bell made from a tree trunk). At this time Barkat Ali claims that he regularly consumed either six chickens or the extract of five kilograms of mutton mixed with a quarter pound of clarified butter, ten liters of milk along with half a liter more of clarified butter, about 3/4 of a kilogram of crushed almond paste made into a tonic drink, along with fruit juice and other things to promote good digestion.[5]

As one of India's preeminent wrestlers, Gama was chosen by R. B. Benjamin, a physical culture enthusiast, to go to London in 1910 along with Gamu Jalandariwalla, Ahmed Baksh and Imam Baksh, to compete in the John Bull Society world wrestling championship. Coming at a time of increasing national consciousness and pride in Indian identity, the trip to London was sponsored by Sharat Kumar Mishra, a Bengali millionaire, and was billed as an opportunity for India to demonstrate its strength on the world stage.

The four wrestlers and their entourage travelled through Europe to London to discover, according to Barkat Ali, that only heavyweight wrestlers were allowed to compete. Being only 5 feet 8 inches tall and 14 stone (196 pounds), Gama was disqualified. Whether or not this is true in fact since Robert W. Smith expresses some doubt on the question, it is significant that the whole issue of weight, height, and size classification proved to be a critical issue for the young Gama, who could not understand the rationale for measuring the skill and subtle power of a tine art in terms of gross mass.[6]

Aside from being simply disappointed, Gama was thoroughly confused. Although his own regimen would appear to have as a final goal simply the production of a massive, powerful physique, this physique — neck girth, chest expanse, and the dimensions of thigh and upper arm —was, to his way of thinking, simply the empirical measure of relative stature and had very little to do with skill. In fact, in Gama's view strength also had less to do with size than one might expect. His phenomenal diet and regimen of exercise was meant to develop a kind of pervasive subtle energy rather than just the kinetic power of particular muscle groups.

In any event, as the story goes, in order to demonstrate in England the Indian's natural talent, his manager arranged with a local theater for Gama to stage a dramatic challenge, promising pounds sterling to any wrestler who could throw him down. On the first day three wrestlers were dispatched by him in short order, and on the second day he is said to have defeated ten local English champions one after the other. According to Ratan Patodi, another of the world champion's biographers, Gama also distinguished himself by defeating the American champion, Roller, in three minutes, and by throwing down all thirty of the Japanese heavyweight wrestlers in one hour.[7] All of the popular Indian press accounts claim that it was on the basis of these feats that Gama was able to circumvent the tournament rules and persuade the officials to allow him to fight with the reigning world champion, Stanlislaus Zbyszko.

Although lighter and shorter than Zbyszko, by about fifty pounds and several inches, accounts of the match held on 10 December 1910, clearly prove Gama's superiority. Apparently taken aback by Gama's speed, strength, and stamina, Zbyszko quickly assumed

a prone position on the mat. Since Gama's forte was foot work and standing take-downs, he was unable to flip his heavier, European opponent onto his back and finally the match was called at dusk. The match was scheduled to resume the following day, but Zbyszko did not show up. Gama was declared world champion by default.

Although I have written elsewhere in some detail on the nationalistic implications of Gama's triumph in relation to colonial power, it is important to note also the extent to which Gama came to represent indigenous masculine ideals.[8] In the eyes of the growing Indian middle-class who were, by 1910, subscribing to a plethora of new newspapers which published news of the world champion, Gama was a national hero. Not only had he defeated the greatest wrestlers of Europe and America, but he had done so, more significantly, in a distinctly Indian way. In both Indian and European publications what was regarded as noteworthy about Gama was the nature of his training regimen: the *bethaks* and *dands* in particular, but also his diet and simply the amount of time he spent wrestling, digging the pit, running, and exercising every day. For many middle-class Indian men, themselves working in sedentary office jobs, and bearing the psychological burden of Eurocentric prejudice regarding their so-called effete proclivities, Gama proved, without a doubt, that strength clearly had an Indian form. Needless to say, the mass of middle-class men who idealized Gama did not immediately enter gymnasiums and start vigorously exercising. But what did happen, I think, is that many of them began to appreciate the virtues of Indian physical culture and stopped measuring themselves strictly against a Victorian, colonial standard of prowess.

Gama returned to India as a national hero and was recruited into the court of the Maharajah of Patiala, a princely state in the Punjab region of northwest India. He received 250 rupees per month as a stipend. Although acclaimed as the world champion, Gama had never really become the national champion by defeating the only other legitimate contender, his old rival Rahim Sultaniwalla. In what is probably one of the most famous bouts in the annals of Indian wrestling, Gama met with Rahim in the north Indian city of Allahabad in 1912. Ratan Patodi gives the following account of the contest. Rahim had put out a challenge to meet with any wrestler in the country at Allahabad, and Gama immediately accepted. More than fifty thousand spectators from around the country and overseas had gathered to watch. and many kings and princes from throughout the country had come to witness the rematch. When Rahim entered the pit, his body anointed with red ochre paste, shouting out the name of god, he looked like a rogue elephant on a rampage. When Gama quietly entered the arena wearing a pair of red wrestling briefs the audience was simply awe struck:

> *As soon as the match started both wrestlers attacked one another, looking to settle the contest quickly. As they grappled, the ochre paste from Rahim's body spread onto Gama and soon they were both besmeared with red. As the match progressed, Gama became more and more aggressive, but with perceptive skill Rahim was able to counter every move he made. This match proved that there is a counter move, grip and twist for every move applied, even when that move is applied by a world champion. Once Gama lifted Rahim off the ground, but he managed to escape and rallied with the applause of the assembled crowd. Then again Gama lifted Rahim off the ground, but he scissored his legs, flipped over, and landed in front of the world champion still raging like a wild elephant.*
>
> *Finally, however, the older man began to tire in the face of such a ferocious onslaught. Responding to this, Gama attacked even more aggressively applying one move after another with lightning speed. Rahim defended himself against Gama's every effort until finally he was exhausted. Rather than be pinned, he bowed to defeat and left the pit.*
>
> *It is simply ill fate that Rahim, who fought so well with Gama three times, never achieved the same recognition as the world champion. Although an acclaimed master of the art, Rahim is now remembered as one of those unfortunate wrestlers who never quite made it. But he had no regrets about leaving the pit in Allahabad, for he knew that move for move he had matched himself with the very best.*[9]

In 1928, when he was fifty years old, Gama met Zbyszko again, this time in Patiala at Maharajah Bhupindar Singh's behest. Set for January 28, the match-up was an epic event, coming as it did at a time of strident Indian nationalism. Zbyszko's arrival in Bombay was something of a media event. Among other things the Indian papers published the Polish champion's massive [**Ed. note:** and exaggerated] credentials — three hundred pounds, fifty-eight inch chest, thirty-five inch waist, twenty-three inch calves and a somewhat unbelievable twenty-three inch neck.[10]

While in Bombay, Zbyszko apparently put on a demonstration of his physical prowess by lifting, bending and breaking steel bars and chains, claiming, for dramatic effect no doubt, that he would do much the same to Gama.[11]

In Patiala the Maharajah had gone to great lengths to prepare a stadium to accommodate fifty thousand spectators. Ratan Patodi reports, probably with some exaggeration, that on the appointed day over one hundred thousand people had arrived to watch the epic rematch. Hardly had the match gotten under way, however, when Gama let go of Zbyszko's neck, grabbed his left ankle, pulled his leg into the air, and applied his favorite move, an *anti* by kicking the former world champion's right leg out from under him and sending him, flat on his back, down in the dirt in only forty-two seconds. As Patodi explains, "Gama then jumped forward, pressed his own chest down on Zbyszko's, and thus showed him the sky."[12]

Needless to say —but as I have nevertheless discussed at

some length elsewhere — Gama's triumph was seen as India's triumph, a point brought home by the fact that the Viceroy himself is said to have come down out of the royal pavilion to congratulate the unseated world champion.[13] In India at least — for I have not seen it printed elsewhere —the scope of Gama's title was upgraded from that of "world champion" to "champion of where ever." Gama kept wrestling after his victory in 1923 until he effectively retired sometime in the early 1940s bequeathing his title to his younger brother, Imam Baksh. Even at the age of fifty, however, Gama was still doing 6000 *bethaks* and 4000 *dands* every day, wrestling with eighty compatriots in the royal gymnasium, and eating essentially the same diet as when he was twenty.[14]

THIS EARLY PHOTOGRAPH, FROM THE PERSONAL COLLECTION OF GEORGE HACKENSCHMIDT, SHOWS GAMA AND STANISLAUS ZYBYSKO SHAKING HANDS PRIOR TO THEIR HISTORIC BOUT IN INDIA.

Writing exclusively on Gama's training program, Dr. S. P. Atreya is somewhat more reserved in his estimation of the world champion's regimen, claiming, simply, that there was no way of knowing how many *bethaks* or *dands* were done on a daily basis by Gama since no one ever saw him start a routine or stayed long enough in the gymnasium to watch him finish.[15] In any event, Atreya points out that regardless of how many he did, what is most significant is that he always did them properly.

> *His attention was fully focused inward on the regimen to such an extent that he literally saw nothing but what he was doing. As a rule, he recited the name of god with every breath taken during his set of bethaks, twice for every repetition, and so you could say that his exercise routine was one long prayer. Throughout he remained absolutely absorbed in the task at hand.*
>
> *Unlike most wrestlers, who jump forward and back only about a hand's width while doing bethaks, Gama would jump back and forth as much as a foot. He also did his bethaks much faster than most wrestlers, in sets of one hundred at a time.*[16]

Clearly Gama's epic heroism is exceptional, and despite whatever hyperbole may now be employed to describe his great achievements, as a powerful athlete he was certainly not alone. He was simply the best of a large number of hard working lower class wrestlers who — projected onto the national and international stage by wealthy merchants, kings and princes — came to embody certain national ideals about Indian character. In order to contextualize Gama's achievements I would like to work toward a conclusion of this discussion by examining the careers of a few of his compatriots: the "real men" of the soil in whose image the middle-class was trying to reshape itself.

One might take, for example, Sadik Pahalwan, a disciple of the great Jwala Ustad from Lucknow in central Uttar Pradesh. Born in 1894, the son of Sultan Pahalwan, Sadik began training at age five. At the age of twenty he began to make a name for himself as a wrestler and soon came to the attention of Professor Ram Murti Naidu, the

nationalist advocate of indigenous physical culture who took Sadik, along with a number of other wrestlers, on a demonstration tour of Ceylon and Burma. For a number of years Sadik was in the central Uttar Pradesh region of Audh, and from this venue he wrestled against and defeated all of the regional champions before he was thirty years old.

Govardan Das Malhotra reports that in his prime Sadik's regimen included fifteen hundred *dands*, three thousand *bethaks*, wrestling practice with twenty compatriots, three miles of running, three hundred lifting repetitions of a heavy *santola*, digging the wrestling pit twice with a heavy *pharsa*, and a number of *dhekulis* (headstand twists in the wrestling pit which develop neck strength and agility).[17] As in the case of Gama, however, what is noteworthy is the particular way in which Sadik becomes, in his middle-class biographer's eye, a heroic representation of Indian male identity. For example, Malhotra paints the following picture.

> *Following the adage that truth is greater than prayer, Sadik overcame all of life's difficulties with laughter and joy, never letting even the shadow of pride and conceit fall anywhere near him. He lived the life of a sage, and always putting others before himself, spent his life in the service of the gymnasium . . .*
>
> *He made no distinction between Hindu and Muslim and loved everyone equally. He was a man of great character: honest, forthright and wise*
>
> *Whenever the 240 pound Sadik would go out in public on his bicycle, wearing a dhoti (loin cloth) and kurta (long split-sided north Indian shirt) with a light-weight scarf over his shoulder, fancy hat on his head, umbrella under his arm, and, in the hot weather, a fan in his hand, while chewing on his favorite pan (a lime paste, betel nut and betel leaf concoction), a veritable parade of people would come out of their homes and shops in the Lucknow bazaar to watch him go by.*[18]

By way of prosaic rhetoric one clearly gets the impression here of a middle-class vision of fitness and fashion as well as clearly articulated correlations between ideal character, discipline, and physical stature.

Born in 1895, Ram Sevak, a native of Banaras in eastern Uttar Pradesh, became one of the best wrestlers in the country by the time he was 20 years old. Defeating many of the local champions in north central India, he left school after 10th grade in order to devote himself to training. Soon thereafter he came to the attention of the Rajah of Nagpur. However Ram Sevak's elder brother kept him from joining the royal court, finding, instead, local sponsors in the city. Most significantly, Ram Sevak came to the attention of Mahamna Madan Mohan Malviya, the founder of Banaras Hindu University, nationalist advocate of education reform, President of the Hindu Mahasabha and, along with Ram Murti Naidu and Manikrao, a vocal advocate of indigenous physical culture. Malviya persuaded Ram Sevak to establish a gymnasium on the grounds of Banaras Hindu University — named Shivaji Hall after the great Hindu military leader of the seventeenth century — and train students in the art of Indian wrestling. Through Malviya, Ram Sevak also came to the attention of one of India's industrial giants, Ghaneshyamdas Birla, a nationalist advocate who regarded the young wrestler's work very highly. After turning forty, Ram Sevak devoted himself to the task of training students at BHU, but also established a gymnasium of his own in the city where he encouraged peasant youth from the nearby district area to come and train.[19]

Like Sadik, Gama, and countless others, Ram Sevak's regimen is regarded as emblematic of his good character, and is recounted by his biographer as a kind of testimonial of stature.

> *Everyday he did two thousand dands, two thousand bethaks, 1/2 an hour of headstand twists and flips, and conducted wrestling practice with between twenty and twenty-eight compatriots . . . He drank a quarter litre of clarified butter, three liters of milk and ate half a kilogram of almonds every day along with a purely vegetarian diet. Never once did he touch alcohol, tobacco or cigarettes, nor have any of his disciples.*[20]

Sukhdev, whose name means divine bliss, was born into a peasant family of dairy farmers in a village near the city of Azamghar in eastern Uttar Pradesh not far from Banaras in 1915. Sukhdev's elder brother, himself a well known local champion, wanted to turn his younger brother into a national champion, and therefore started taking him to the village gymnasium from a young age. Mulli Ustad, the local village master, lavished attention on Sukhdev until the young wrestler left to join a city gymnasium at the age of twelve. Soon he became the best wrestler in Azamghar and quickly began beating all the local champions of Uttar Pradesh. He also competed successfully in tournaments held in Bombay and Calcutta, and defeated Gama's nephew, Aslam Pahalwan, in a short and definitive three minute match. After noting, in characteristic detail, the components of Sukhdev's daily regimen —five thousand *bethaks*, three thousand *dands*, two liters of milk, a kilogram of almonds and half a liter of clarified butter — Malhotra points out that he was not simply a powerful man possessing great skill, but also very religious. Not only was he a vegetarian, but as a young boy he vowed never to eat onions, turmeric or garlic. This is taken by Malhotra to be exemplary behavior, and he goes on to say that even though Sukhdev was unable to pursue an education on account of his devotion to the art of wrestling, he lived the life of a saint on account of his devotion to Lord Siva and Lord Hanuman.[21]

In other words, Sukhdev exemplified all that was good in Indian character despite the fact—or one might say, because of the

fact—that he was a poor illiterate peasant. The significance of this comes out in Malhotra's eulogy: "Upon his death at the age of 69 this man, with the chest of a lion, a voice of great power, and raised up by his devotion to the nation, stands alone as a great example to the youth of today."[22]

Any number of other examples could be cited of wrestlers much like Sukhdev. In conclusion, however, one may consider what Gama's biographers have to say about his exemplary national character.

In all of the accounts of Gama's life which I have read, the world champion is characterized as being not only strong and skilful, but also supremely honest, hard working, pious and forthright. In many ways — and despite the fact that he was, in fact, probably a man of good character — Gama was made to embody not only the virtues which middle-class men nostalgically associated with their own peasant ancestry, but also a romantically anachronistic aesthetic of masculine self-representation. Describing what Gama looked like on parade after beating Zbyszko in 1928, Brijbhushan Dube points out that he refused to ride in the Maharajah's car, preferring to simply walk. Wearing a black embroidered *tahmad* (long coat), a very fine, soft light-weight *kurta* (long shirt) on his upper body, a light green turban set off at an angle on his head, and over his shoulder the *dushala* (shawl) given to him by the Maharajah, Gama, with Imam Baksh at his side and other royal wrestlers behind, walked at the front of a parade of fans which stretched back for miles. On the one hand this parade was historic, while on the other it was simply an indication of the world champion's *garima* (dignity), *saralta* (simplicity), and *sadaai* (pure faultlesness).[23]

To illustrate the depth of these virtues in Gama's national character, Dube gives a number of examples. Once, sometime in the mid 1920s, during the height of nationalist action, Gama was put in prison with his younger brother for reasons which are unclear, but probably on suspicion of anti-government activities. After a few days' incarceration, the warden tried to persuade Gama to divulge the names of his enemies in exchange for his own freedom. At this Gama is reported to have said, "I have no enemies in this world. If you think that I would bring down someone else in order to save myself, you are wrong. I am your prisoner, do with me what you will." [24] What we learn from this, Dube points out, is that Gama was a perfect, selfless gentleman.

The image of an extremely powerful, well dressed, perfectly selfless gentleman, committed to hard work and simple, traditional, rural values, evoked in many urban middle-class men, an aesthetic ideal for modern Indian masculinity. In the eyes of men like Shanti Prakash Atreya, himself a disciple of Ram Sevak, as well as other men such as Barkat Ali, Govradan Das Malhotra, Brijbhushan Dube, and Ratan Patodi, who have all written extensively about the history of wrestling, Gama and others like him were in a class by themselves, a fact which enabled middle-class men, nervous about the direction of political, economic, and cultural change, to appropriate the down-to-earth personae of two very strong, poor illiterate Muslim men, a peasant dairy farmer, and a pious Banarsi Hindu, among others, for the purposes of their own heroic nationalism.

Notes

[1] Barkat Ali, ***Pahalwano ki Duniya*** (New Delhi: Barkat Ali, 1984), 99.

[2] Ratan Patodi, "Akhare ka Hira, Gama," ***Bharatiya Kushti*** 29(1984): 24.

[3]Munna, Rajindarsingh, "Datiya me Gama ka Smarak Ho," ***Bharatiya Kushti*** 29(1984): 53.

[4]Patodi, "Akhare," 26.

[5]Ali, ***Pahalwano,*** 108.

[6]Robert W. Smith, "Gama the Lion: Master of the Arts," ***Black Belt*** (n.v; n.d) Gama clipping file, The David P. Willoughby Papers, The Todd-McLean Collection, The University of Texas at Austin. In ***The Super Athletes,*** David P. Willoughby claimed Gama was 57" inches tall and weighed between 220 and 250 during his adult years. (South Brunswick, N.J.: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1970), 369.0

[7]Patodi, "Akhare," 26.

[8] Joseph Alter, "Gama the Great and the Decolonized Indian Body: Wrestling with Consumption and the History in Digestion," unpublished manuscript, author's collection.

[9]Patodi "Akhare," 31-33.

[10] Ibid., 35.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Alter, "Gama the Great."

[14]Ali, ***Pahalwano,*** 108.

[15] Shanti Prakash Atreya "Gama ki Kushti Sadhan," ***Bharatiya Kushti,*** 29(1984): 41.

[16]Ibid., 41-42.

[17]Govardan Das Malhorta, "Uttar Pradesh ke Pahalwan, ***Bharatiya Kushti*** 18(7.8 & 9) 1981: 36.

[18]Ibid., 35-37.

[19]Ibid., 77.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., 85.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Brijbhushan Dube, "Esa Tha Vishva Vijeta Gama," ***Bharatiya Kushti*** 29(1984): 49.

[24]Ibid., 40.

Jack Walsh — World's Strongest Man?

Jim Murray

One of the most unusual strongmen I've known is Jack Walsh, who as a professional billed himself as "The World's Strongest Man." From an early age, Jack was fascinated by the old-time strongmen, such as Louis Cyr, and later he performed as a circus strongman, backlifting elephants and performing other spectacular off-beat stunts such as having people jump from ladders onto his abdomen and hoisting heavy poundages with one finger.

The problem was, it was very difficult to evaluate Jack's strength because he was not tested on standard lifts that could be compared with what others did, nor did he ever participate in a regular weighthfting competition. When I first met Jack, at the Trenton, New Jersey, YMCA, he was 19 or 20 years old and weighed at the lightweight limit of 148 pounds. He told me he had pressed 235 pounds and I saw him do that if my memory serves me correctly, but he did have an extreme backbend that would not have passed with the judging that prevailed at the time (1948 or 1949). He also said he had continentaled and jerked three hundred pounds.

I did see Jack perform some impressive feats, including a one-m jerk with two hundred pounds, a press in the wrestler's bridge with about three hundred, and a shoulder-bridge press ("belly toss") with four hundred-plus pounds. The problem was that when he did the wrestler's bridge he had both his feet and head braced and when he did the belly toss he had me stand on his feet so he wouldn't slip. Nevertheless, this was a young, 148-pound man and the weights he lifted were plenty heavy.

Jack was proficient at one-arm lifts. He cleaned a 210-pound barbell with his left arm, transferred it to his right arm, and jerked it overhead. Ray Van Cleef reported in ***Strength & Health*** that Jack had visited York and made a good try at jerking the Cyr dumbell, which weighed about 220 pounds and was very difficult to lift because of its thick handle and massive globes.

Among Jack's claimed lifts early in 1950 were a hand and thigh lift of fifteen hundred pounds, and a backlift of 3,280, consisting of a 2,700-pound elephant and its 180-pound handler on a four hundred pound platform. As he continued to train on very heavy deadlifts, hand and thigh lifts, and leg presses, Jack's bodyweight had gradually increased to 175-180 pounds at his height of 5' 6-l/2". Incidentally, Jack told me he had begun weight training at age thirteen, weighing ninety-five pounds at 5'2" in height. The first time he tried the weights, the most he could lift overhead was sixty pounds. He said he trained on basic, standard exercises for several years before working on the professional strongman stunts.

Later Jack tried to lift two smaller elephants on a similar platform, one of the animals weighing twenty-one hundred pounds and the other eighteen hundred pounds. This stunt was a failure when one of the elephants ran off the platform every time Jack exerted enough pressure to move it. Later, on 7 July 1950, he tried to exceed Warren Lincoln Travis' 4,140-pound back lift by raising a platform said to be loaded with standard block weights, a total of 4,235 pounds. He succeeded, at a bodyweight of 178 pounds. Subsequently, on 13 November 1950, he said he succeeded with 4,638 pounds, again using block weights, and on 7 February 1951, he lifted twenty-five men on a platform that he claimed weighed a total of 4,700 pounds.

Please note that I didn't see any of these big backlifts performed. Jack said he showed he had lifted the weights by having people pulling on sheets of paper under the four comers of the platform. If the papers came out simultaneously it counted as a lift.

Jack also said that he continued to practice the hand and thigh lift as he gained size and strength, and claimed that he reached a lift of nineteen hundred pounds, exceeding Louis Cyr's best by 2-1/2 pounds. The backlifts and hand and thigh lift were done late in 1950 when he was weighing near the lightheavyweight limit.

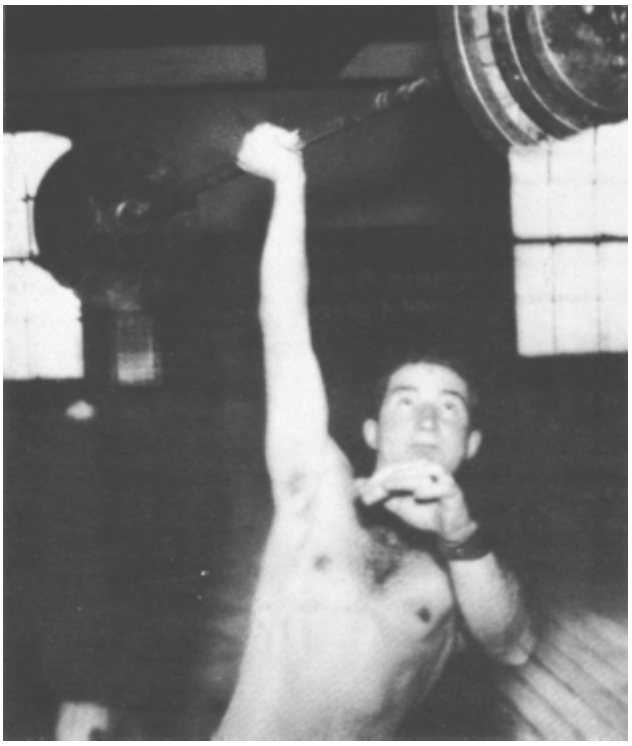
Some of Jack Walsh's most impressive feats called for the ability to stand pain as well as strength. When I first knew him, while he was still weighing under 150 pounds, we tried to get pictures of him hanging from a chinning bar by one finger while holding dumbells totaling sixty pounds in the other hand. The first time he tried the stunt the callus ripped away from his finger, leaving bleeding raw meat. This didn't deter Jack from trying it again, successfully, despite the blood running down his hand and wrist!

Jack originally practiced hanging from a bar with one finger to prepare himself for lifting heavy weights from the floor with one finger, another favorite stunt of old-time strongmen. He had a ring that fit his middle finger from which he suspended a chain that he could attach to weights for lifting. Louis Cyr had lifted 535 pounds with one finger and Jack claimed to have succeeded with 550 in 1950. Later, he said, he lifted 603 pounds in the finger lift.

Another stunt that he did was to hold a heavy barbell across his unprotected skull. I never saw him do this, but he did demonstrate it at York and impressed Ray Van Cleef, who was not easily impressed. I accompanied Jack to a Philadelphia television studio in 1949 or 1950 and saw him bend a piece of ordinary plumbing pipe across his head (no padding) by pulling down on the ends. The pipe was about three feet long. We stopped at a plumbing supply store and bought it on the way to Philadelphia. What was noteworthy about the performance was that Jack had trouble starting to bend the pipe. To get the bend started, he raised the pipe about four inches and brought it down hard with an audible "clunk," across his skull. Then the pipe bent!

Among the more unusual strength feats Jack Walsh performed was to hang from a chinning bar supported only by his chin over the bar. While "chinning" the bar, he would perform a crucifix with a pair of dumbells. He claimed that he had done the chinning/crucifix stunt with a pair of fifty pound dumbells.

I had a couple of amusing encounters with Jack while I was editing ***Strength & Health.*** On one occasion, while I was visiting in Morrisville (It's in Pennsylvania, just across the Delaware River from Trenton, New Jersey, Jack's home town), he asked if I would lend him some barbell plates for a lift he was going to do in a Trenton movie theater. (I had my original collection of exercise plates at my parents' home in Morrisville.) I agreed and went along to help Jack set up. He proceeded to announce that he was going to break Bill Lilly's official belly toss record and I would certify it. I had to take the microphone and explain that three judges and a scale were required to set an official record, but affirmed that if he lifted the weight it would be a most impressive, albeit unofficial, lift.



MASTER OF THE ODD-LIFTS, JACK WALSH — AS A LIGHTWEIGHT — MADE THIS TWO HUNDRED POUND ONE-HAND JERK AT THE TRENTON YMCA. --*PHOTO BY LEBEGERN, COURTESY JIM MURRAY*

Jack succeeded in lifting the weight, which he said was four hundred-plus pounds—something more than Lilly's record. I have no idea what it weighed, other than the pair of fifty-pound exercise plates he borrowed from me. The rest of the weights were a conglomeration of exercise plates and the counter-weights used to help control the raising and lowering of railroad crossing barriers.

The railroad weights were involved in another incident I found amusing. My wife and I, and our two sons — toddlers at the time — had been at the New Jersey shore. On our return we passed through Trenton and I saw a big sign on a gas station to the effect that "The World's Strongest Man" was appearing there. I pulled in to see the strongman and found that it was Jack, but that he wouldn't be there until later. The attendant showed me a "three hundred pound" barbell that Jack lifted nightly with one arm. Anyone who could match his lift would be given a new set of tires, and anyone who could lift the weight overhead with two hands would receive a full tank of gas. The weight consisted of an exercise bar loaded with a mixture of exercise plates and railroad weights. I hefted it and figured I could lift it, so I pulled it to my chest and jerk-pressed it overhead. When I asked to have my tank filled, the attendant said I had to lift it while Jack was present and he wouldn't be there until later. We couldn't wait so I left Jack a note telling him I'd lifted his barbell and would be back the next weekend to do it again in his presence.

Jack telephoned me in York and told me he had only loaded the bar to a weight he figured no one in the Trenton area could lift. It wasn't really 300 pounds, just 250. But since my visit he had loaded it up to a weight that would defy any contender. "How much weight did you add?" I asked. "A pair of twenty-fives," was the answer.

I was sure the weight I had lifted was not 250 pounds. The bar was slightly bent and the oversized holes in the railroad weights allowed a lot of wobbly movement. I could jerk 300 at the time, but would have had more difficulty cleaning 250 than I had experienced. The weight felt more like 220 to me. So the next week I took a lifting belt along with me and revisited the gas station. Sure enough, he'd added a pair of twenty-fives. I continentaled the barbell to my chest and jerked it without any difficulty. "There's a tank of gas," I said, and jerked the weight again. "And there's another." The station attendant was undismayed. "You have to do it when Jack is here," he repeated. "When will he be here?" "Later." I never got the tank of gas.

The trouble with trying to properly credit Jack Walsh as a strongman is that, like the oldt ime professionals, he put numbers on many of his lifts that weren't entirely accurate. There is no question in my mind but that he was very strong, however; the one-arm jerks with more than fifty pounds over bodyweight at a youthful age attest to that. He was also exceptionally tough and determined. And he had no end of competitive fire. During the late 1950s he repeatedly challenged Paul Anderson to all-around tests of strength. He asked how I thought he would do against Paul and I told him, truthfully, that in my opinion Paul would beat him in any basic test of strength whether Paul had practiced it or not. [**Editors note:** We asked Greg Ernst, the Canadian strongman who has officially backlifted 5340 pounds, if he agreed with Jim Murray's assessment that (assuming Walsh had made the backlifts he claimed), Paul Anderson could have raised more than 4700 pounds in the backlift or 1900 pounds in the hand and thigh lift "whether Paul had practiced it or not," and Ernst said that he did not agree, He maintained that although he believed Paul might very well have made such lifts with training, he could not have done so without training, adding that really big poundages in such feats as the backlift and the hand and thigh lift are possible only through progressive resistance, just like any other lift.]

As to whether Paul — or anyone else —could have matched Jack Walsh in stunts such as supporting heavy barbells on his unprotected skull, or in picking up weights with one finger, I don't know. Quite possibly Jack was in a class by himself in tests involving enduring pain while simultaneously lifting or supporting heavy weights. One thing is certain: Jack was an entertaining professional strongman and made a good living for many years by performing unusual feats of strength. [**Editors' note:** Although he has had some health problems, Jack Walsh is still alive; he resides in New Orleans. LA.]

Excerpt from: Pour Devenir Fort et le Rester

[How to Get Strong and Stay So]

By Edmund Desbonnet; Translated by David Chapman

Paris: Librairie Athlétique, N.D. [c. 1916]

Chapter XXVI: "How Triat's Memory was Saved from Oblivion"

riat's method was perfect for the regeneration of the French nation, but the system was attacked by rivals after the great man's death. Triat's ideas then died out, and those who advocated ineffective methods of gymnastics seemed to gain acceptance.

Happily, Providence did not permit that such knowledge would be lost to us, and I was the instrument chosen by it to research and relocate Triat's work, to study it, to coordinate it, to revive it and to publish it in my magazines and my books with the plan to save Triat from oblivion and to make the great and consoling shadow of this apostle of man's regeneration hover over the France of tomorrow. Triat will finally see justice done to his memory which was saved from oblivion thanks to a series of circumstances that are interesting to relate.

In 1856 ***The Family Museum*** published an article under the byline of Paul Féval, the great novelist, on the Triat Gymnasium which at that time was located at 55 Avenue Montaigne in Paris. By a singular fate my mother, who lived in the country, possessed *only* one bound volume of ***The Family Museum***— precisely the one for the year 1856. She kept this in a trunk along with other things that she took with her after her marriage. When my mother married, the trunk was carried up to the attic of our house and there this volume which was destined to have such importance in my own life remained for a long time, hidden under a pile of old things from the country.

From the age of twelve, I was consumed by the idea of becoming strong, and when I asked my father what I could do to become strong, he could not understand such harebrained ideas. But one certain day in January 1881, I was in the attic of the house where I often went in order to do gymnastics with a few apparatuses that I had brought up there. By chance, I found the trunk open and I amused myself by looking through its contents. There I discovered the volume of ***The Family Museum.*** I opened it, and the first picture that came before my eyes carried the title "The Triat Gymnasium." It was the first time that I discovered a work on the subject that interested me so much.

You can well imagine that my amazement and joy were indescribable. After having read the article by Paul Féval, I had the feeling that I had just discovered my vocation. From that day the name of "Triat" danced in flaming letters before my eyes. Triat became a god; I loved him though I did not know him, and his name was sacred to me. Triat's work had been the spark that ignited the powder of my imagination, and in my childish mind there formed an idea which was still rather confused and in an embryonic state that someday I would become a professor like Triat and that I too would regenerate nineteenth century man. *Triat*, that name was graven forever in my heart, and when my mother allowed me to take the volume wherein Triat was mentioned, I kept it as if it were a sacred relic (I still have it to this day), and it became my guide and my constant companion.

I questioned my mother and father about Triat, but neither of them knew anything about him. I became discouraged. From 1881 to 1901, despite my research, I never heard anyone speak the name of Triat, and I found no other trace of him or of his work.

In 1886 I started the first [physical culture] school at Lille, later at Roubaix, and finally in Paris. It was not until March 28, 1901 that a father who had brought his son to me so that he could learn physical culture said to me, "Do not waste your time describing to me the benefits of exercise, for I have been convinced for a long time; I am a former student of Triat!" *Triat!* For the first time this much loved and venerated name resonated in my ears, and it was spoken, Ye Gods, by one of his former students! By someone who (more fortunate than I) had seen him, had spoken with him, better still had been trained by the man himself! Oh joy! I finally had before me a man who could speak to me of Triat: I was going to learn something about him, for until that time I had not possessed a single documented fact aside from the article by Paul Féval which had revealed to me the existence of this great man.

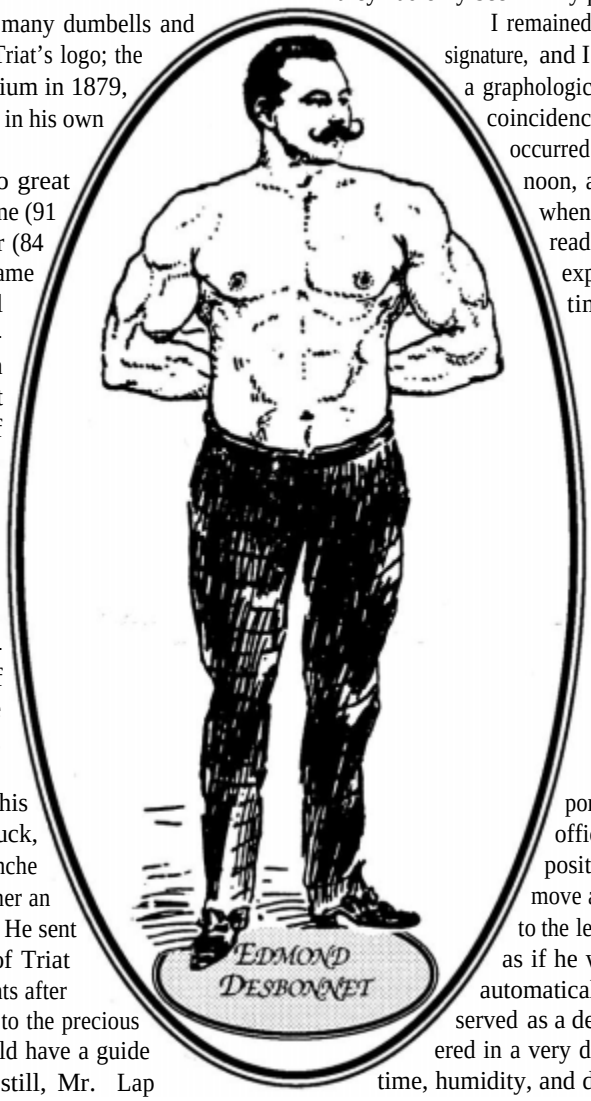
Mr. Chamerot, for such was the name of Triat's former student, a printer in Paris, 2 Rue Saint-Simon, could only sing the praises of his former professor. He recounted his goodness, his devotion, his selflessness, his greatness of soul, his beauty, his strength, his passion for his art, and for his plans for the regeneration of the human species. After the war of 1870 Triat had dropped from sight; Chamerot knew at any rate that he had died around 1881. The man racked his brains, but he could not tell me any more information, but he gave me the names of several persons who might be able to put me on Triat's track. Messrs. Soleirol, Martin, and Laplanche (who had been instructors with Triat) and Mr. Nicolas, a gymnastics instructor who ran a gymnasium at 88 Rue de Rome.

Immediately the next day I went to the Rue de Rome to see Mr. Nicolas who received me very cordially and was happy to speak with me about Triat whom he had known, loved, and with whom he had spent several years as one of his most eager pupils. He told me of the death of Triat's instructors (Soleirol, Martin and Laplanche). but he informed me at the same time that Laplanche was Triat's

nephew and that he had founded a gymnasium at Montpellier. This was the first real clue that I had uncovered (thanks to Mr. Nicolas), and I was thus put on the track that I had sought. Mr. Nicolas showed me the plans for the Normal School of Gymnastics that Triat planned to have built on the Island of Billancourt. I was amazed with this inspired project by its simplicity which immediately proved the great good sense of him who had conceived it. My admiration for Triat grew even greater.

Mr. Nicolas also showed me many dumbells and globe barbells which were marked with Triat's logo; the had come from the sale of his gymnasium in 1879, and Mr. Nicolas had bought them to use in his own establishment.

He also showed me the two great dumbells that Triat lifted, the heaviest one (91 kilos) with his right hand, and the other (84 kilos) with his left hand. I thereby became aware of Triat's strength. Mr. Nicolas al explained to me the way which Triat lifted his dumbells, thereby proving that from his twentieth to his forty-fifth year, Triat had without a doubt become the equal of the mightiest professional strongmen in weight lifting. But Mr. Nicolas had lessons to give, and I did not want to abuse his generosity, and I made a date for another day. At any rate, as soon as I returned home, I addressed a letter to 'The Director of the Laplanche Gymnasium in Montpellier," to let him know of the plans that I had devised: to revive the name of Triat, to publish his portrait, research his work to make him known, continue and revive the principles of his method. Thanks to some unexpected luck, my letter was delivered to Mr. Laplanche the younger, son and successor to his father an a great admirer of Triat, his great-uncle. He sent me a complete and exact biography of Triat finally possessed the interesting documents after ing searched so long in vain, and thanks to the precious hints that I gathered in this way, I would have a guide my highly emotional quest. Better still, Mr. Lap announced to me that he was sending a large portrait of Triat which belonged to his grandmother, Triat's sister, and which featured the following inscription: "To my dear sister Eugenic. Hippolyte Triat."



I read and re-read the life story of this departed master with the fervor of a son who, mourning for his dead father, finds the last words of advice written to him by the man who gave him life.

When on the following day, the postman delivered the registered parcel which contained Triat's portrait, my hands shook with joy and fear. With joy because I was finally going to see him whom I wished to know, and with fear because I was afraid I would not find him as I had imagined him, and I would suffer disillusionment that would thereafter trouble my dreams.

I opened the box which contained a large portrait measuring about sixty-six centimeters (twenty-six inches) and which I unrolled with great emotion. I discovered the handsomest head of an apostle that one could imagine and the most beautiful, athletic body of a full-grown man that one could admire. My dream continue, the reality was even more beautiful than the image which I had constructed myself. There are men who claim that there is no happiness in life—if they had only been in my place on that day!

I remained for many minutes contemplating Triat's signature, and I attempted to discover his character by a graphological study. I then thought back to a bizarre coincidence concerning the date of his death. That occurred on January 11, 1881 at 3:00 in the afternoon, and this corresponded to the exact time when as a child I opened the book wherein I read his name for the first time. I once more experienced the same deep feelings as the time when he died—a time when I was urged on by an unknown force to go up to the attic of my house and pluck from an old, rustic trunk a book which was dull and without interest for my mother, but which she preserved for twenty-five years without purpose or reason, and which I opened to the page where his name was printed. Thus, the dead man's soul had wanted to create the first link in a chain that was destined to connect me to the work of regenerating mankind which was begun by him. And he had chosen me to continue an endeavor which he had not had the fortune to complete.

At last, while smoothing out the portrait which had been creased by the post office cancellation, Triat's image changed position, and his magnetic eyes appeared to move and to focus first on me and then to move to the left in the direction of a section of column as if he wanted to point to that spot exactly. I automatically cast my eyes on this column which served as a decoration for the portrait, and I discovered in a very dark comer a few illegible words which time, humidity, and dust had mostly effaced. Nevertheless, with a little patience and using some bread from the center of the loaf, I succeeded in completely uncovering the letters written on the column—letters which formed two simple words linked by a conjunction, but what words! They are the most respectable that one can utter here on earth: *God and Truth.* That was Triat's motto.And on that particular day I did not go further in my investigations.

I was transfixed by the man, his importance, and his work. I understood that my duty was to research, with the help of God, the Truth that Triat had known and which the French people had not wanted (doubtless because the time for that truth had not yet arrived). Thus is it said that he who plants a tree is not permitted to harvest the fruit.

SOME THOUGHTS ON SPIRIT:

Its Source and "Uses" in the Best of Games

Al Thomas

The questions raised here and the guesses ventured in response to them are connected to issues specifically rooted in Maurice Catarcio's record-breaking feats and more generally, in the wonderment engendered by the Iron Game body and accomplishments. Maurice's feat is the particular to which many of these generalizations point, but at the same time and by implication, these guesses are ventured about all of the truly authentic achievements in our old and noble tradition of strength: about all the great ones with a true "vocation" or calling from On High. (But, lest we read too much into all this, these guesses are ventured about these memorable strength heroes within, and only within the time frames in which they administer the [almost priestly] "offices" of their strongman "vocations." In the paleness of the real world we must remind ourselves that even those whose "call" is the "highest" often prove themselves — so disappointingly to us, their admirers — no more mighty, no more called from On High than we.)

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Unaccountably moved, I recently watched a video of sixty-six year old Maurice Catarcio's unprecedented tearing of 102 decks of plastic-covered playing cards in fourteen minutes, three seconds (blasting into smithereens Herman Bush's 1948 record: forty decks of paper cards in twenty minutes). Because I had witnessed the real event not long before and was the one who slapped each of the 102 decks into the bloodied paws of the "Magnificent Maurice," I couldn't account for the fact that the video's virtual reality was resonating with stronger feelings in me than the real thing, there in Jim Larusso's Muscle World Gym, before the recording eyes of network TV cameras.

Mystified, I replayed the tape again and again. Slowed down in effect, Maurice's "secular epiphany" (as one reporter called it) slowly revealed itself, filling me with the pleasure that always attends demonstrations of great might. Filling others too, we learned later, with a similar pleasure, but also with the shock of recognition that accompanies the experience of epiphany, mentioned above: "the sudden unveiling of hidden meaning, consequent to confrontation with an unexpected event." The reporter's so-called "secular epiphany" revealed itself as any proper one should, experientially, in the resonance-chamber equipped for the recording of prodigious feats, the belly.

Please bear with the next paragraph, which develops, at least as a metaphor, a body-mind or body-Spirit connection that will be returned to, and developed, in the following argument.

As a student of aesthetics (art as feeling) might explain this process: In a mechanism similar to the communication of ideas as a function of the brain —deep feelings (like the almost reverential ones disclosed by some in the audience) are revealed, or more correctly "released," *in* and *by* the nervous system. These feelings, then, are registered or encoded as experience, which is characterized, at the deepest levels, by its resonance to a continuum of feeling-impulses (ultimately aesthetic impulses), ranging from religious-Spiritual responses on the one hand, to their womb-mates, on the other, art and sexuality.

It is an understatement of course to say that a discussion of this sort is rare in the strength journals. But the observations, ventured above, and their subsequent development are part of a larger consideration and argument that are, I think, important, even if for no other reason than that they might elicit the kind of debate without which it is impossible for our game to achieve its fully human potential. Some thoughts, or guesses, at least are ventured below about the Spirit-body connection; about the body as metaphor: about the deep schism between our Iron Game and games/sports (generally considered); and ultimately, about the uniqueness of our Iron Game by reason of its Spirit dimension.

When it comes to discussing an issue like the feeling-cascade touched upon above and the role played by such issues in our deeper understanding of the body and body game, it's beyond debate that only we ourselves (we who love the "weights" and the body) — not others — are guilty of having created the mind-set which exempts us from truly serious, mature, and probing discussions of the Game, its unique body, and the body-Spirit (Iron Game-Spirit) connection. It is nobody other than we who have exempted ourselves from this morally important, growth-enhancing self-analysis.

We have exempted ourselves, in the final analysis, from the self-knowledge that accompanies such discussion for no other reason than that the metaphors, linguistic constructs, and "poetic" imageries that occasionally (but necessarily) crop-up in such discussions are too high-falutin' and pompous, too self-conscious, too precious for folks who just want to look at pictures of big, strong muscles and read biographies (very short ones) about the possessors of big, strong muscles and the heavy weights they can lift: "Enough already. Save all that 'philosophical' crap for the eggheads at the ***Readers Digest."***

If we can accept the intent of the foregoing discussion and then move on, we come to some observations that advance our argument by specifying it. As a start, the spiritual dimensions of "soul"-stirring achievements in strength and body are registered, as we've

seen, in our 'middle." A more colorful metaphor than our earlier use of "belly" and "nervous system" comes to us in the designations employed by anthropologists and students of religion in referring to this body-site of feeling: i.e. the "sacred (or holy) middle" and, more commonly, "the sacrum." Whatever the seeming inappropriateness of such terms in the squeamish Nineties, this mid-realm has been "holy" for thousands of years before there were any Romans who subsequently named this anciently-sacred venue of Spirit (and emotion — and sexuality) the sacrum.

Perhaps more germane to some of us, the Christians' Savior assured his followers that Spirit was similarly located. The venue of its kingdom, He taught, is "within us," "in the middle of us," "in the midst of us." In this placement, of course, Jesus sounded very much (But why not?) like thousands of so-called pagans in His location of this ultimately-important "faculty" and seemingly-ever-applicable metaphor.

However "quaint" the '*physiology" in all this, the fact behind the metaphor is inarguable. We all know the Holy-Middle source of the profound emotion that we experience in the presence of great art, or the supernal, or the person for whom we would die. Knowing the deep source of this feeling, we know also that our most spiritually enriching experiences have their roots in it. This was true for the ancients to whom it was the realm of the god-within, the Spirit. It is hardly less so, if with different designations, for US moderns.

"But when you say, 'for US moderns,' does the "US" refer to the brilliant priest (-technocrats) of our theological-industrial complex?"

No. Bless your heart. No.

"But—but does it refer to the philosophers-of-spirit of our academic-industrial complex?"

No, not at all. But we must go slowly here. Try this thought on carefully; it may not fit at first. It's the irony of ironies in this age of the specialist. Try to understand this:

To nothing— to no group or class or profession—to nothing does that pronoun "US" refer more inarguably than to Our Game, to even the lowliest of the real-ones in Our Game. Nobody—not academician, not cleric, not scientist —nobody is more the student, the chief advocate, the "philosopher" of body —nobody is more the Levite (the priest of body's ah-empowering "sacred middle") than we in the Game are (even the "least" among US): we who love this Body (-Spirit)-Game of ours.

This "holiness" —this. at least metaphoric. holiness; this wholiness —of our (quite noble) game deserves celebration. The connection between these awarenesses about ourselves and the Game's role in embodying them for us — our growing experience of the deep, moral distinctions that separate Our Game from small "g" games — all this cries out for celebration.

I love baseball. I love its history. I love the "mud lusciousness" of the game, the land whose "mud lusciousness" shapes the game. But rhapsodize about it as much as I and other silly people may, our nation's favorite pastime is just a game, though a magnificent one. To put the very best face on our favorite pastime it is just a game: an invented game. When it and Our Game meet, a blush suffuses the cheeks of its fans as their game's mongrel pedigree is rolled-out in the presence of the human body's family tree: with its human roots in mankind's primal parents there in the Garden (long before it had an outfield) — and its transcendent roots in the Power, the Presence: in the Spirit: the source of Maurice's resurrection and of all human renewal and heroic revitalization.

But our Iron Game, thank God, will never be America's favorite pastime. Such conferrals of dime store cachet are best left to ***Field of Dreams*** cultists.

If (other than as part of its name) our Iron Game was truly a game, it would be the capital "G" Game of a divinely-appointed human body — and at its center: The Kingdom. (Now listen well: In their reading of this preceding sentence, there will be Good People who feel constrained, by their deepest and most honest instincts, to enclose "divinely" in quotation marks. That is fine. But even they, *especially* they [in their honesty], can't escape the sense of a deep and powerful force at work in this "Game" of theirs.) Ours, to repeat, is the game of a divinely-appointed human body, with *the* (or *a)* Kingdom at its center. And this is true. True and psychically important no less so as (mere?) metaphor than as substance. It is true, no less (or more), for the true-hearted atheist than for the believer in Jesus or Judaism or the Vedas — or in wondrous groves of oak.

Hearkening for a moment back to the earlier discussion of the sacrum in our continuing pursuit of Iron Game meanings: As is obviously NOT true for any of the small "g" games —despite their fancy country clubs and Halls of Fame —the connections in our Iron "Game" are deep, not just back to the Civil War Days, not just back to the beginnings of our own personal history, but way back to the beginnings of our race's memory. That's what the body in our body-sport connects with, and that's what it connects us (its incarnations) with.

The deep memory is what informs us when, alone (always alone, adrift-on-our-own, as in no other game), we dive into the deep sea (of our Being); and rising to the surface, we embark, alone (without coach or sensei), upon our ponderous swim. Alone.

This "aloneness" (not loneliness, as we will see) is a critical issue in the distinctions drawn here between our Iron Game and games-as-such. Games-as-such cannot exist without coaches, managers, instructors, senseis. Until too old to matter, game players are plagued with a hierarchy of instructors. whose official role is the instruction of novitiate and bald-dome alike into the mystery of games. Their real purpose, however, (though unofficial, of course) is nourishing a childish dependency in their charges and retarding in them the sort of morally-informed maturation that Our Game effects by connecting us with the deep memory touched-upon above.

For all the aloneness of this deep journey, it is not lonely. There are of course, all the therapeutic silliness and happiness that accompany shared travail with training partners, "with whom (in Harry Paschall's words. describing a similar phenomenon) we have ridden the river." But at the same time there is the feeling of family, far deeper than the transient connectedness provided by teams and team sports. For many. Our Game is a psychic parent: much more their true source than their gene-source had ever been. Connected to the world-within, the iron man experiences *IN* his deep self, *FROM* his deep self, that which he could never *learn,* surely never *experience,* from teammates or even the wisest coach or sensei, out-there in the world beyond his skin.

Hunkered down in his holy middle, he discovers, not as a

theory but as nonverbal, immediate, sensory, transforming experience: a "unified field." There in his sacrum (where thought has become living cells), he experiences an inner reality as complex and diverse as its twin, the "reality" of the outer world: 'These moments [are] of pure, positive happiness, when all doubts, all fears, all inhibitions, all tensions, all weaknesses [are] left behind. Now self-consciousness [is] lost. All separateness and distance from the world [disappear]." In this peak experience, as described by the psychologist Abraham Maslow, we see and feel something of Jesus' "Kingdom of Heaven" (within), of Swedenborg's "interior awareness," of Buddha's "Nirvana." We see and feel something, a bit at least, of what the audience sensed in Magnificent Maurice — the apartness, the abstractedness —of his doings that remarkable afternoon.

Those of us who have journeyed beyond our little boy enthusiasms for the "weights" —those of us who have experienced at least some modest degree of access to this sort of deep world via the spirit-stretching intensity of the Spirit-Body connection that we have experienced UNDER ponderous weight loads —we have some resonance to, we have internalized to a degree at least, these states of "peak experience," of "interior awareness."

In recounting these sorts of connections, Maslow's patients told him that, for the first time they felt "like a member of the family, not like an orphan." Indeed, Maslow came to feel — as the mature Iron Gamer has sometimes sensed, but usually lacked the bold courage to say—that such experiences were the real "reality," the truly normal "normal life," not some mystical experience available only to chaps in Himalayan retreats.

Hitting a homerun is a "peak experience," but you do not *labor-under-it.* You don't *labor under* the "peak experience" that comes in the split-second of catching a game-winning Hail Mary Pass. You most assuredly DO *live-inside,* you most assuredly do *labor-under,* any one of a hundred (intense-beyond-imagining) experiences that are provided, not just to great athletes (but to the least of athletes, if willing to pay the price), by our Alma Mater (who was kind enough to provide Maurice a "peak experience" to "live-inside" for fourteen minutes and three seconds).

These sorts of folks, as Maslow assures us (but need not have), are not hysterics, but the healthiest of people. Where the great man is wrong — as any mature Iron Gamer knows — is in his notion that such experiences are "accidents or moments of grace," available to one percent of the population. "Accidents" they surely are *not* to those who achieve them as part of Our Game. "Moments of grace," perhaps, but moments that Our Game makes available with a lavish hand to those willing to make the deep journey into the truest of 'family' connectednesses.

Products of a social contract, games are constructed in a practiced realm of abstract geometries beyond the surface of the player's skin, as we've seen. If larger significances are sought in that realm — larger moral, political, aesthetic, or sociological significances — they are necessarily qualified by the essential game-ness of games —by the predictability of the game-purpose — by the inescapable abstractness of any activity whose "essence," like the game's, is expressed in number formulations. In the world of the game as such, significances are smaller rather than larger, because a game's paradigm "legislates" its conversion into *a* world but invariably a world bereft of meaning or spirit.

On the other hand and in an opposite direction, one experiences in our Game's paradigm a force that "legislates" a conversion that is charged with meaning: in which the Real World "out-there" (and the Real World "in-here," in our "holy-middle," that is) undergoes a sea change-conversion into a Game (for our purposes, here, our Iron Game): a conversion replete with significances: with the stuff of literature and art, but more importantly here, with the stuff of "affirmative prayer," which (in a few pages, relative to Maurice) will be defined as "spirit-filled, life communicative living."

Unlike the outward-direction and social dynamics of games (in which meaning is undermined by the inescapable sense, however, endearing, of contrivance), Our Game's direction is inward: its dynamics, those of the Spirit-body connection, with their source, as we've seen, in the sacrum. In these sorts of distinctions, lie the deep moral divergence between these two formulations (Our Game and games) and their respective "realities." It's to such distinctions as these that the disputant turns when correcting any attempt to confer cachet upon Our Game by the attribution to it of the (ostensible) honorific term "sport" (or the lesser one, "game"). The true beauty of Our Thing is not contingent upon such patronizing, but ultimately demeaning, conferrals.

A counter-argument to the premise ventured above is that bodybuilding and its contests represent a game and, if less accountably, a sport. As suggested earlier, the conferral of the honorific term "sport" upon activities such as bodybuilding and its contests is meant to provide these endeavors with some cachet. It is clear, however, that no definition (developed pursuant to logic's demand for internal coherence) supports the notion that bodybuilding is either a game or a sport. And any definition that is sufficiently manipulated to permit bodybuilding contests being included under the heading of "sport" would be shamelessly contrived and "stipulative" (one reached, that is, by agreement: in this particular case, an agreement between "interested parties," who profit by the attribution of this term, "sport," to their showcasing of bodies).

If there is an argument that validates my notion that the body's "role" in our Iron Game is different in kind from its "role" in a game or sport — "different in kind" and more "holy" (for lack of a more precise term) — we find such a validation in the perversion that is visited upon the body when it is subjected to contests, to competition.

For instance, despite the fact that boxing is a product of "business contrivances" far more sleazy than those that produce bodybuilding contests, a boxing aficionado (even the most humane of the species) is less disjunct from himself (and from his humanity) at the final bell of a fairly-matched boxing contest than an aficionado-of-body is at the end of a well-judged bodybuilding contest (a greater and greater rarity, it seems, with the passing years).

For the aficionado who is sensitive to such distinctions, they result from the fact that, in boxing, a body is a vehicle for doing. It is seen and responded-to for what it does, not for what it IS or MEANS (in some metaphysical sense). It is precisely in this latter sense that. in humanely conceived physique display (such as the "exhibition," *never* the contest), the body is not responded to for what it does because it doesn't DO anything, except to pose." It is responded-to

for what it IS and for what it MEANS. And the body's "is-ness" and its meaning have far more to do with transcendental truth(s) and "holiness" (the body-as-temple, etc.) than they have to do with what the body DOES or CAN DO — in this case, posing, which up-there on the posing dais is far closer to ballet than to a game or a sport, even in the most florid aficionado's "definitions" of these words.

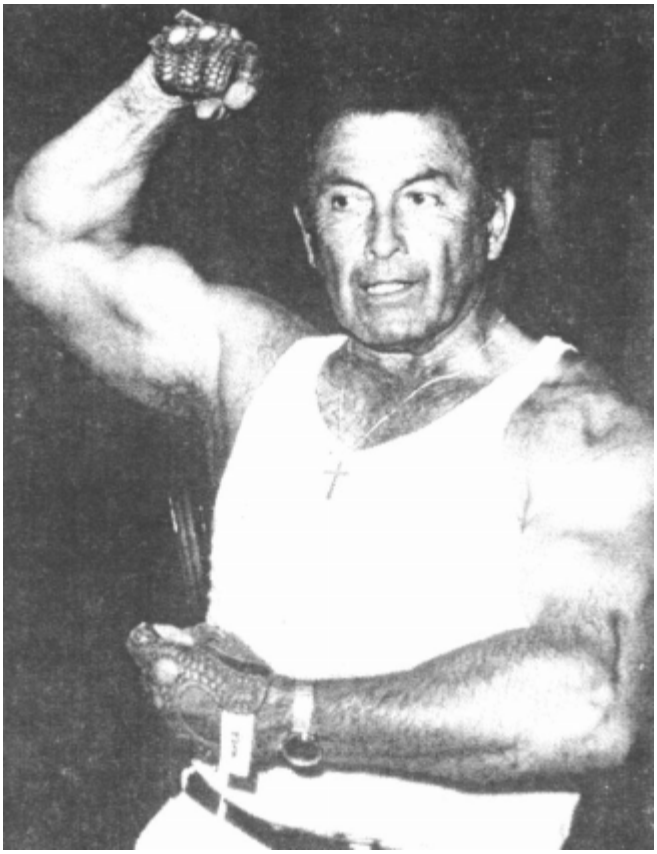
And if we are called to account for the impossible tackiness and bush league-ness of bodybuilding's professionalization (contrasted with the professionalization of REAL sports) —we need mere ly remember and consider these distinctions above. However tacky and bush league (ignoring far weightier moral considerations) it is to professionalize thwacking jaws and noses (which is merely the perverting of what the body-as-machine DOES) —the professionalizing of what the body IS (in ail its beauty and metaphysical-religious significance) is far more disruptive than boxing to the deep resonances of our Holy Middle, and especially so because such disruptions are deeper than words and betray themselves (if at all) merely as dissatisfaction with (such silly and inconsequential matters as) bad contest placements.

It is, finally, against a backdrop of this sort of inquiry into what the Iron Game was coming to mean to me —what it had always meant in an inchoate way, but was coming to mean in a more clearly comprehensible sense —that Maurice's feat began focusing itself in me, and especially so when a New Age lady who saw the video remarked that Maurice appeared, at times, as though he were meditating or praying, which was a "surprise" to her since she hadn't thought of the "somewhat macho Maurice as the meditative or prayerful sort."

Whatever else the video shared with art, it was becoming clear that, like art, it had isolated its suffering and ever-more bloody subject from the Honorable Maurice Catarcio, the imposing Chairman of the Bridge Commission of Cape May County (NJ.), but even more interestingly, it also separated him from the Maurice who "works out with the weights" at Muscle World Gym.

In the words of another viewer, "I remember Maurice when he was the best built guy around, but then his businesses took over, he got fat, and then went down with diabetes and cancer. But that afternoon, I got the feeling he'd been thinking for so long that he could do all this strongman stuff that he'd 'hard-wired' a circuit in his brain or his Spirit, somewhere, and, before anybody noticed, he'd thought up a new body for himself. [One is reminded here of the insightful line from 'Romans': 'Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may know what the will of God is.'] As the stack of cards grew, right there in front of our eyes, he actually grew younger looking and more peaceful. He seemed deep into himself. Really deep. Abstracted also —as though he was meditating about other things while his hands were doing their own thing, separate from him. Since he went-down with cancer, he's rebuilt lots of muscle, but this feat seemed to me more an example of mind over matter than muscle over matter."

On a less poetic note, it has become a cliche of sports journalism to attribute the success of a game-player to spirit. The term is never defined, however. In sports, "spirit" has become a synonym for *spunkiness* or *morale* or *vigor* or *esprit de corps*, etc. Its intent is vague approval, with no hint, of course, at its original sacral denotation. There was something, however, of the original intention of the term in one reporter's observation to me that he "felt" a "force, a Spirit" in Maurice while he was in the midst of his card-tearing, "despite my first-impression sense of him as a dominating sort of guy, not your usual Spiritual sort."



ON 19 AUGUST 1995 SIXTY-SIX YEAR OLD MAURICE CATARCIO OF CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY, TORE 102 DECKS OF PLAYING CARDS IN HALF IN FOURTEEN MINUTES AND THREE SECONDS.

– PHOTO COURTESY MAURICE CATARCIO

Apart from the obvious muscular force, there was inarguably a "force" at work in Maurice that afternoon: one that I've often found in the authentic ones and that, more and more with the passing years, I'm coming to appreciate as being coterminous with the force implicit in the ancient referent of the term "Spirit."

This notion was seconded by the New Age lady mentioned above. What an earlier commentator saw as "abstraction" and "apartness" struck her as more like "prayer." But, lest she offend the unprayerful, she quickly defined her terms: "I don't know whether this ripping and tearing is a sport or athletics or what. But I never saw the kind of transformation that I saw this man experience in any other sport. I got the feeling from all this of some kind of Yoga, which teaches that Spirit creates body, and also that the strict attention necessary for this creating is provided by Yoga as a sort of focusing technique. I hope I'm not offending you muscle-people, but to me all this looked more like a new kind of Yoga than a game or a sport.

"When I said I'd gotten the feeling of 'prayer,' I meant the real thing, not the begging that passes for prayer. For instance, if

you could translate this man and his miracle-healing into words, they'd comprise a prayer. What are the processes that have contributed to this not-young man's youthful strength and to his ability to heal himself? They are nothing more than the substance of the kind of prayer that I'm talking about, 'affirmative prayer': the kind that focuses, not just on life, but on discovering and celebrating the *processes* of life that taken together, add up to life. This 'affirmative prayer' exists in any process of living that's in touch with Spirit, and with life-communicating living. Is there a better way than this to describe the quietness that everybody remarked about, welling up in him from the deep place where Spirit resides?

"My guess is that this man is special because he 'knew' even without 'knowing' that the Spirit in him had not been violated by his diabetes or cancer or anything else. He would never put all this in these words, of course, because he's a devout Catholic, but as I said earlier, everything he did to heal himself and restore himself to even more strength than he ever had before was, and is, prayer. He'd explain it in one way; I, in another way — but whatever. This feat has been very moving, even to me, and I never lifted a weight in my life, but what you can learn from this kind of thing is that whether the technique is called Yoga or prayer or meditation, its purpose is the same: to act as a focusing technique so that the Power in Spirit deep in our 'Holy Middle,' can be brought to the surface, where it can be used, as this man did like any other 'principle' in nature or science."

As I said earlier, this is strange, even "inappropriate." language in a discussion of strength and the body. But I hope that one may be forgiven for wondering why language that has reverential meaning in a discussion of the source and resources of Spirit suddenly sounds "inappropriate" simply because, now, the discussion of these Spiritual sources has been shifted to a strength journal. At the same time that I *do* wonder why discussion of Spirit is disallowed in Iron Game publications by the very folks for whom such discussion *is* appropriate in another publication, I do *not* wonder (I *DO* understand) why such discussion is "disallowed" by those folks to whom life is (merely) matter: nothing but the meaningless collocation of molecules and atoms. On the other hand, however, I may wonder, of course, how such folks can be quite so convinced-beyond-questioning about the finality of their pronouncements (about the finality of matter) in this post-Einsteinian, increasingly Platonic, field theory, quantum physics world of ours.

"Strange subject matter," indeed. The strength athlete is, after all, the only athlete (considered in his role as an athlete, that is) about whom the argument for a Spirit-center can be seriously mounted, without fear of bathos, a descent into sentimental claptrap and hot stove "philosophizing" about the religion of games and teams.

What's the reason that, despite almost reverential feelings about strength and strongmen, we rarely permit ourselves to think — and more rarely yet to write —in terms that are commensurate with these reverential feelings? One reason. I think, is that we have been conditioned to contemplate our Iron Game and its champions in formulations that have their origin in games. And since it is virtually impossible to talk at any depth about a mere game without descending to bathos and Grantland Rice-rhetoric, we find ourselves with millions of Iron Game words but none of them addressed to the problem of comprehending the Spiritual problem, the mystery of Spirit and deep feeling, presented to our conceptual and experiential faculties by the doings of a Maurice or any other distinguished strongman.

It's important, then — and it's about damn time —that we disabuse ourselves of the notion that ours is just-another game, a sport like the others. It's important — and it's about damn time —for us to think and write about this generous-hearted endeavor of ours from some other orientation than one concerned only with numbers, records and anecdotes. In short, it's important — and about damn time —to proceed in all this without any apologies for expressing our appreciation, our love, for this Game of ours. Ours is too important an avocation—for some almost a vocation in the churchly sense — for it to remain unexamined as to its true "nature," and as to the spirit which is the ground of its, and our, nature.

It's important — and about damn time — that Our Game comes to terms with, and speaks aloud, its instincts about body: what it is and means to us. Body: the noblest work in nature's gallery. In games as such, bodies do exciting things, even artistically pleasing things. but always things that provide the only reason for games. In Our Game, the aficionado resonates to epiphany: to the pleasure that body provides his aesthetic sense, almost his religious sense. He resonates to achievements in strength, to the grace and balleticism of body's most ponderously massive doing.

More beautiful than a double play, the immemorially-crafted human body—balanced like the earth itself on the butterfly wing of Spirit — rewards its devotees' contemplation with a sense of the human body's majesty, to which games, by their nature, are inattentive: too busy to attend to. The noble body: in every age the temple of God, or gods. Above all, the ultimately-crafted human body rewards its devotees' contemplation with a sense of the mystery and beauty of humanness itself; the tragedy of our being brought to life, the sublimity of our being brought to life-in-the-Spirit. No game, this Iron Game carcass.

Ultimately, it is body that sets even the least distinguished of Iron World citizens apart from the most distinguished citizens of gamedom. Try as he might—and many do —even the most obtuse iron worlder cannot forever escape a confrontation of some sort (or a collision at least) with the mystery of the body, not just that it often breaks down sliding home, but the confounding mystery of what body is and poetically at least, how and what it means. Not even the wisest citizen of Iron World can answer such questions, of course, but the very process of living in proximity with questions like these and with the body that is their source is humanizing and ennobling, in the very same way that proximity even to undistinguished art is more humanizing and ennobling than proximity to the most distinguished machine.

When answers to questions like these are broached, a yet-deeper one emerges: How is Spirit incarnated — and to what purpose in so "low" a vehicle as (even the grandest) human flesh? With such deep issues, even the most distinguished citizen of game-dom has no truck, certainly not by design or "collision."

No game, it's clear, could put one as immediately, as pal-

pably in touch with Spirit as the epiphany that was figured-forth, swelteringly, in the quietude and transfiguration of the peacefully-suffering Maurice (slumped deeply into his chair, his hands slippery with blood). Tearing now: the hundredth deck. And now: the hundred-first. And now, finally, hunching himself up with a grunt: the bloody hundred-second, in an excruciating fourteen minutes and three seconds. No game this. No game player, he. The epiphany? What other than Spirit, immanent in all life-communicative living and doing. But not as theological cliche.

What we experienced that day in Jim Larusso's Gym was different in kind from the "spirit" bandied about on the sports page. In the presence of the emotion-tugging feat experienced that afternoon, the devotee put away for the moment all truck with concepts and abstractions: His heart having been touched in the presence of such agonizing capacity to DO, to ENDURE, and to SUFFER, all so manifestly superior to his own.

My "authority" for the ideas (the guesses) ventured here about Spirit resides in its (in Spirit's) works: my "authority," that is, rests in the effects (the works, the products) of what one might call the "applied principles of Spirit." Just as the "authority" of scientific principle resides in its effects (its works): in the fact, that is, that scientists can use it. The rootage of the strength athlete, deep in our race memory — in Spirit — is deeper and more existential in its effect upon him and upon his achievement of Self than the tentative rootage that connects the game player with the ultimately essentialist contrivances of his rules-oriented game.

As the years pay out I have come to feel that nobody can be known in any sustaining way apart from a consideration of his connection to body, and ultimately, and even more importantly. to Spirit: his connection to immanence, to his "holy middle." All of which seems particularly true of the central player in our drama of Spirit — and of all authentic players in the body-drama of Spirit.

"Nothing ever disturbs us without our permission," a wise preacher assures us. A photo resonates in my mind, taken at the time that Maurice's cancer was discovered. Big-gutted, the 247-pound version of the once flat-bellied strongman is sprawled in an easy chair with a big grin on his unshaved mug, a glass in one hand, and the other signaling the "V" sign. It was the sort of grin, I have a hunch, that perched on the cocky mug of old Jacob when he announced to the Angel, after a long night of wrestling. "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And truly "blessed" is what old Maurice has become — has worked so hard to become — by his attention to the "workings-in-him" of capital "S" Spirit: his long and painful grappling with a Jacob-ian blessing-in-disguise.

In Jacob's fashion (and in the words of gerontologist Ronald Miller), Maurice has seen fit to "grapple with the approaching end of physical life in an attempt to call forth the hidden blessings within human finitude." His subsequent "grappling" gives evidence of his rootage in Spirit and of his desire to share this realization of Spirit's power.

The much-remarked serenity that characterized Maurice's perfomance seems to have had its source in his deep awareness that the decades-long battle he had waged against himself was, finally, finished. Another way to express this (though at odds with his old street lighter *persona)* is that Maurice's serenity was the afterglow of his (and of all the good ones') realization that the "therapeutic wherewithal," necessary for his healing, had always been right there in the "middle of him," "within him": Precisely the site where the Prophet reminded us that we would find the "Kingdom": the sacrum: the realm of Spirit—to which the wise man's surrender is his victory.

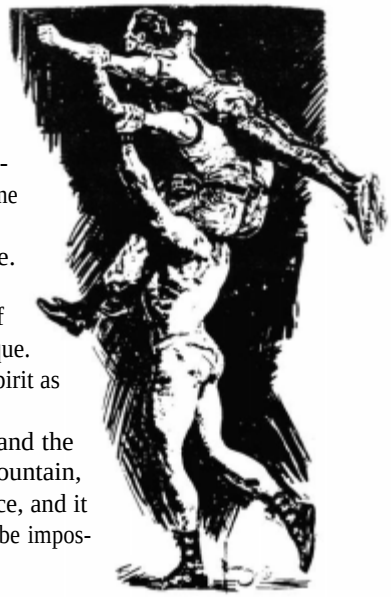
Looking at this photo of Maurice —somehow triumphant in his strickenness — and then fast-forwarding our film to watch old Maurice in the process of constructing a (strongman-)life, one gets the sense that, in his eyes, there must, in reality, never have been a truly "final diagnosis" of cancer for him, because a strongman lives (strong people live) in a universe of infinite possibility, in which a new life is there-for-the-making.

In everything that has come to pass since that photo, there is a child-like magic thinking, according to which the thought is the master of the deed. First, one announces the reality of facing-down death —believes with a child-like power in this reality (this new Spirit-consciousness) — hunkers himself down in his "sacred middle," restoring his broken old-self with Spirit — and then, proceeds to the next day's doings in "delicious anticipation," in "confidently-knowing anticipation" of unprecedented Powers.

Like the sun on a cloudy day, the Powers had, of course, always been there, but were obscured — in effect: "not there"— for him until thrown over by disease, he surrendered himself to embarkation on the ancient journey within and, surrendering himself (like a droplet returning to the ocean-of-Spirit), he discovered within his interior Kingdom the Spirit-Power to prevail not just over cancer and death and tons of iron, but more importantly, over the forces in himself which had sought his destruction. In order to master Nature, he had to obey it and master himself.

Perhaps not yet completely transformed. Who is? But the message that breaks through, slowly, to the observer from this unlikely Phoenix-resurrection is just that:

If we can bring ourselves to live with a similar sort of child-like mastery, in which the thought truly is master of both the deed and matter itself —



If ever we can come, properly child-like, to a deep comprehension of this Power-conferring Game of ours, like none other—

If ever we can come. properly child-like, to a deep, even humble comprehension of the special, the absolutely unique. entree Our Game provides to Spirit as the real source of renewal —

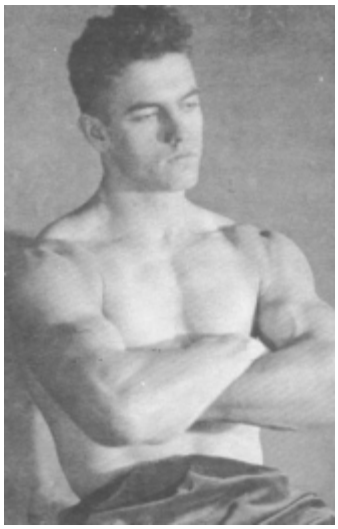
Then, like Maurice and the others, we can say to the mountain, "Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible."

The IRON Grapevine

Dear *IGH:*

As the years pass, I realize more and more how valuable David P. Willoughby has been to those of us who love strongmen and bodybuilding. This realization led me to provide the following information for those who may not fully understand Dave's value to us all.

One of the most profound chapters in the history of the Iron Game ended on January 20, 1983 with the passing of David P. Willoughby. He was eighty-one years old. Greatness may be measured by the survival, over time, of a man's efforts. Without any doubt, David P. Willoughby's contributions as a writer, theorist, and historian in the field of physical culture are without equal and we are still very much in his debt. In his day, Willoughby was the world's foremost historian of the Iron Game.



Willoughby's knowledge of anatomy in relation to physical development was unmatched He had a lifelong association with the world of academics, and he earned his living as an anthropometrist and illustrator for medical and paleontology textbooks. Although he worked full-time, he used his spare-time to investigate, catalogue, and present an immense store of information. He was both reliable and indefatigable as he chronicled the history of musclebuilding and strength.

Willoughby compiled a list of over three thousand weightlifting records from all nations, from 1880 to the end of his life. He either took or carefully estimated the bodily measurements of thousands of strongmen weightlifters, bodybuilders, and athletes the world over. The interpretations and conclusions of this vast research was prepared with painstaking exactness and can only be appreciated by studying his many published articles and books over five decades. His writings and drawings have appeared in medical journals and physical culture magazines throughout the world.

Probably the greatest series of articles ever published in Bernarr Macfadden's ***Physical Culture*** magazine was authored by Willoughby. It was a complete course in bodybuilding, strength, and development and it featured the anthropometrical statistics and measurements along with the feats of many Iron Game personalities. The series ran through ten installments from January-October, 1930, and in it Dave projected the best roads to symmetrical development and simplified the whole field of physical culture.

Another of Willoughby's classics appeared in the Raders' ***Iron Man*** magazine from 1956 to 1963 under the title "The Kings of Strength" (twenty-two chapters). This series is certainly one of the most complete treatments of the subject ever published. In 1933, Dave entered the home study or correspondence field with ***The Willoughby Method of Home Physical Training*** – a masterpiece of well illustrated instruction. The financial depression of that era prevented Dave's work from becoming a successful venture.

Not only was Dave Willoughby the historian of the Iron Game, he extended his genius and writing skills into the fields of natural history and paleontology. His ***Empire of Equus,*** for instance, which required fourteen years of painstaking research and drawing, was a definitive work on the natural history of the horse. The same can be said about his great work, ***All About Gorillas*** (1978). Another book dealt with elephants, but was never published.

Dave's last and perhaps greatest book, ***The Super Athletes,*** published in 1970, is a truly encyclopedic work which applies a scientific yardstick to man's athletic achievements from the beginning of recorded performances, not only for the weightlifting or strongman enthusiast but for every sports fan and devotee. It is a complete survey of athletic excellence in almost every sports field, and it is done in a manner unique in sports literature.

Dave was born March 17, 190l, in New Orleans, Louisiana, of Irish and English-French parents. He resided in California, principally Los Angeles, after 1912. He commenced barbell exercising in 1918, and regular weightlifting a year or so later. He became a member of the weightlifting team of the Los Angeles Athletic Club in 1921, and won the A.A.U. championship of Southern California in 1923-24-25-26. In 1924, he won the A.A.U. National Championship. As Dr. John Fair has written in these pages, Dave was a pioneer in the organizing of a weightlifting association recognized by and affiliated with the A.A.U., this being the California Amateur WeightLifters' Association, founded in 1925. He was also the first, with Ottley Coulter and George F. Jowett, to introduce and define for American lifters a full list of lifts, rules, and regulations, this being done in connection with the American Continental Weight Lifters' Association (ACWLA) in 1924.

Willoughby's measurements and weightlifting records are as follows: Height 6'1-l/2"; weight 188-194 lbs. Best lifts (all made prior to 1939) – Left Hand Snatch, 162-l/2 lbs.; Right Hand Swing, 163 lbs.; Right Hand Clean and Jerk, 195-l/2 lbs.; Two Hands Swing, 164 lbs.; Two Hands Snatch, 214 lbs.; Two Hands Clean and Jerk, 274 lbs.; Two Hands Slow Curl, 150 lbs.; Rectangular Fix, 140-l/2 lbs.; Pullover at Arms' Length 117-l/2 lbs.; Abdominal Raise, 92 lbs.; Hip Lift, 2000 lbs. He practiced over sixty different lifts and feats, and — outside of 'pressing" — made respectable records in all of them. He turned professional in December 1926, and conducted a private gymnasium for two years thereafter.

David P. Willoughby's standards of accuracy and integrity were beyond reproach, and I am proud to have had him as a personal friend. His passing was a great loss to his dear wife Carol, to his family and many friends, and to me physical culture world.

Vic Boff
Coral Gables, FL

Paul Anderson's Moscow Triumph

Arkady Vorobyov

Editors' Note: Although the story of Paul Anderson's 1955 trip to Moscow with the U.S. weightlifting team is weIl known, we thought our readers would enjoy this article by Arkady Vorobyev, which describes how the great Russian lifter viewed Anderson's achievements. It is reprinted from: John Williams, trans., *USSR-USA Sports Encounters* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977).

June 15, 1955 was a rather cold, wet day in Moscow. Fifteen thousand spectators wrapped up in raincoats and sheltering beneath umbrellas **or** newspapers waited patiently for the start of a weightlifting match in the open-air Zelyony Theater.

The coming encounter between the weightlifters of the USA and the USSR had been on the lips of people in trams and shops, in restaurants and movie houses. By evening the streets of the city became deserted. The unfortunate ones without tickets had flown off like moths to the light of their television screens. Upsetting all the normal notions about the size of its following weightlifting took its revenge on soccer and ice-hockey. To be honest, if the match itself had not taken place and only one man had remained on the platform, thousands of spectators would have still stayed in their seats, if that man had been Paul Anderson.

When he stepped out of the airplane and onto the gangway an enthusiastic "exclamation" was heard from our side. The "Dixie Derrick," as Anderson was nicknamed, really staggered the imagination. Powerful arms, somewhat reminiscent of a bull's leg in shape, bulged beneath the short sleeves of his shirt. The twenty-two year old Paul Anderson stood 177.5 cm [5' 9.8"] and weighed 165 kg. [364 pounds]. He had a rolling gait that reminded one of a pair of compasses: one leg stood firm while the other drew an arc and bore it forward. This gait underlined even more his bulk and power.

Immediately, when he set foot on Moscow soil, Anderson became extremely popular. Scientists and pensioners, schoolchildren and housewives followed the news of this miracleman with great interest. Everything seemed unusual, such as the fact that Paul trained right in his own bedroom, where he had fitted a platform and equipped a small spats hall. And the fact that at the age of nineteen he weighed 120 kg. [264 pounds].

He had a varied sporting career. Paul threw the discus and put the shot and played football on a university team in the state of South Carolina. But in 1952 he took up weightlifting. He made rapid progress and could probably have become world champion in 1954 if it had not been for an injury to his left hand. No sooner had he recovered from this setback, however, when he was involved in a road accident. Nevertheless, he did not let weightlifting happiness pass him by.

In those days much less was said about the five hundred kilogram barrier in the total than was subsequently said about the six hundred kilogram mark, probably because few believed it was possible. Thirty years of expectations had made even the most confined optimists skeptical. And suddenly, like a genie from the lamp, a miraculously strong man appeared who lifted 518.5 kg. [1143 pounds.] — although the result had not been officially ratified at the time.

With his unusual strength and size, Anderson became a living legend to be touched and pinched. He once joked to a journalist that several cows grazed on his front lawn so that he could drink three gallons of fresh milk each morning. The journalist duly reported this to his readers in complete seriousness. If Anderson had said that each morning he ate a whole roast lamb for breakfast, no one would have dared doubt him.

We went to the joint training session with the Americans as to a revelation, once again because of Anderson. The question everyone wanted to solve was: what was this — a miracle or a triumph of methodology? Justifying his nickname, the Dixie Derrick declined the warm-up, and began by cleaning a weight of 147.5 kg. [325 pounds] to his chest (John Davis had won the world champi-onships five times with 145 kg.[319 pounds] and less) and pressed it above his head six times in succession. Not bad for starters! Then he asked for 172.5 kg. [380 pounds] which was four kilograms more than Canadian Doug Hepburn's world record. Oblivious of our astonishment, Paul pressed this weight three times. At the same training session he also snatched 135 kg. [297 pounds]. Then, lying on a bench, he pressed 205 kg. [451 pounds] three times.

Finally, Anderson lifted 275 kg. [606.25 pounds] off a rack and onto his shoulders whilst barefooted. The bar bent with the weight. Paul gave the weight a jolt as if to show that this monstrous weight was no more than a trifle for him. And indeed the strength of his legs, which resembled inverted pyramids, was boundless. He did live knees-bends without difficulty, and it was quite obvious that this was not his limit. There was a ripple of applause in the hall which was crowded with people, as the training session had turned into a performance. I made no discoveries for myself as far as methods or technique were concerned, but the fact remained: world records were falling like tenpins. The good-natured, curlyheaded lad toyed with them like he would with a dumbell.

When the day of the match arrived, I kept a careful watch on Anderson. He lay unperturbed on a couch, his chest heaving noisily up and down. When his turn came, he got up from the couch with all the elegance of an elephant and went straight out onto the platform. Although our Alexei Medvedev was also competing and made several appearances on the platform, his presence was somehow unnoticed. Anderson was the absolute master of the platform. He performed his solo with complete calm. The bar, heavily loaded with weights, was raised and then lowered without a murmur of dissension. And the same weight seemed to grow incredibly heavy when Medvedev tried to lift it.

Anderson returned to America leaving behind the belief that it would take a superman to compete against another superman. Once he retired, America could find no successor to the great man, and for a time the records of "wee Paul" stood like a rock. At his final appearance at the 1956 U.S. championships before turning professional, he staggered the weightlifting world with a total of 533 kg. [1175 pounds]. In time, of course, many great lifters, such as Yuri Vlasov, Leonid Zhabotinski, and Vasily Alexeyev exceeded Anderson's lifting, but the legendary lifter left quite a "legacy" for the strong men who followed in his footsteps.

The Heidenstam Dinner

Ken Rosa

There are some experiences which are worth remembering forever. Flying Virgin Atlantic first class to Heathrow and attending the fourth annual Oscar Heidenstam Foundation Hall of Fame Awards dinner in England on March 18, 1995 are two exalted pleasures of my life. First cabin on Virgin Atlantic and the Oscar Heidenstam reunion are what class is all about. Everyone should spend some time in the VIP lounge of Virgin Atlantic at Heathrow. It's a preview of what heaven may be like. Former double NABBA Mr. Universe Joe Abbenda and his wife Jayne were also on the flight starting a two week vacation by first attending the Oscar Heidenstam Foundation dinner. We arrived in England to find delightfully sunny weather with flowers in bloom on the grounds of the Marriott Hotel where this unequaled function is annually held.

In the lobby we found several barbell buddies from previous reunions. Cherished acquaintanceships renewed. Joyful encounters. There was Mike Baker, Bill Pearl, and Leo Stem. In the center of the small crowd was the inspiration of us all, the monarch of strength and health, John C. Grimek holding court with his beloved Angela at his side.

Seven P.M., the main event. There were physical culture people from all over Europe, from the Caribbean from the USA flowing into the spacious main ballroom. Towards the rear wall of the ballroom were four almost life sized photographs of John Grimek in his classic biceps pose leaning against the Roman or Greek pillar, Reg Park, Steve Reeves and the 1995 honoree Bill Pearl. Incredible. Then there was a captivating array of physical culture memorabilia.

The Oscar Heidenstam Trustees and Directors are Ian MacQueen, MD., president; Dr. Tom Temperly, vice president; Clifford LeMaistre, chairman: Cohn Norris, vice chairman; Malcolm Whyatt, secretary. These are all extraordinary people. The indomitable Malcolm should be knighted, in my opinion.

Malcolm introduced Colin Norris who reminded us that "we're meeting tonight in the memory of a man whose unselfish concern for others touched many lives. It's the idea of the Foundation to honor and help others. I was privileged to conduct the funeral of Oscar Heidenstam. It was during that service that I realized how much he meant to others. I looked out on the congregation of about two hundred men, mostly bodybuilders, crying like babies. Only then did I realize that not only had I known this special person but thousands of others would know him as well. We of the Trust want to keep his memory and his ethics alive. With your help we endeavor to do that."

Colin Norris then said a prayer of thanks for the food we were about to eat and said, "enjoy yourselves." Cliff LeMaistre now took the microphone and said, "This brings us to a very special gentleman, Uncle Bob Wooler, one of the pioneers of physical culture and weight training in Great Britain. He opened his first club way back in 1930 which soon became well known through the pages of ***Health and Strength*** and other journals as just about the finest of its kind in the country. It's often said that behind every successful man there's an even better woman and in this case it's no exception. When Bob was a young lifeguard he met his wife Vera back in 1935. Their happiness and success was absolutely limitless. Vera was an outstanding professional dancer. And when their children came along, Dianne, Bob Jr., and Joanne, they were naturally guided towards a healthy lifestyle. After a spell as a physical training instructor during the war years, joined by his wife Vera, he re-opened the Bob Wooler Barbell Club which actually catered to many other physical activities besides weightlifting, bodybuilding, etc. But Bob's real claim to fame was as a sports and entertainment manager at the Sunshine Health Club. Bob organized many sporting events during the late 1940s, '50s and '60s including the annual Mr. South Britain at Portsmouth. He fronted the annual Mr. and Miss Britain shows. All of the family was supportive or involved during this great era. We all know his daughter Dianne and the Dianne Bennett Glamour Girls and of course, her famous husband Wag Bennett who was not only a top physique star but one of Britain's strongest men. Both are still active in bodybuilding and physical culture. Bob's enthusiasm hasn't diminished one bit over the years. He still runs his famous health studio which takes up three floors of his own home in Portsmouth. And remember, Bob is just eighty-two years young. Bob, many congratulations, you're a great example to all of us."

There was a warm ovation for Bob Wooler as he was presented with an award of royal cut-glass crystal with the Foundation emblem and the date. Wooler, a distinguished looking gentleman with white hair, voiced a moving thank you speech to an audience made up of people who obviously loved him.

Malcolm now passed the microphone to Dr. Tom Temperley who said "it's with a mixture of sadness and yet some pleasure that the Oscar Heidenstam Foundation presents its first ever posthumous award to a supreme strength athlete, all around physical culturist, and loving family man Reuben Martin. This evening Reub's vivacious wife Beryl honors us with her presence to accept the award. She's supported by her family members and friends. Reub's legendary exploits and accomplishments leave us all with outstanding memories of him. He was a supreme athlete, a warm, kindly human being, a man with a great sense of humor. Reub was born on March 15, 192l. During the war he was a physical training instructor in the Royal Air Force. He excelled in weightlifting, gymnastics, boxing, and ran the one hundred yard dash in 10.3 seconds. In swimming he did one hundred yards in sixty seconds. In 1947 he won the British heavyweight weightlifting title. In the 1948 Universe, won by Grimek, Reub came second to Steve Reeves in the tall class. He competed against such notables as John Grimek, Reg Park, Bill Pearl. Her-

culean balancing was Reub's forte. Last year on March 17, Reub passed away suddenly. He was an inspiration to all of us. We miss him so much."

Malcolm Whyatt, ever the consummate British gentleman, said "Beryl, I'm sure you want you to say a few words, as he handed the microphone to Mrs. Reub Martin. As she stood up and commenced speaking in an evenly modulated, wonderfully cultured voice I felt my breath taken. "Thank you ladies and gentlemen. I'm here this evening, as you know, to accept this award on behalf of Reub. Many of you here this evening have special memories of a very special person. Those of you who didn't know him, well, I'm sorry for you. You don't know what you missed. Reub was Reub. Gregarious, outgoing with such a great zest for living. He always used to wear us out. With Reub you got what you saw. No pretenses. Looking back, I had never seen a balancing act like Reub's. I think I fell in love with him then. And, of course, we had Reub the weightlifter. And he once told me, 'Ber, when I walked out on that floor at Wembly I was the proudest man in England.' And there was Reub, Mr. Universe contestant. He was a man of many facets. An interesting person. An inspiration to so many. So on behalf of my family — all of whom are with me this evening, my daughter, my son, and grandchildren — I want you to know I'll treasure this always. I'm so very proud to have been his wife."

Wow! There was applause that I thought would bring the building down. This is one impressive lady. Reub was a fortunate man. And I had a lump in my throat.

These Oscar Heidenstam Foundation reunions just get better But one has to be there to really appreciate just how good they are. Yet as good as it was we still hadn't come to the main man.

Dr. Ian MacQueen referred to the lyrics of a song when he said. "my love has no beginning and no end. Bill Pearl's distinctions certainly have a beginning but apparently have no end. They're still going on. In 1952 at the age of twenty-two he came third in the Mr. San Diego contest. But that didn't satisfy Bill Pearl. He started training for the next event the next year with intentions of entering again. But before the next Mr. San Diego contest had come around he had won the Mr. Oceanside, Mr. Southern California, Mr. California and Mr. America. In 1953 he won the NABBA Mr. Universe amateur title even while he was serving in the U.S. Navy. There was a short spell following that when he went into professional wrestling and then he opened his own very successful gymnasium. Three years later he entered the Mr U.S.A and won that. In 1961 he entered and won the professional Mr. Universe. Six years later he entered and again won the professional Mr. Universe. That was the year some upstart from Austria . . . Blackshenegger (the audience laughed). . . some thingamajig or something, came over. There was another hiatus and I think because the standards in bodybuilding and physical culture had developed so that people were beginning to say well, Bill Pearl was good back then but he can't beat the guys now. Anyway, Bill Pearl came out of retirement and in 1971 he once again won the professional Mr. Universe making him a four time Mr. Universe winner. Not all of us can become like Greek gods but we can strive. And in striving we do become better than we were. That alone justifies the effort and is the foundation of our creed. But some do achieve those lofty ideals. They serve to inspire us. They motivate us to greater efforts to raise our sights to greater limits. Bill Pearl is such a man who is a shining example. Indeed, he is a pearl of a man. I went to the Oxford Dictionary to look up the word pearl. It says 'a pearl is a concretion within the shell of an oyster with remarkable luster and highly prized as a gem.' Surely Bill Pearl has muscles like concrete? And who doubts that he has a beautiful luster? Or that he is a true gentleman? Now, all the oysters in the sea bed just remain oysters unless some pivotal ingredient comes in and does something magical to produce the wonderful pearl. The ingredient that enabled Bill Pearl to become the shining pearl that he is is with us here tonight He is none other than 1946 Mr. California Leo Stern."

More applause.

"So let us honor Bill Pearl and give him the ovation he deserves," at which point there was a thunderous ovation.

Bill stood up and looked incredible. He never looks bad. The room grew silent with anticipation as he took the microphone, and in a deep, resounding voice said, "I can't tell you what an honor this is. If I were to be really truthful I can probably look at every table in this room and find somebody who has had a dramatic effect on my bodybuilding career and me as an individual. John Grimek, Joe Abbenda, Reg Ireland, Bert Loveday, Terry O'Neil, Roy Duval, John Citrone, good friends of mine. I could go on and on. All through the audience people like you have helped me be who I am today." Bill then summed up his feelings by reciting a touching poem entitled "Touching Elbows" by an unknown author. He concluded, obviously engulfed by emotion, by saying, "I love you all so very much," and he received a standing ovation which was possibly the longest and most exuberant I have yet heard at any reunion.

But the evening's events were not over. We were all rewed up for the post dinner party during which I displayed my love for the gorgeous grand piano by caressing the keyboard until the wee hours. My being surrounded by charming Dianne Bennett and other vivacious ladies requesting songs understandably inspired me. Leo Stern requested "The Shadow of Your Smile," a hauntingly beautiful favorite of mine which I first heard in London when I was there to compete in the 1965 NABBA Universe. This was the biggest and best Oscar Heidenstam reunion yet. I eagerly look forward to next year and to keeping my promise to an elegant lady named Beryl Martin: The Best Is Yet To Come.