



# IRON GAME HISTORY



THE JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

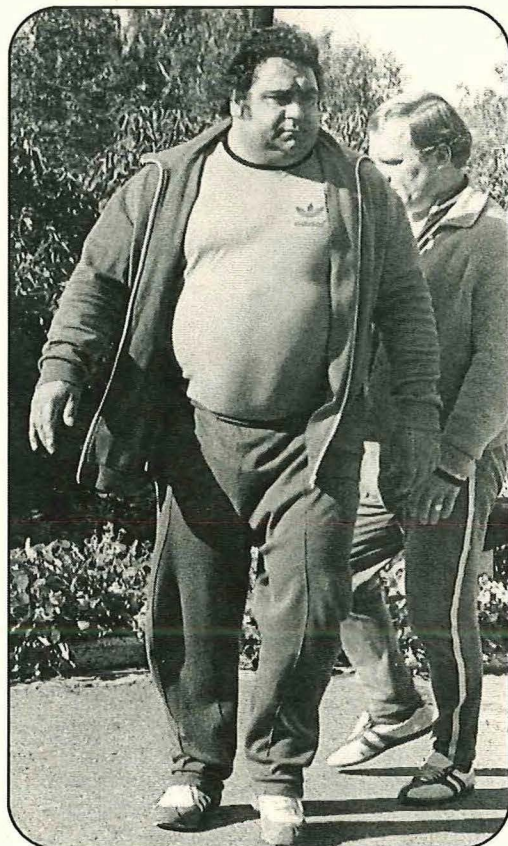
Volume 11 Number 4

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## *I Remember Vasily Alexeyev*

When the news reached me that the great Vasily Alexeyev had died in Germany it struck with real force. What other lifter would ever reach his status? Or cast such a shadow? No doubt my reaction had to do with how lucky I'd been to see him often in his long, majestic prime and to spend a good deal of personal time with him. Or perhaps my reaction was simply because both his face and his "figure" were so unforgettable. No one in weightlifting or in any other sport could equal his trademark scowl and no one could match—or would want to match—that great cowcatcher of a belly. In Vasily's time, mainly because Jim McKay and ABC Sports—in their coverage of the

1972 and 1976 Olympic Games—decided to capitalize on Alexeyev's unique presence by focusing on him to a degree unprecedented for a weightlifter either before or since, the rotund Russian became widely known as the strongest man in the world and the symbol of Soviet might. And so, as a way to pay tribute and say goodbye to this charismatic sportsman I'd like to offer a few of my memories, such as:



### Vasily and Jan

Shortly after the publication in *Sports Illustrated* of a feature article about Jan called, "The Pleasure of Being the World's Strongest Woman," I'd been assigned by *SI* to cover a major weightlifting competition in the US.<sup>1</sup> Jan went with me on the assignment and she was with me when I went to the training hall and, for the first time, saw the massive man for myself. Unbeknownst to us, Vasily had seen the article about Jan and so we were genuinely shocked when he boomed out across the hall, "Jan, Jan," and motioned for us to come to his platform. As we walked up a translator we had in tow introduced us and explained to Vasily that I was Jan's husband and that I'd been assigned to work on a story for the same magazine which had profiled him several years before. "Da, Da, Khorosho," he said, "Yes, yes, good." As we all shook hands several photographers who were in the hall moved toward us. At that point Vasily put up his hand toward them palm out, wrapped one thick arm around Jan's shoulder, applied the high beams

Vasily Alexeyev's remarkable cowcatcher of an abdomen belied his athleticism. Born in 1942, Alexeyev died on 25 November 2011 in Germany.

on that rare but show-stopping smile of his, and said in a commanding voice, "Strongest Man! Strongest Woman!"

### The 1977 "Record Makers Invitational"

During the period of Alexeyev's greatest celebrity, he was involved in several "made for TV" competitions—competitions which featured a relatively small number of elite lifters from around the world who might reasonably be expected to be able to break, or at least attempt, a world record in one lift or the other. Thus the name of these events—"Record Makers," the idea being that the average sports fan would be much more likely to stay tuned if he/she thought a "World Record!" was about

to be broken. Obviously, these events were funded by TV executives who were so enamored of the dour double-wide dreadnought from Russia, who seemed able to conjure up world records with ease, that they wanted to make him the star of such shows.

Las Vegas was sometimes the site of these and similar events, and although that city has always seemed somehow sad and superficial I went at the request of a *Sports Illustrated* editor who wanted me to provide some background and context for Sarah Pileggi, the writer assigned by the magazine to cover the event. I was also anxious, as always, to watch elite weightlifters in action. Arriving the day of the show I went up to Vasily's room as soon as I checked into the "meet hotel" to say hello

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and to give him a magazine. To be specific, I had with me a copy of the newest *Iron Man*, which contained an article about his recent exploits on the platform. After we exchanged a friendly bear-hug (and although I've never hugged a real bear I imagine that such a hug would have felt much the same as the one I got that day in Las Vegas) I explained the article to him, and he immediately sat down on the bed and began to study the photos. What lifter—no matter how celebrated—doesn't enjoy looking at photos of himself/herself?

Within just a few minutes in walked Bruce Wilhelm, the US superheavyweight, entering the room via a door which connected their two rooms. He immediately asked Vasily what he was studying. Smiling, Vasily showed him the magazine article and Bruce asked to see it. Somewhat reluctantly, the Russian handed it over and Bruce then settled down on the adjoining bed and began to look through the pages. Soon Vasily gestured that he'd like to have it back, but Bruce turned partly away and kept reading. After another request or two Vasily stood up and walked over—with his big paw out—right in front of Bruce. And that's when the fun began. Bruce, rather than returning the magazine, quickly rolled it up, backhanded Vasily in the crotch with it, leapt up from the bed, and sprinted toward the door to his adjoining room with the Russian Bear just a half-step behind. What a sight! Here were two enormous men, at rough play, moving with startling quickness and grace. As Vasily zipped through the door, however, he jammed his right hand on the doorjamb.

Right away it was apparent that Vasily had injured his wrist, and as this information sank in it became clear that he'd almost certainly be unable to take part in the Record Makers event. As such things will, word of the injury quickly reached the officials of both the U.S. and Soviet lifting teams and, from there, the word was carried by the worried officials to the TV executives, who demonstrated their characteristic generous nature and love of sport for sport's sake by yelling and threatening to either cancel the event or withhold the fee they were paying—even though the rest of the lifters, all of whom were either world champions or record holders, were healthy and ready to perform wonders of strength and athleticism.

What to do!? What to do!? The lifting officials were distraught and at a loss and I felt personally terrible about what had happened even though all I'd done was bring a magazine. However, knowing that Vasily still had one mighty mitt left I told a couple of officials that there was no reason he couldn't do a one-hand

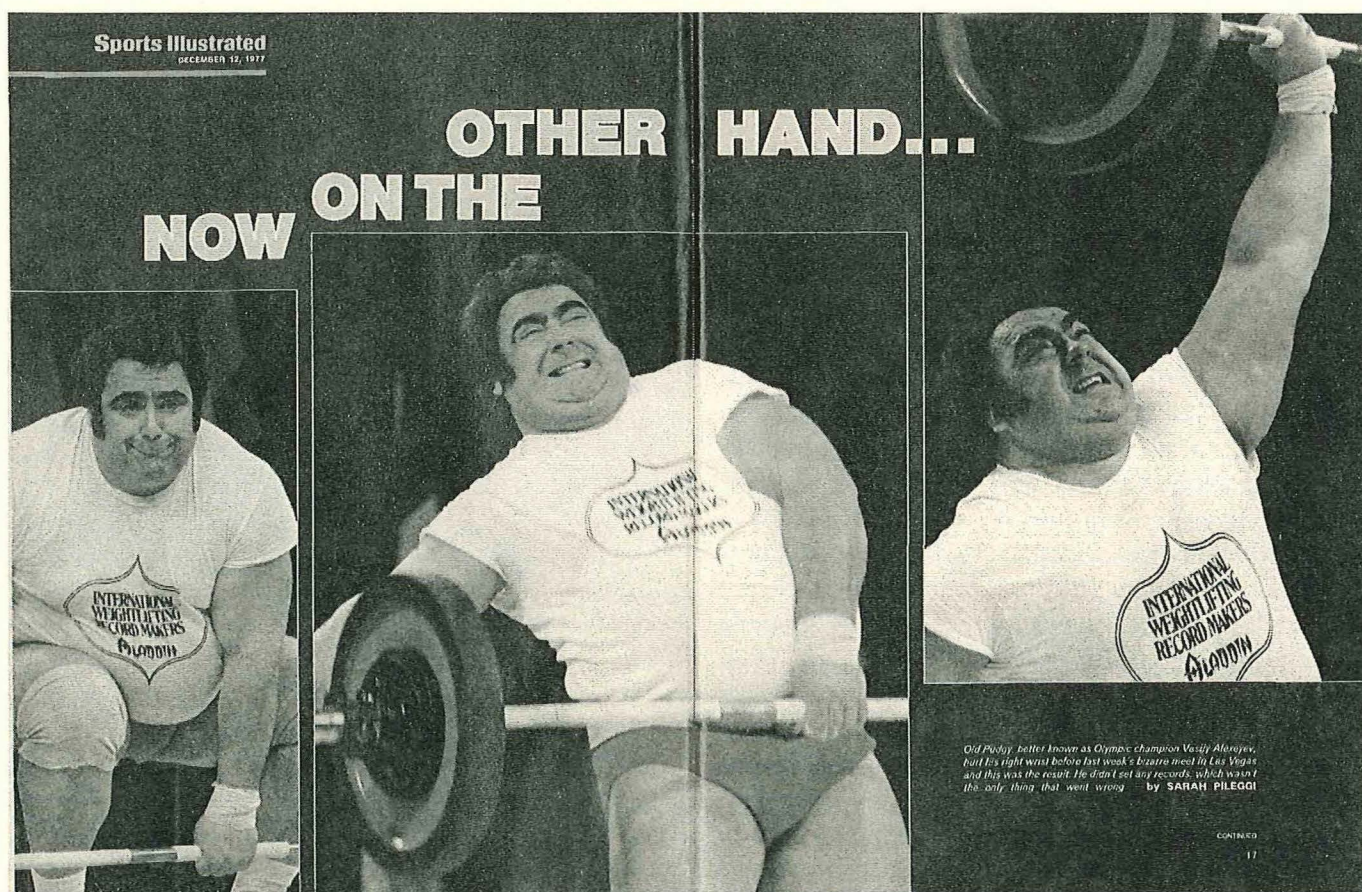


Bruce Wilhelm, on the right, famously remarked, "I'm the strongest man in the free world, Alexeyev's the strongest man in the whole world."

Photo by Bruce Klemens

snatch during the contest, especially since that very lift had for years been part of the five "Olympic Lifts"—the Two Hand Press, Two Hand Snatch, Two Hand Clean and Jerk, One Hand Snatch and One Hand Clean and Jerk. I also told them that I doubted Alexeyev, even with all his vaunted pulling strength could exceed the world record in the one hand snatch since the record was 253.5 pounds done by the specialist Charles Rigoulot, who had set the record half a century earlier. Nonetheless, I maintained that Vasily should be able to "power snatch" over 200 pounds, put on a good show, and—most important—perhaps save the event.

Finally, after an injection the following day didn't alleviate the pain in Vasily's injured wrist, and after a bit more huffing and puffing by the TV people Vasily agreed to reintroduce a lift not seen on an international platform in almost five decades. As the time drew near for his part of the show Alexeyev began a series of light snatches in the warm-up area, and I noticed that one of the two big differences between his "technique" in the lift and the masterful moves of Rigoulot was that when Vasily took his "hook grip" on the bar and got set to pull the bar with his left hand, he kept his right arm straight and well away from his thigh whereas Rigoulot and all other able men in the lift always placed their non-lifting hand on the top of their thigh in order to press downward and thus impart extra power to the pull. (The reason for Alexeyev's failure to use his "off hand" in this way was, of course, the injury to his wrist.) The other way in which Vasily's technique was different from that employed by Rigoulot and most other weightlifters dur-



*Sports Illustrated* featured Alexeyev's one-hand snatch exhibition in a two-page photo spread that opened Sarah Pileggi's article about the International Weightlifting Record Maker's contest held at the Aladdin hotel in Las Vegas. Note how he holds his injured hand out to the side rather than placing it on the thigh to increase his pulling power.

Courtesy Sports Illustrated

ing the first three decades of the Twentieth Century was that rather than drop into a full or nearly full squat as the bar was "fixed" overhead he simply dipped his legs slightly as he caught the bar at arm's length—a "power snatch" in the modern parlance of lifting. Vasily used this style since mastering the complex coordination of power, balance, and flexibility essential in a one-hand snatch using a full squat would require many months or even years to perfect.

My take on the event is that Vasily did himself very proud, making 198 pounds on his first attempt, mastering 220 on his second for a solid, powerful success, and finally trying 231, which proved to be a bit heavy. Some might think that a 220 pound one-hand snatch done by a 360 pound man was a poor showing, but a video which has been seen many times on the internet recently captures Mikhail "Misha" Koklyaev—the phenomenal Russian weightlifter/strongman whose official bests in the snatch and clean and jerk comprise a total which is slightly ahead of Vasily's best—barely making a shallow-split one-handed power snatch with 242, a lift he told me he had practiced. The point is that

Vasily did his 220 having no idea he'd need to do it until just a day or so earlier—and without using his off hand to boost his pull.

The event was chronicled in *Sports Illustrated* in early December of 1977 in Pileggi's article, "Now On the Other Hand. . . ." People have often misremembered what happened, and why, back in 1977, and few people knew the story behind the story, but having been front and center from the backhand to the groin to the majestic lift with 220 and the failure with 231 I'm happy to be able to set the record straight. I am, however, very sad and sorry about the occasion which prompts me to describe what went down—or, in this case up—almost thirty-five years ago.

### The Buffet Adventure

During the run-up to the World Weightlifting Championships in 1978, which were to be held in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, I arranged for a rental car because I'd learned that the hotel where the athletes, the officials, and I were staying was several blocks from the dining hall where the teams' meals were provided—an

arrangement that was obviously not well thought out by the officials in charge of the decision since it meant that the lifters had to either “ride shank’s mare” all those blocks each day if they wanted three squares or to provide their own food in some way. Actually, this bizarre arrangement led me to hang around either the hotel or the dining hall much more than I normally would have so that I could at least drive some of the lifters around and save them all that legwork. On one particular day I gave Vasily a ride from the hall back to the hotel because—having spent a few years myself in Brobdingnag—I knew that walking multiple blocks to eat and multiple blocks back three times a day, or even once, would have galled him literally as well as figuratively. He smiled radiantly when I offered to drive him.

During the ride I asked him if he liked the food at the dining hall and he assumed his trademark scowl, shook his large head, and said very plainly, “*Nyet! Shit food!*” At that point I decided that he needed a little pampering and so I asked him in my limited Russian if he would like to go with me that night to a restaurant. “Restaurant? *Khorosho!*” he boomed, and lit the car with that wonderful grin. Thus it was that I collected him later that day at his hotel and took him to a place where I’d eaten my first night in town—a sort of country inn that featured a first-rate buffet.

Vasily was dressed in his standard uniform—a pair of warm-up pants, a matching jacket, and a plain t-shirt. He looked clean, he looked comfortable, he looked hungry. Because the inn was on the outskirts of town, because there’d been a lot of local publicity about the World Championships, and because Vasily was already so recognizable, when we were being taken to our table he got a very warm round of applause, which seemed to altogether please him.

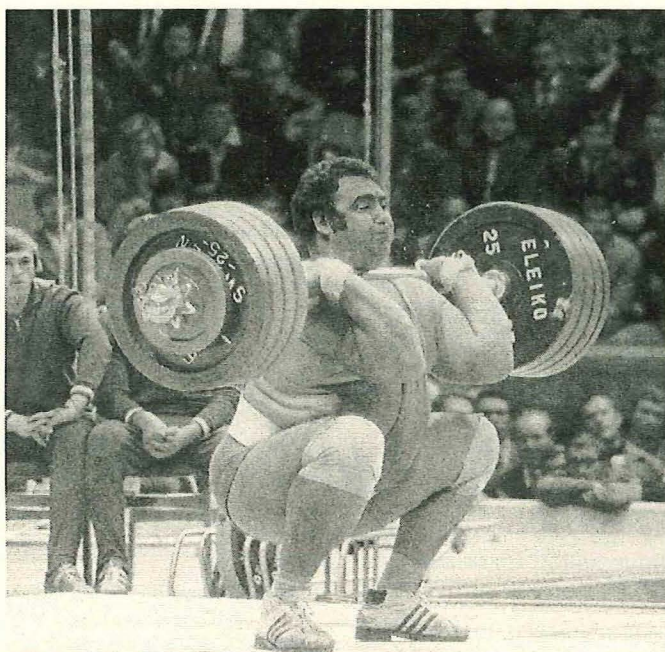
I’d noticed that they served pitchers of beer and so I asked Vasily if he would like to have a beer he quickly answered, “*Da,*

*da,*” and within a few minutes the pitcher arrived along with two frosted mugs. These seemed to puzzle Vasily, who touched his with his finger and smiled, so I filled his glass and signaled for him to wait just a moment. As I’d hoped, both the beer and the mugs were so cold that almost immediately some of the beer froze. This delighted Vasily, whose eyes lit up like a child’s as he cradled the mug, looked inside it, and took a long pull. After we’d each drunk a mug we moved to the buffet and I gestured for him to take the lead. As we moved along the groaning board I noticed that his first three choices matched my own, and this gave me the idea to simply take what he took as a way to remember what it felt like back when I was a “Super” myself.

When we returned to our table we each had four pieces of chicken, some roasted potatoes, green beans, beets, a modest plate of salad, and a roll. And we began to eat. And drink. I was very hungry by then and although I’d lost approximately 85 pounds from the 335 I weighed in my lifting days I still had a large appetite, so when we’d finished what we had taken I looked at him, then looked at the table and raised my eyebrow and he quickly said, “*Da, Da.*” Once again he led and I followed, quietly taking almost exactly what he took so that when we returned to the table and our third cold mug our

plates had essentially the same things they’d had after our first pass. Once again we ploughed through the food and once more we returned to the table, but this time—as I was taking my fourth piece of chicken—he stopped, looked at my plate and then at his, grinned, and said, “Competition! *Khorosho!*”

By that time I was no longer hungry but I kept going because I’d been found out. By that time we were into our second pitcher of beer, but although our pace slowed slightly we kept going. After six trips to the buffet we’d each eaten 24 pieces of chicken, five or six helpings of two kinds of vegetables, six rolls, and at least three



Alexeyev was the first man to officially clean and jerk five hundred pounds (in the 1970 World Weightlifting Championships in Columbus, Ohio). Later, prior to the removal of the press from the three “Olympic Lifts,” he also became the first man to officially press five hundred pounds, a feat which meant much less to him—as he thought in kilos—than it did to his many American fans.

Photo by Bruce Klemens

plates of salad. By then I was really suffering, but Vasily still ate and drank with obvious gusto. I knew I was badly overmatched and decided to just wish the increasingly rounder Russian “Bon Appetit” from that point forward. However, just for the theatrics of it, I looked at him when our respective plates were empty and gestured to the table, and he smiled a smile full of satisfaction, rubbed his astounding abdomen, and said, “*Nyet!* Enough!” whereupon we both laughed as I called for the check.

When we arrived at the hotel and hauled ourselves out of the car he insisted that we go to the room where the scale was kept. The scale, of course, was the bane of all weightlifters—except for the superheavyweights, who made great use of it to torment their famously hungry and thirsty comrades—but when we got there the room was uncharacteristically empty. In any case, when my gargantuan companion stepped on it the scale registered 169 kilos (372 pounds). He then looked down at me and said with genuine happiness, “*Khorosho*. World record!



I have other indelible memories about this celebrated athlete—like the time when Jan and I drove a badly injured Alexeyev from the 1978 World Championships to his hotel and drank way too much vodka with him; Nicolai Parhomenko, then the head of “Heavy Athletics” in the Soviet Union; the team physician; and a roomful of other long-faced officials who realized—correctly—that the career of their great champion may well have ended the moment a major muscle in his hip ruptured as he dipped to jerk his first attempt, a weight that would have given him an unprecedented ninth consecutive world title.

One thing which stands out about that night is that Jan was the only woman in a room with seven or eight men who were very seriously pouring tumblers of vodka and making elaborate toasts to the “wonderful world of weightlifting,” to “friendship between nations,” and, especially, to the Soviet hero who lay stricken on the nearby bed. Jan and I had been through a few simi-



Jan Todd and Vasily Alexeyev in the warmup room at the Gettysburg World Championships in 1978. Later in the contest, Alexeyev ruptured a muscle in his hip, an injury that essentially ended his career.

*Photo courtesy Sports Illustrated*

lar but far less serious drinking sessions with the Soviet lifters and officials before, and we knew that it was considered a major breach of etiquette to follow a toast by sipping one’s vodka or only drinking a swallow or two. The way it went was that glasses were filled, a toast was proclaimed, glasses were raised, and then glasses were emptied—and Jan has always taken great and justifiable pride in the fact that when they filled her glass she got a full share each time, a lifter’s share.

And there was the time Vasily gave me a silver samovar and I gave him a gigantic winter coat hand-sewn and embroidered for me by a group of Inuits in the Northwest Territories who apparently believed I was six inches taller and weighed at least a hundred and fifty pounds more than I was and did. Vasily told me he truly loved the tent-like coat and that it was the first one he’d ever had which was too large for him. He brought it with him to Gettysburg in 1978, and after we hauled him hobbled and hurting to his hotel room that night the first thing he did was to throw the huge coat over his thick shoulders, pull up the wolf-fringed hood, and ask for a bottle of vodka. Vasily Alexeyev was an altogether unforgettable man.

—Terry Todd

NOTES: The *Sports Illustrated* articles cited by the author may be viewed at:

1. <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1093013/index.htm>.
2. <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1093139/2/index.htm>.

# Doris Barrilleaux And the Beginnings of Modern Women's Bodybuilding

Jan Todd & Désirée Harguess  
The University of Texas at Austin

*With the world fully aware of the importance of physical fitness and so many women now participating in sports which until recently were not open to them, women's bodybuilding may readily change the role of women in society. Although there will always be those who wish to remain delicate, helpless, clinging vines I believe there will be those who wish to be considered strong, healthy, independent and able to stand on their own two feet. The day that a movie or television program is made in which the woman does not fall and need to be rescued from the danger, we will know that we have arrived.*

~ Doris Barrilleaux, 1982

On 17 June 1978, Doris Barrilleaux, a forty-six-year-old grandmother and mother of five, walked onto the stage of the Canton YMCA auditorium dressed in a zebra-striped bikini. Although she was, by her own admission, "so scared she was shaking," Barrilleaux allowed the public to view her body that day because she knew—just as every other woman on the stage knew—that they were making history.<sup>1</sup> Doris, and the thirteen other women who entered what meet promoter Henry McGhee called the "National Women's Physique Championships," were competing in what is generally regarded as the first national women's bodybuilding contest held in the modern era.<sup>2</sup> Although only three of the women were from outside Ohio and the contest itself was described by Barrilleaux as "total chaos," the meet had a profound effect on the Riverview, Florida, flight attendant. "It made me want to do things better," recalled Barrilleaux. "I left Canton excited, and I sometimes wonder if I'd have ever had the gumption to begin running my own meets in Florida if I hadn't entered Henry's meet."<sup>3</sup>

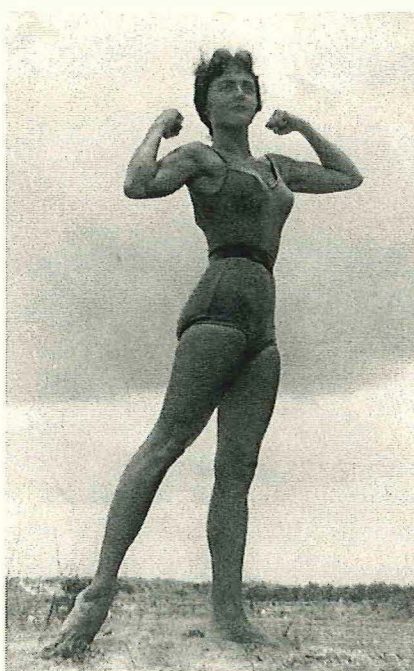
As will be shown, in the years following her bodybuilding debut, Barrilleaux did much more than just "run meets" in Florida. In fact, she played a pivotal role in the development of the sport for women as she formed an association for women's bodybuilding, began a women's newsletter, and was one of the most vocal and important early advocates for the sport. Her efforts greatly contributed to the explosion of interest

in women's bodybuilding that emerged at the end of the 1970s and directly contributed to the acceptance found by women's bodybuilding in the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Barrilleaux engaged at all levels of the sport—she was a competitor, an organizer, a promoter, a publisher, an author, an administrator, a judge, a photographer, and one of the philosophical leaders of this new activity. As Barrilleaux's involvement with women's bodybuilding increased, however, she found herself locked in a struggle for control of the sport. Although Doris championed the right of women to create and govern their own sport and argued that the best aesthetic for women's bodybuilding was one that emphasized the natural femininity of women, she was eventually marginalized within the very sport she helped create. Although ultimately unable to maintain either political or aesthetic control, Barrilleaux nonetheless had a singular effect on the creation of women's bodybuilding, and without her tireless efforts it is difficult to imagine that women's bodybuilding would have emerged as such a powerful cultural force in the 1980s.<sup>5</sup>

## Doris Biering Barrilleaux Discovers Bodybuilding

Barrilleaux was born Doris Jean Biering in 1931 in Houston, Texas. Because she grew to womanhood before Title IX became law in 1973, Barrilleaux did not play any varsity sports but she did love to bowl and liked playing basketball in gym class, although she claims to have been bothered by the half-court and the three-drib-

ble rules for girls.<sup>6</sup> As a high school student, Barrilleaux never gave a thought to bodybuilding but she admits to being drawn to the bodies of celebrity swimmer and film star Esther Williams, dancer Cyd Charisse, and Olympic swimmer Johnny Weissmuller, who played Tarzan in the movies.<sup>7</sup> The other body she was drawn to in high school was that of handsome Sterling Barrilleaux, three years her senior. Barrilleaux was just sixteen when she married Sterling, a nineteen-year-old employee at the American Can Company, and she bore her first child, a daughter they named Vickie Lynn, at about the age that most girls were thinking of their senior prom.<sup>8</sup> By the time she was twenty-five, Barrilleaux had had three more children and the family was living in Grand Prairie, Texas. Three weeks after the birth of Jerry, her fourth child, in December of 1955, Barrilleaux was playing with her children at a neighborhood playground when she attempted to hang by her knees from the jungle gym bars. "I couldn't believe," she later reported, "that I was so weak that I couldn't pull my legs up to the bar."<sup>9</sup> Barrilleaux's inability to perform what had once been a simple maneuver caused her to begin thinking about her personal fitness and she resolved to gain control of her body through a program of diet and exercise.<sup>10</sup> Unsure where to turn for advice, Doris went to a newsstand and looked for magazines on exercise. She didn't find any published specifically for women but there were some men's weight training magazines in the racks and she bought several copies. One of the magazines she purchased was Bob Hoffman's *Strength & Health*. Although most of the articles were not aimed at women, Doris saw no reason not to do the same exercises and so she created a routine for herself that she did at home with relatively little equipment. As she grew stronger and fitter, however, Barrilleaux made the decision to train in a regular gym so that she could have access to free weights and other equipment.<sup>11</sup> However, in the 1950s, deciding to train in a gym was not a simple matter for women; most health clubs were for men only. After making a number of phone calls, however, Doris finally found a club that would let her train. Doris recalls, "I drove around the block several



Doris Barrilleaux sent this photo of herself to Vera Christensen in 1962 for use in *Strength & Health* magazine. Although Barrilleaux had a figure that many women would envy, Christensen rejected it as "too masculine."

Photo courtesy Doris Barrilleaux

times on that first day, and I even stopped and used a pay phone to make sure it was really okay for me to go in. I guess I wanted reassurance."<sup>12</sup>

Once inside, the gym owner's wife met Doris and explained that there was a separate area where she could train and not be disruptive to the men. So, in 1955, in a segregated weight training area hidden behind a wooden partition, Barrilleaux began her first gym workouts. For the next four months Doris faithfully went to the gym three times a week and soon noticed that she felt much stronger and healthier. Her routine lasted one to two hours and included abdominal curls, calf-raises, bench presses, flies, rowing motions, overhead presses, deadlifts, and squats. By modern standards the weights she used were very light—ranging from five to twenty pounds. When she discovered that she was pregnant again, Barrilleaux continued training right up to the day before she gave birth to her fifth child, Don, in 1958, and even went bowling the night before she delivered. This, her last pregnancy, was by far the easiest, according to Barrilleaux, and she attributes her easy labor and quick recovery to her weight-training program.<sup>13</sup>

In 1959, Sterling was transferred to the American Can Company plant in Tampa, Florida, and the Barrilleaux family moved to the small town of Brandon, just outside the city. Brandon was primarily an agricultural center at that time and to Doris' regret there was no gym she could join in the area. So, with Sterling's blessing she purchased weights and a bench and continued her exercise routine at home. While in Brandon, Barrilleaux began to document her physique improvement through a series of self-portrait photographs. At the same time, she began to correspond with fellow Floridian Vera Christensen, author of "To the Ladies," a monthly women's column in *Strength & Health* magazine that Christensen had begun in 1956.<sup>14</sup>

A pivotal moment in Barrilleaux's intellectual understanding occurred in 1962 when she sent a photograph to *Strength & Health* showing herself doing a double-biceps pose. To her surprise, the photo was returned by Christensen with a note suggesting the pose was "too

Photo courtesy Doris Barrilleaux

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the day before she gave birth to her fifth child, Don, in 1958, and even went bowling the night before she delivered. This, her last pregnancy, was by far the easiest, according to Barrilleaux, and she attributes her easy labor and quick recovery to her weight-training program.<sup>13</sup>

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masculine,” although Christensen then added, “Please send another.”<sup>15</sup> Barrilleaux was surprised by the note as she regarded herself as strong and toned at that point in her life and did not think her body looked masculine. So, she submitted a more conventional photo of herself, seated on a beach in a bikini. That photo appeared in the February 1963 issue of *Strength & Health* as an illustration for Christensen’s article, “Family Fitness.” Barrilleaux, then 32-years old, was extolled in the piece as a fitness role model other housewives should work to emulate.<sup>16</sup> In thinking back over her career, Barrilleaux credits that note from Christensen as the moment when she first began thinking about the gender politics of weight training, muscularity, and femininity.<sup>17</sup>

In 1963, Sterling was asked to transfer again and this time the family moved to a suburb of New Orleans. Once settled, she and Sterling, who was also weight training by this time, became members at the Imperial Health Club in Gretna, Louisiana.<sup>18</sup> Although men and women didn’t train together at the Imperial Health Club, Barrilleaux found the men to be “welcoming enough” and sometimes even “supportive.”<sup>19</sup> The gym’s owner was certainly impressed with Doris; he asked her to manage his gym and sell memberships but she didn’t think she had the time given her large family. However, she did do some part-time work for the club as a weight-training instructor, and she and Sterling—who had also developed a fine physique by this time—were pictured in newspaper advertisements for the club.<sup>20</sup> That same year, Doris recalls attending several men’s bodybuilding contests in New Orleans. “In those days, the AAU always held the bodybuilding contests after weightlifting meets and I clearly remember how bored we’d get waiting for the bodybuilders to get their turn. Still, I loved it and found it real interesting.”<sup>21</sup>

In 1967, Doris became a grandmother and also began a new career as a flight attendant and part-time office manager for a private travel club in New Orleans. She was just thirty-six. Doris, who’d gone straight from girlhood to motherhood, found the travel and

the wealthy clients she met through her new job fascinating. She fell in love with travel and when Sterling was promoted at American Can Company and sent back to Tampa, she continued to dream about finding another job as a flight attendant. However, those plans went on hold when Sterling decided after less than a year in Tampa that if he stayed with American Can he and his family would be facing several more moves. Consequently he resigned in late 1970 and opened his own automotive mechanics shop near Riverview, Florida. To help ends meet, Doris took a job at a local pharmacy where she helped fill prescriptions three days a week and did Sterling’s book-keeping on her days off.<sup>22</sup> The business proved to be a success and Doris and Sterling purchased two lots at the mouth of the Alafia River where they built their new home. Beautifully situated, with a dock for easy river access, they could watch the sun set over the Gulf of Mexico and see manatees swim past to feed on the nearby mangrove trees.<sup>23</sup>

Tampa had several serious gyms in the early 1970s and Doris took out a membership at Hector’s Health Club where she was soon connecting with the Florida bodybuilding community. She attended most of the men’s contests in her area, often accompanied by her friend, Joyce Weir, and the two attractive women were often asked to hand out the trophies to the male winners.<sup>24</sup> During this time, Doris also met the talented physique photographer, Dick Falcon, who lived in Tampa.<sup>25</sup> Doris, who had not yet had any major media coverage, approached Falcon about doing a story on her for one of the muscle magazines. Falcon was not only willing to do the piece, he told Barrilleaux that he would “make her famous.”<sup>26</sup> Shortly thereafter, he set up a photo shoot with Doris and began submitting photos of her to the various magazines he normally supplied. Shots of her demonstrating resistance-training exercises appeared in “Women, Too, Need Exercise,” in *Muscular Development* in January 1977; and then in the March 1977 issue of *Strength and Health*, Falcon’s profile of Barrilleaux appeared entitled, “Keeping Youthful at Forty-Six.”<sup>27</sup> More Falcon



Because of Doris’ interest in health and exercise, Sterling Barrilleaux also began training regularly and built a fine physique. He and Doris were asked to pose in gym ads for the Imperial Health Club in Gretna, Louisiana.

photos appeared in the August 1977 issue of *Muscular Development* alongside Bob Hoffman's article, "Fresh Air and Sunshine."<sup>28</sup> The following year Falcon also photographed Barrilleaux for her 1978 book, *Inside Weight Training for Women*, which she co-authored with Jim Murray.<sup>29</sup>

It was through her friendship with Dick Falcon that Doris began learning about photography and writing articles for fitness magazines. Like Falcon, Barrilleaux had a good eye for physique photography and was soon recognized as one of the major physique photographers of the 1980s and 1990s. By her own count, her photographs have appeared on 189 magazine covers over the past several decades and she's had several thousand images published in magazines such as *Strength & Health*, *Muscular Development*, *Muscle Training Illustrated*, *Body Talk*, and *Florida Muscle News*.<sup>30</sup>

### Before Modern Women's Bodybuilding

We use the term "modern women's bodybuilding" in this article to differentiate between the sanctioned sport that emerged after 1978 and the earlier precursors of women's bodybuilding.<sup>31</sup> The pre-modern or archaic era of women's physique contests in America began in 1903 when Bernarr Macfadden held a women's "physical culture contest" in conjunction with a men's physique contest and a variety of sporting events in Madison Square Garden in New York City. Macfadden's female contestants, judged by artists and doctors, displayed their bodies wearing tight-fitting long underwear with sashes around their waists. The winner of that first contest, Emma Newkirk of Santa Monica, California, had a well-padded body without any visible muscular definition. She weighed 136 pounds and was 5'4½" tall. Macfadden held another women's contest at Madison Square Garden in 1905, and over the next three decades he sponsored a number of similar "physique" contests for women in which their bodies were judged on general healthfulness and appearance rather than muscularity.<sup>32</sup>

The judging of beauty and fitness is part of the story of twentieth-century America. After Macfadden, and then the founding of the Miss America pageant in 1921 in Atlantic City, numerous physical culture entrepreneurs began including women's "physical culture" or "figure" contests alongside their men's bodybuilding events.<sup>33</sup> Jack Lalanne, for example, allowed women to train at his gym in Oakland when he opened it in 1936 and, to inspire his female clients to train harder, he held an occasional "beauty contest" for them.<sup>34</sup> At Muscle

Beach in the 1940s and 1950s, the bodies of young women were judged annually in the Miss Muscle Beach contest. According to Mim Scharlock, winner of the 1949 title, the women she competed against were not really weight trainers. Some of them came to Muscle Beach to participate in the acrobatics, she explained, but she was not aware of any who engaged in regular weight training to get ready for the Miss Muscle Beach contest.<sup>35</sup> For the most part these early contests bearing titles such as "Miss Body Beautiful," "Miss Physical Fitness," and later, in the 1960s and early 1970s, "Miss Americana" and "Miss Bikini" operated within a narrow, conservative definition of beauty. These early women competitors came on stage in high heels and did no poses that deliberately accentuated their muscles. Unlike the Miss America pageant, in which facial beauty played a major role in the choosing of the overall winner, most of the early body contests maintained the illusion that they were about judging fitness—not beauty—even though they were certainly not about muscle. Furthermore, for the most part, these pre-modern contests were not taken seriously by the men who controlled bodybuilding nor were they considered important by the writers and publishers who covered the sport. A classic example of the general lack of regard these early contests elicited within the bodybuilding community can be found in bodybuilding author Denie's report on the 1978 Miss World Physical Fitness Contest held in conjunction with the World Cup Professional Mr. Universe Contest.<sup>36</sup> After straightforwardly describing the men's contest, Denie's segue to the women's report began with, "On to the fanny-swingers in the Miss World Physical Fitness Division." Unlike Denie's positive coverage of the male athletes, there is no discussion of the relative merits of any of the women's bodies in his piece, although he does note that one of the women did a few ballet and acrobatic moves during her time on stage.<sup>37</sup>

Although a number of these pre-modern "physique" contests continued to be held during the 1970s, other events and new social movements were coalescing to launch the modern women's bodybuilding movement. The women's rights movement, which had been greatly strengthened by the 1968 feminist protest of the Miss America Contest, played a role in the emergence of women's bodybuilding in this decade as did the passage of Title IX in 1973 and the resulting discovery—made by thousands of young women once they had access to sport—that they not only could play sports but that they should also begin weight training to become a better athlete.<sup>38</sup> Also important was Dr. Kenneth Coop-

er's discovery of the benefits of aerobic training and the personal fitness movement his work inspired in the 1970s as both men *and* women began regularly running, jogging, and thinking about the power of exercise to promote health and longevity.<sup>39</sup> Further, Austrian bodybuilder Arnold Schwarzenegger, made famous in *Pumping Iron*, and magazine publisher Joe Weider elevated men's bodybuilding to never-before-seen heights in the 1970s and inspired women as well as men to begin lifting weights for the sake of appearance and better health.<sup>40</sup>

### Henry McGhee and the United States Women's Physique Association

In tune with all these cultural changes was a young bodybuilder and strength coach named Henry McGhee who began working at the Canton YMCA in 1973. McGhee's interest in the physical potential of women began in childhood, he claimed, and was caused by his older sister Tammy—a strong, athletic girl who was faster than most of the boys in her school and was a terrific all-round athlete. As McGhee put it, "It just always seemed wrong to me that she got no encouragement to do sports simply because she was a girl."<sup>41</sup> McGhee, who earned a chemistry degree at Kent State University where he also assisted as a strength coach, had become a serious convert to weight training by the time he joined the Y in downtown Canton. Although he knew it was the Young Men's Christian Association, McGhee thought the inner-city facility should be open to everyone in the neighborhood and so began a campaign to allow women to join, which was ultimately successful. In November of 1974, McGhee began training a few women in a separate weight room that had been organized at the Y just for women. McGhee's goal in these early days, he explained, was not to create women bodybuilders. "I just wanted the women I worked with to feel better about themselves and to get in shape," he reported.<sup>42</sup> In an article in *Strength & Health* in 1977, McGhee expanded on this idea saying, "As it stands now, women in our society are not only weak but they know they're weak. This compounds their problems and leaves them open to attack and abuse. By training, they not only become stronger but their self-confidence grows at the same time which means their fears are eradicated."<sup>43</sup>

According to McGhee, the idea of holding some kind of a body contest for women began simply as a way for the women to set goals for their training and to show the results of their hard work in the gym. "I guess we had the first one in about 1975," said McGhee, "but it wasn't

like a bodybuilding contest. I couldn't do girls in bikinis at the Y in the beginning, so the first couple of contests we had were very local and the girls competed in dresses."<sup>44</sup> While *Sports Illustrated* later claimed that McGhee's early events were really just beauty contests, McGhee believed otherwise. As he explained to a *Strength & Health* reporter in 1977, he was running physique contests that differed from beauty contests in that the contestants were judged on presentation, general tone, and symmetry. "Any girl could win," he claimed, "who was willing to train hard."<sup>45</sup>

On 27 September 1976, McGhee sponsored what he called a "women's body posing" contest for his club members and asked his women competitors to display their bodies before a panel of seven women judges that McGhee had chosen from among his group of trainers. According to a newspaper account of this event, what the judges were told to assess was whether the relative proportion of the different muscular groups was appropriate, whether the muscle itself was lean and firm, and whether there was too much subcutaneous fat.<sup>46</sup> It is worth noting that the size of the muscle was not a matter of specific consideration.

By 1977, McGhee had more than thirty women doing squats, bench presses and lat work at the Canton Y, and he had begun referring to the activity as "bodybuilding."<sup>47</sup> By then he had also formed a women's fitness association for his athletes and called it the United States Women's Physique Association (USWPA). McGhee envisioned USWPA as a sanctioning body for women's physique and on 26 March 1977, as part of a strength extravaganza that included a men's powerlifting contest, he held the "Miss Canton Bodybuilding Contest." This may be the first women's meet to have officially used the term "bodybuilding" in its title.<sup>48</sup> Later that same year, in October, McGhee held a regional contest called either the Ohio Regional Championships or the Miss Body Midwest Contest, a meet that has been incorrectly referred to in some sources as the first "national" women's bodybuilding contest.<sup>49</sup> The winner of the Ohio Regional was a nineteen-year-old former gymnast named Gina LaSpina, who at 5'7", weighed about 125 pounds and resembled a lithe dancer far more than a twenty-first-century woman bodybuilder. According to an Associated Press story covering her victory, Gina took not only the overall championship but won four additional trophies for best poser and best body parts at the meet.<sup>50</sup>

McGhee next announced that he would hold a national meet in the summer of 1978. Barrilleaux,

who'd been featured in *Strength & Health* by this time, was invited by McGhee to come and she was also encouraged to enter the contest by John Grimek, editor of *Muscular Development*, with whom she corresponded.<sup>51</sup> As Doris remembers the meet on 17 June 1978, the contestants first walked onto the stage wearing nothing more than a two piece swimsuit and stood side by side. They then left the stage, and came back wearing either a sweat shirt or jacket so that "best legs" could be determined. Then, back they went again to take off their sweatshirts, don sweatpants, and return to the stage so that best upper body could be determined. Following this, Doris said they did their free posing routines; she performed to Helen Reddy's feminist anthem, "I Am Woman."<sup>52</sup> In their free posing routines, however, the women were instructed to avoid using any "masculine poses" by McGhee who had told

the judges to deduct points if the women performed double-arm poses or clenched their fists.<sup>53</sup> It appears that a demonstration of flexibility may have also been considered important as Doris remarked in a letter later that year that they'd been asked to do splits and backbends.<sup>54</sup>

The International Federation of Bodybuilders (IFBB) women's historian Steve Wennerstrom, who attended the 1978 meet as a reporter and saved his notes from that day, reports that there were fourteen women in the contest, divided into three height classes. The overall winner was twenty-three-year-old Marybeth Pritt, an amazingly lean physical education major and recent graduate of Bowling Green State University, who also won best back, best muscle tone, best waistline, and best chest. In a letter to Bill Jentz, publisher of the *Women and Strength Periodical*, Pritt explained that she'd trained only three months for the contest, working out on both Nautilus and free weights only three days a week. Pritt closed the letter, however, with a request that Jentz be cautious in his selection of photos as she wanted "no masculine poses printed, please—I am a female and proud of it."<sup>55</sup>

Second place overall went to Gina LaSpina, winner of McGhee's 1977 meet, who was also judged best poser. Winner of the third height division was sev-



Henry McGhee, shown here in a photograph from 2010, still lives in Canton and is involved in a variety of coaching activities. He runs a training facility called Henry's Dynatorium and is active in the Special Olympics.

Photo courtesy Janet Brunecz

enteen-year-old Lisa Sweterlitsch who beat Barrilleaux in the 5'5"-and-under class. According to Doris she placed third in this class, and the trophy she took home that day reflects that memory. Interestingly, both Bill Jentz' article on the event in *Women and Strength Periodical* No. 15 published in July 1978 and Steve Wennerstrom's notes from the contest suggest that Barrilleaux took second in her height class, beating five other women.<sup>56</sup> In either case, such a high placing at age forty-six was highly commendable. A self-portrait taken by Doris with her third-place trophy after the meet gives a good idea of her condition at this time.<sup>57</sup>

Although Doris was delighted with her result in McGhee's meet, and in hindsight recognizes that her participation in the contest opened many doors for her, she was not happy with the meet itself (which, according to all reports was poorly organized) or with the judging standards used at the con-

test.<sup>58</sup> What Doris primarily objected to in Canton was the degree of leanness that McGhee had told the judges was desirable in women's bodybuilding. McGhee tried to explain his vision to a *Sports Illustrated* reporter in 1980 by stating, "Every woman has the same capacity for starving to death, but before she does, she's going to be very lean and muscular. That's what we want in our competitions, muscularity, with proportion. Anything we feel is heredity we don't consider—facial features, size of breasts, width of pelvis—and we're not concerned with traditional standards of femininity either."<sup>59</sup> Barrilleaux, in a letter to Bill Jentz after competing in another McGhee contest late in 1978, claimed that McGhee's ideal was an "extremely skinny, unfeminine contestant."<sup>60</sup>

### The Superior Physique Association

Following the Canton Nationals, and the publicity surrounding the event, Doris was invited to guest pose at men's bodybuilding competitions at least ten times in 1978 and as she attended these male contests she became convinced that she could do a better job of running women's bodybuilding than McGhee could.<sup>61</sup> Doris, like many other women in the 1970s, had come to believe that women would only find true equality if they

could control their own sport experiences but she didn't act on the idea until she had a conversation at a men's meet with twenty-four-year-old Suzanne Kosak. Kosak, who had become interested in bodybuilding because of her boyfriend, a former Mr. Tampa, approached Barrilleaux after she'd finished guest posing and asked, "Why can't we have our own contests?"<sup>62</sup> Doris, who'd been thinking the very same thing, suggested they meet and begin to plan.

In October of 1978, Barrilleaux, with help from Kosak and another friend, Linda Gleason, formed the Southeastern Physique Association (SPA)—the first bodybuilding organization run for women by women. It is clear that in the choosing of the title the three women originally intended this to be a regional organization. However, interest in the sport was popping up throughout the United States and so in early 1979, Doris and the group began calling it the Superior Physique Association and they officially registered it under that name with the State of Florida the following October.<sup>63</sup> During the winter of 1978-1979 Doris, Suzanne, and Linda worked to find new members, met regularly, held elections, and developed written rules and judging standards. Although the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) controlled men's amateur bodybuilding at this time, Doris did not ask to affiliate her new group.

In December of 1978, shortly after SPA was first formed, Barrilleaux returned to Canton to compete in another of McGhee's contests, where she placed third.<sup>64</sup> At this time she was still giving some thought to trying to cooperate with McGhee, but the meet convinced her it would not be possible. In a letter to Bill Jentz, Barrilleaux wrote, "(McGhee's meet) was quite disorganized again with half the trophies missing. No one knew what the required poses were or exactly how they'd be judged."<sup>65</sup> Barrilleaux went on to say that McGhee had asked her to become the president of his organization, the USWPA, and to join her fledgling S.P.A. association with his. Doris declined, she told Jentz, because "all the women involved in S.P.A. want to keep it strictly a woman's organization without *any* men involved. I agree!"<sup>66</sup>

In the spring of 1979 Barrilleaux published the first edition of *SPA News*, a Xerox-copied newsletter of only four pages.<sup>67</sup> As the magazine grew in pages and geographic reach in the succeeding months, Barrilleaux used it to promote S.P.A. members, to cover their meets, and to communicate her ideas on judging,

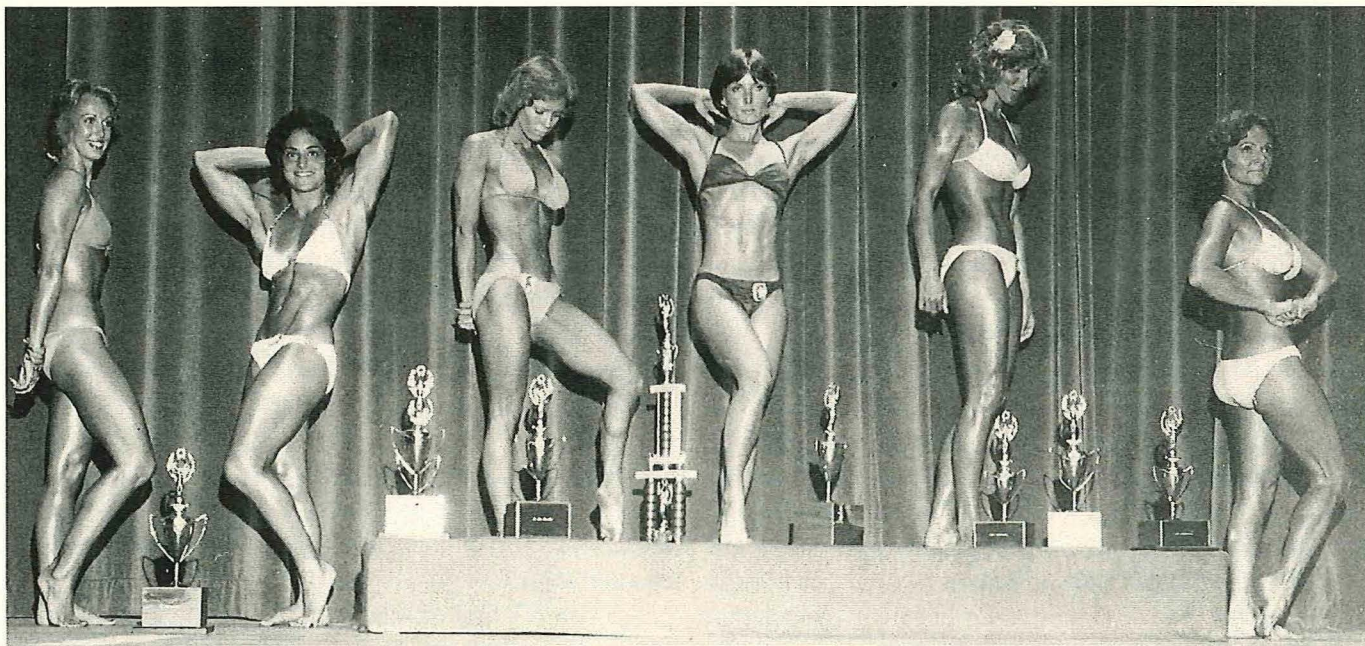
drugs, and femininity. Through her exchanges with Vera Christensen, fifteen years earlier, Barrilleaux had experienced the body as contested terrain in which representations of strength—such as clenched fists and flexed muscles—were proprietary symbols of masculinity. As a result, she encouraged SPA to develop contest rules prohibiting contestants from flexing with clenched fists and from using more masculine poses such as double biceps shots, lat spreads and most particularly "the crab"—in which a bodybuilder leans slightly forward, brings his/her clenched fists together near the legs in the front of the body, and then simultaneously flexes the abdominals, trapezius, latissimus dorsi, deltoids, and other arm and trunk muscles.<sup>68</sup> SPA widely disseminated the new criteria and over the next several years Barrilleaux conducted judging clinics throughout the nation as SPA chapters opened in other states.<sup>69</sup>

SPA's first official contest was the Ms. Brandon Physique Contest on 29 April 1979. Kathy Lewis, the twenty-six-year-old winner, and the twelve other women who competed that day (including Doris, who finished seventh) came on stage first in high heels—to affirm their femininity, according to Doris—but then removed their heels for the actual contest.<sup>70</sup> Local television crews and national news publications were on hand for the Brandon show, which was judged a great success by Doris and her SPA colleagues. "I remember organizing, competing, and then cooking for fifty people for the party at my home following the show," recalled Doris about the Brandon meet. "It was great fun and everyone was so enthusiastic."<sup>71</sup>



Gina LaSpina, winner of McGhee's 1977 contest, was a former gymnast who stood 5'7" tall and weighed 125 pounds. LaSpina's body was fairly close to Henry McGhee's stated ideal for women's bodybuilding in this era.

Photo by Steve Wennerstrom



SPA's first contest was the 1979 Miss Brandon Physique Contest. Kathy Lewis, center, won first place.; Doris, on the far right, finished seventh. The most controversial entrant was the former rugby player, Laura Combes, second from left, whose level of muscularity was considered shocking for a woman at this time.

In the months that followed, SPA sponsored almost a meet per month through the end of the year. The Ms. Florida Physique Contest was held May 26; the Miss Sun Coast Body Beautiful on June 23; the Ms. Temple Terrace Body Beautiful on July 28—the first meet to include a teenage and senior division along with the open contest; the Miss Tampa on August 25; the Miss Gold Coast on October 13; the Miss North Florida on October 20; and then in April 1980 they held the Miss Southern USA meet.<sup>72</sup> By the spring of 1980 SPA had become a well-defined and successful association. However, other entities were also becoming interested in the market potential of women's bodybuilding.

### The Struggle for Control of Women's Bodybuilding

In the summer of 1979, Barrilleaux began hearing about new women's contests that were being planned in other parts of the United States. Gold's Gym in Santa Monica, California, decided to host what they called "The First Women's World Bodybuilding Championships" at the Embassy Auditorium in Los Angeles on June 16 of that year. Held in conjunction with the IFBB Junior Mr. America contest, only twelve women entered the "world" event and they were all from California. The contest was organized in four rounds with twenty points possible in each round. Round one was a bench press contest to demonstrate that the women were "real athletes."<sup>73</sup> Each woman was required to take sixty per-

cent of her bodyweight and do a single repetition to qualify. They then had to do ten more repetitions to attain the full twenty points for that round. In round two the women appeared on stage in high heels for a side-by-side comparison with four quarter turns, again worth twenty points. Round three, the last of the pre-judging rounds, consisted of a brief set of compulsory poses determined by the Gold's Gym organizers. That evening during the men's contest the women each had ninety seconds of time for free posing to music in front of a crowd estimated at about two thousand people. Master of Ceremonies, bodybuilder Steve Davis, reminded the audience that the women were true pioneers, "they have performed here tonight without any previous framework or criteria . . . they are all magnificent."<sup>74</sup> Lisa Lyons, of Century City, California, won the competition and "brought down the house," according to Steve Wennerstrom, "because of her grace and fluidity of form."<sup>75</sup>

Lyons, who was a frequent trainer at Gold's Gym in Santa Monica, was also an exceptionally bright woman and she quickly seized on the marketing potential the new title brought her. In the months that followed her victory, Lyons appeared on several television shows, was featured in all the muscle magazines, wrote a book about weight training for women entitled *Lisa Lyon's Body Magic*, and helped to popularize the new women's sport in a variety of ways, including serving briefly as an administrator. Although some of her choices were controversial, like her appearance in *Playboy* in

October 1980, and her participation in the creation of Robert Mapplethorpe's book of nude photographs called *Lady: Lisa Lyon* in 1983, Lyon's lithe, 5'3", 105-pound body helped establish the idea that "women's bodybuilding" no longer needed to be considered oxymoronic.<sup>76</sup> Lyons, sociologist Leslie Heywood contends, was the first woman to convince large numbers of the public that the built female body could be a site of men's desire and appropriate female aspirations.<sup>77</sup>

Barrilleaux didn't attend the California contest as she was making plans to attend a different show later in the summer that was being hosted by George Snyder, promoter of the IFBB's prestigious Mr. Olympia contests. Snyder, known to be a fan of the less muscular, more beauty-oriented contests, told Barrilleaux that his meet on 18 August 1979, in Warminster, Pennsylvania, would be the first professional contest for women and that she needed to understand that "it is definitely not [Snyder's emphasis] a 'physique' type contest where women do muscular posing." Continuing he explained, "If you would like to call it a beauty contest you could, however it is a beauty contest for women bodybuilders."<sup>78</sup> Barrilleaux decided to enter the contest despite Snyder's admonition that "no poses which highlight muscularity" were supposed to be allowed and that the competitors would have to compete in high heels. Although she was interested in seeing how the contest went, Doris also had another reason for the trip to Pennsylvania. The previous year, Snyder had formed his own women's organization and had applied to the IFBB for recognition for his "Women's Bodybuilding Association" (WBA).<sup>79</sup>

With Mr. Olympia Arnold Schwarzenegger as master of ceremonies, Snyder's contest was going smoothly until the audacious and somewhat mesomorphic Laura Combes, an elite women's rugby player turned bodybuilder who also lived in Florida, took the stage. Combes complied with the high-heel requirement and open-hand posing prohibitions during prejudging but in the evening

show she decided to defy Snyder's rules. When she appeared in front of the loud and knowledgeable crowd, Combes shocked them with her muscle size. The crowd began cheering wildly and in response she kicked off her heels, hit a double biceps, and finished with the crab shot, displaying more female muscle than anyone had ever seen in the modern era.<sup>80</sup> Despite her immense popularity with the crowd that evening, the judges placed her sixth. The winner of this first pro show was Patsy Chapman, who took home a check for \$2500. However, it was truly Combes' show; she had, metaphorically, just opened women's bodybuilding's version of Pandora's box.<sup>81</sup> Unhappy with the final scoring, Combes took a parting shot at Snyder as she walked off stage that evening, "If you think I'm muscular," she yelled to the audience, "just wait until you see the women who will follow me!"<sup>82</sup>

Combe's flaunting of the "femininity" rules concerned many. During the contest, Mr. Olympia Frank Zane had told Barrilleaux, "The world is not ready for women's bodybuilding."<sup>83</sup> Snyder complained that Combes' flaunting of the rules would mean bad publicity for the sport and for his Olympus Gym where the number of weight-training women had recently increased substantially.<sup>84</sup> Although they were friends, and Combes had competed in some of SPA's first contests in Florida—winning Miss Brandon in 1979—Barrilleaux was also troubled by the archetype she represented for the sport. "What worries me in trying to get a new thing like this off the ground," Doris told a reporter later that year, "is that women will look at Laura and get turned off to bodybuilding. They will say, 'I don't want to look like that.' It will scare them. It could kill the whole movement."<sup>85</sup>

Combe's boldness and development didn't slow down the growth of interest in women's bodybuilding, however. As the year progressed, Barrilleaux was inundated with letters requesting information about the organization and she added dozens of new subscribers to her *SPA News* mailing



Doris took this self-portrait of herself with her trophy from Canton the day after she arrived home. Her physical condition at age forty-six was, indeed, remarkable.

list. Realizing that the administrative load of her organization was increasing, Doris retired from competition and dedicated herself to promoting women's bodybuilding. She approached television shows, sent articles to newspapers, and even wrote repeatedly to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports volunteering to work with them to promote weight training for women.<sup>86</sup> By 1980 SPA had chapters in almost every state in America and in several countries overseas. When the IFBB ran its first Ms. Olympia in Philadelphia in August of 1980 and chose the slender, overtly feminine, and charismatic Rachel McLish as the first bearer of that title, the sport of women's bodybuilding truly exploded.<sup>87</sup>

Attracted by the publicity accorded to women's bodybuilding and its commercial potential, both the IFBB, which controlled professional men's bodybuilding, and the AAU—then on its last legs as a governing body for amateur sport in the United States—each independently formed a women's committee in 1979 that were direct competitors to both SPA and Henry McGhee's USWPA.<sup>88</sup> The AAU's bodybuilding oversight committee, called the National Physique Association (NPA) named Lisa Lyons as the first chairwoman of its new women's committee. In an open letter to women bodybuilders printed in *Iron Man* magazine and repeated almost verbatim in *Muscle Digest*, Lyons declared the group's political independence of the male-run NPA and explained that because of the "work I have done in the gym, in competition, and in the media to establish women's bodybuilding as a serious and respected sport, the AAU also invested me with a responsibility: to promote that sport and support its athletes in developing in the direction that they choose."<sup>89</sup>

Almost simultaneously Christine Zane, wife of Mr. Olympia Frank Zane, was chosen as chair of the new IFBB women's committee.<sup>90</sup> Christine, who began dating Frank when she was in junior college, had been encouraged by him to begin doing some weight training to improve her already genetically-blessed figure. After entering and winning several beauty contests in Florida where they then lived, Christine entered and won the Miss Americana title in 1967. Three years later, after she and Frank married and moved to southern California where she taught women's exercise classes, Christine took the 1970 Miss Universe Bikini crown and then retired from competition.<sup>91</sup> Although Christine was never a competitor in what we would define as a "modern" women's contest, she was active as a judge at women's physique shows at the end of the 1970s.

Barrilleaux, who agreed to serve on both com-

mittees simultaneously, initially greeted the appearance of the new women's committees with enthusiasm. In an article in *SPA News* in December of 1979 entitled "Do You Feel Left Out of Bodybuilding?" Barrilleaux told her readers that she had been one of five women chosen to serve with Christine Zane on the new IFBB women's committee and that "This affiliation will be most beneficial to SPA members as they will have more contests available to them with the added incentive of substantial prizes."<sup>92</sup>

### A New Landscape for Women's Bodybuilding

In an election in 1980, Barrilleaux replaced Christine Zane as chair of the IFBB Women's Committee, a position to which she was reelected in 1981 and 1982.<sup>93</sup> As chair of the IFBB's Women's Committee Doris became increasingly involved with the IFBB leadership in the promotion of women's contests both in the United States and abroad. She corresponded regularly with IFBB President Ben Weider and IFBB Vice President Oscar State and felt in the beginning that the three of them shared a common vision for the sport.<sup>94</sup>

On the amateur front, however, the AAU—the umbrella organization under which Lisa Lyon's National Physique Committee for Women functioned—was crumbling.<sup>95</sup> In January of 1976, the IFBB had issued a statement declaring that all amateur bodybuilding in the United States was to be under the control of Tom Minichiello, who had founded a group called the American Amateur Bodybuilding Association.<sup>96</sup> However, the AAU was also sponsoring amateur men's contests during these same years through its National Physique Committee of the AAU, Inc. (NPC) and this led to considerable confusion with fans and the public. With the passage of the Amateur Sport Act in 1978, the IFBB and AAU entered into a tenuous alliance that ceded the rights to all amateur contests to the AAU and all professional contests to the IFBB. Two years later, however, after the IFBB challenged the right of the AAU to continue to be the sole promoter of amateur contests, the NPC, under Jim Manion, dropped their AAU affiliation and Lisa Lyon's women's committee was then discontinued by the AAU.<sup>97</sup>

IFBB president Ben Weider then asked Barrilleaux to take on the task of forming a new amateur women's association under the umbrella of the IFBB. Barrilleaux agreed and with help from Susan Fry and Kimberly Cassidy, the American Federation of Women Bodybuilders (AFWB) was incorporated as a non-profit organization in December of 1980.<sup>98</sup> Because she ini-

tially believed she would be able to maintain autonomy for her committee underneath the IFBB's umbrella, Doris' closed down SPA, although she decided to keep publishing *SPA News* which became the official publication of the AFWB.<sup>99</sup>

Barrilleaux's new organization for amateur female physique athletes was remarkably similar philosophically to SPA. Under Doris' direction the group quickly created a constitution, bylaws, and judging criteria—all largely modeled on SPA's standards.<sup>100</sup> In a membership flyer produced in 1982, Barrilleaux described that process and how the group had had to struggle for autonomy:

Within one year there were AFWB State Representatives in nearly every state . . .

. The women worked hard and long, many times learning by trial and error, to establish their own rules and guidelines. They stood up for their rights when old-time promoters denied their right to govern their own sport. They bent over backwards to work with the promoters who thought women had no place onstage at a bodybuilding competition, and also with promoters who insisted that the women were no different from the men, and should be judged exactly like the men—by the men's guidelines. . . .

In the past the women have worked behind the scenes anonymously and were kept in the shadows of the men . . . In a male-dominated sport, some evidently felt that the women were neither capable nor worthy of managing their own sport. Thanks to AFWB and IFBB perseverance, it has become evident that they were wrong.<sup>101</sup>

However, the halcyon days of the AFWB were remarkably short. A letter from Ben Weider published in the April 1981 issue of *SPA News* confirmed that "the American Federation of Women Bodybuilders has been recognized as the governing body for women's amateur bodybuilding in America." However, Weider continued, it was understood that the AFWB "will work closely and co-operate with the National Physique Committee of the USA, Inc. (formerly National Physique Committee of



Seventy-nine year old Doris Barrilleaux with Joe and Betty Weider in July 2011 at the opening of the Weider Museum at the University of Texas in Austin.

Photo by Bob Gardner

the AAU, Inc.)"<sup>102</sup> Its chairman, Jim Manion, was the North American vice president of the IFBB, and had proven to be a savvy meet promoter and attracted many sponsors to the sport. Manion understood the economics of bodybuilding as well as anyone and unfortunately for Barrilleaux, he and a growing number of IFBB officials began to question the need for a totally autonomous women's organization.<sup>103</sup>

Things became complicated for the AFWB in 1982 when the AAU attempted to once again gain control of amateur bodybuilding by issuing sanctions for men's, women's, and couples' bodybuilding contests. Doris claimed in an editorial in *SPA News* that their interest came from the fact that "the addition of women's and couples' competitions had turned the sport into a top money-maker with national media coverage."<sup>104</sup> At this point in time the AFWB was supposed to be the sole agency granting sanctions for women's meets. However, as Doris explains in her editorial, in addition to the AAU, even some NPC and IFBB officials refused to honor the AFWB's sovereignty and would not "co-operate or recognize the women as controlling their own sport."<sup>105</sup> By 1 January 1982, Doris complained that, "I am receiving reports that some NPC men are still grant-

ing women's sanctions and memberships even though the NPC officials have agreed to work with the AFWB."<sup>106</sup> Even some of the top women were confused. Carla Dunlap, for example, wrote Doris at one point to ask, "do women have to be registered with both the Nat'l Physique Committee and the AFWB, or just one or the other, [and] if so which?" Dunlap then added, "I hope I am not the only person who is not totally clear on what's happening. . . ."<sup>107</sup> It's hardly surprising that the AFWB was unable to maintain sanction authority over women's bodybuilding since so many women's contests were held at the same time, and in the same venue as a men's contest and there was a certain lack of logic in having to have two sanctions for the same event. The other factor that made it difficult for the AFWB was the rapid growth and expansion of the sport; by 1981, there were an estimated eighty contests and eight hundred competitors in women's bodybuilding.<sup>108</sup>

Although Barrilleaux's position as AFWB Committee Chair gave her considerable power, she was still trying to operate a women's association within a larger association and community dominated by men. Doris ran her own meetings, but a few male bodybuilding officials generally attended, and though these male officials rarely said anything during the women's meetings, their presence, Doris believed, prevented her members from speaking as freely as they might.<sup>109</sup> In the early days of the sport, competitors to most of the early shows were *invited* by bodybuilding promoters and officials to the big contests rather than qualifying.<sup>110</sup> It was, therefore, inevitable that such men would be viewed as social gatekeepers by the women attending AFWB meetings.<sup>111</sup> Women bodybuilders had very few ways to financially capitalize on their involvement in the sport (There were still relatively few pro contests.) except through doing appearances, guest posing, and modeling or "representing" products, all of which made it difficult for women competitors to speak out and become identified as someone opposed to male interests.<sup>112</sup> Wayne DeMillia, one of the IFBB officials who regularly attended the AFWB meetings, told Barrilleaux explicitly, "We have the only game in town, you play it our way or else."<sup>113</sup>

As the NPC grew in strength under Jim Manion's direction, pressure began to build to move women's bodybuilding totally under its control. The NPC's interest in assuming control of women's bodybuilding wasn't just the question of who controlled the sanctions. Some IFBB officials had begun to question the aesthetic standard for women's bodybuilding that Doris tried to enforce. In forming the AFWB, Doris had

first suggested using essentially the same judging standards that she had adopted for SPA. However, as women trained longer and began building more muscle people in many corners of the sport began pushing for more "muscular" standards. Barrilleaux suggested that it was time to recognize two kinds of women bodybuilders, those who wanted to build the most muscular bodies possible and those who wanted to become fit and sleek, but not necessarily fully developed. Doris wanted to call the two groups "bodybuilders" and "body sculptors." As she wrote, "In my attempts to establish two classes I have met with much opposition. This opposition came from those encouraging women to develop to their maximum potential."<sup>114</sup> Although the idea had merit, and Doris also saw it as a possible solution to the problem of anabolic drug use, she could not get the IFBB to agree to the two divisions in the early 1980s. So, when the official AFWB rules were published in *SPA News*, Barrilleaux pushed the smaller and more feminine aesthetic, writing in Rule Number One: "The judges will not be looking for the most muscular or vascular woman," and in Rule Number Two: "Body fat should not be so low as to cause the women to lose their breasts."<sup>115</sup> Although the rules found favor with Ben Weider and many women competitors, not everyone was pleased with them. Some of the larger and more muscular women competitors and writer Bill Dobbins, then editor of *Flex* magazine, for example, were highly incensed by the AFWB's proposed judging standards and conservative approach.<sup>116</sup> Over the next several years the question of how to judge women bodybuilders would become increasingly politicized and publicized. However, the full story of that controversy is beyond the scope of this essay.

In 1982, as Doris found herself increasingly attacked both for her stand in favor of the smaller, and less highly defined aesthetic, and for her position on women's right to self-rule, she decided to resign as AFWB Chair and turn the group over to Susan Fry, the former AFWB secretary.<sup>117</sup> However, although she resigned as Chair, she stayed on the AFWB Committee albeit not in the titular role, and she continued attending and judging at both men's and women's contests until 1984.<sup>118</sup>

It is interesting to consider what might have happened to women's bodybuilding had Barrilleaux and her colleagues decided to go back to their SPA roots and run a separate women's organization when she lost control of the AFWB. Could they have made it work? Bodybuilding's sister sport of powerlifting went through remarkably similar struggles in the early 1980s as

women powerlifters—and a few men who wanted drug testing—ultimately decided that they could never convince the dominant group, the United States Powerlifting Federation, to change its position against drug testing and so decided to separate and form their own autonomous federation.<sup>119</sup> The American Drug Free Powerlifting Association (ADFPA), which later changed its name to USA Powerlifting, has now become the largest and most prestigious association in the United States and has had strict drug testing programs in place since the beginning.<sup>120</sup> We can't help but wonder what would have happened if the members of the AFWB had similarly deserted the IFBB and created an organization that allowed women to compete in the two different kinds of contests Doris had envisioned. Working against Doris' ability to make such a move, of course, was the international reach of the IFBB and the economic and political power they possessed because of the Weider publications. In 1984 the IFBB shut the AFWB down entirely and transferred the group's \$30,000 in savings to the NPC and Jim Manion.<sup>121</sup> Barrilleaux protested the move, of course, but reports that IFBB President Ben Weider cited the Amateur Sports Act of 1978 for the shift and explained to her that since the NPC had been designated as bodybuilding's sole national governing body, it was actually illegal for the AFWB to exist.<sup>122</sup> Given the developments in powerlifting in this same era, Weider's assertion begs further research and analysis.

### Later Years

As she stepped away from her heavy administrative load, Doris became more involved with writing and photography. She wrote articles for various bodybuilding publications including Joe Weider's *Muscle & Fitness*, *Shape*, and *Flex* and was given a regular column called "Curves and Peaks" in Dan Lurie's *Muscle Training Illustrated*.<sup>123</sup> In 1983, Barrilleaux released her second exercise book, *Forever Fit*, and in one of her last roles in the administration of bodybuilding, Barrilleaux assisted the IFBB and had a cameo appearance in the film *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, which filmed in Las Vegas, Nevada, in December of that year.<sup>124</sup> Doris' transition away from administration was also due to Dan Lurie's invitation to her to edit a new women's bodybuilding magazine he planned, called *Body Talk*. Doris threw herself into the project and the first—and only—issue appeared in the spring of 1984.<sup>125</sup>

Over the intervening years, Barrilleaux, who turned eighty in August of 2011, has continued to lift weights and to ride her bicycle or swim daily. Although

she and Sterling divorced in 1987, she continues to live in her lovely home on the Alafia River where she spends her free time working on digital photography, doing all her own yard work, and writing. For the past several years she has been working on a digital autobiography which is now selling as a DVD.<sup>126</sup>

Bodybuilding official Oscar State observed in a letter to Steve Wennerstrom shortly after the latter was named IFBB historian, that he wondered if Steve was going to tackle the problem of trying to determine who had been "the pioneer in getting women's bodybuilding started on the competitive level."<sup>127</sup> State's question was driven, of course, by the very reason that Wennerstrom was named historian for women's bodybuilding in 1982.<sup>128</sup> Women's bodybuilding evolved so quickly and in so many different parts of the country simultaneously, that it has proven difficult to trace the true historical roots of the sport. Did Barrilleaux host the first women's contest? No. That honor belongs, we would argue, to Henry McGhee. However, in terms of "forming" the sport, bringing women together in common cause, establishing judging standards, and being the most visible and long-term advocate for the sport, probably no one has done more than Doris Barrilleaux, called by many "the First Lady of Bodybuilding."

### NOTES:

During the course of this project both authors interviewed Doris Barrilleaux via telephone and in person. For clarity we have referred to the interviewer by last name rather than simply saying "by the author."

1. Doris Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 12 August 2011.
2. Henry McGhee interview with Todd, 14 August 2011. Only three women at the meet were from outside Ohio. See also: Nicholas Chare: "Women's Bodybuilding: Toward a Radical Politics of Muscle," *Limina*, 10 (2004): 52-69; at: [www.limina.arts.uwa.edu.au/previous/volumes\\_610/volume\\_10?f=73871](http://www.limina.arts.uwa.edu.au/previous/volumes_610/volume_10?f=73871).
3. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 12 August 2011.
4. For an excellent discussion of the influence of women's bodybuilding on beauty, fashion and popular culture see: Allen Guttmann, "Sports, Eros and Popular Culture," *Stanford Humanities Review* 6, no. 2 (1995), viewed at: <http://www.stanford.edu/group/SHR/6-2/html/guttmann.html>.
5. Ibid. See also: Chare, "Women's Bodybuilding," 52-69; Leslie Heywood, *Body-makers: A Cultural Anatomy of Women's Bodybuilding* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Maria R. Lowe, *Women of Steel: Women's Bodybuilding and the Struggle for Self Definition* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); and Joanna Freuh, Laurie Fierstein and Judith Stein, eds., *Picturing the Modern Amazon* (New York: Rizzoli, 1998).
6. Barrilleaux interview with Harguess, 5 November 2010. Women did not begin playing full-court basketball until 1971. To encourage cooperation in women, basketball rule makers only allowed girls to dribble three times before they were forced to pass the ball. See: Sally Jenkins, "History of Women's Basketball," NBA.com at: [http://www.nba.com/about\\_us/jenkins\\_feature.html](http://www.nba.com/about_us/jenkins_feature.html).
7. Barrilleaux interview with Harguess, 5 November 2010. Barrilleaux idolized Tarzan as portrayed by five-time Olympic gold medal swimmer Johnny Weissmuller in a dozen films made in the 1930s and '40s. See Michael K. Bohn, *Heroes and Ballyhoo: How the Golden Age of the 1920s Transformed American Sports* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2009).
8. Vickie Lynn Barrilleaux was born on 3 September 1949 when Doris was 18. Darlene Kay Barrilleaux was born on 9 May 1952; Gary Dean Barrilleaux was born on 15 May

1953 and died on 22 May 1987 in a motorcycle accident; Jerry Wayne Barrilleaux was born on 5 December 1955 and died 28 December 1992 from AIDS; and Don Ray Barrilleaux was born on 19 July 1958.

9. Barrilleaux interview with Harguess, 5 November 2010.

10. Barrilleaux began weight training to improve her health and to help with weight control and appearance. Insight into the use of body technologies to discipline, control, and restrain the body can be found in: Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds., L.H. Martin, H. Gutman & P.H. Hutton (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 16-49; and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

11. Barrilleaux interview with Harguess, 5 November 2010.

12. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 12 August 2011.

13. Ibid.

14. Barrilleaux email message to Harguess, 5 December 2010; Vera Christensen, "To the Ladies," *Strength and Health*, ed., Bob Hoffman (York, PA: Strength and Health Publishing Company, 1956-1986). Vera Christensen was the wife of 1951 AAU Mr. Florida bodybuilding champion Al Christensen. They owned and operated a successful gym in Winter Haven, Florida. Vera Christensen died on June 30, 2011 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

15. Barrilleaux email message to Harguess, 5 December 2010.

16. Vera Christensen, "To the Ladies," *Strength & Health*, February 1963, 38. Barrilleaux also appeared in Vera Christensen, "To the Ladies," *Strength & Health*, April 1964, 55.

17. Barrilleaux interview with Harguess, 5 November 2010.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid. For discussion about the acceptance of women weight trainers in male gymnasiums, see Doris Barrilleaux, "Vive La Difference," *Muscle Training Illustrated*, January 1986, 126; Alan M. Klein, *Little Big Men: Bodybuilding Subculture and Gender Construction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 160-162; and Lowe, *Women of Steel*, 25-26.

20. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 20 August 2011. According to Doris, no one was called a "personal trainer" in those days, but that was essentially what she did for other women at the club.

21. Ibid. Barrilleaux attended bodybuilding contests with her husband and says other women attended with their husbands.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Barrilleaux email message to Harguess, 20 May 2011.

25. Ibid; Barrilleaux claims Falcon insisted on shooting all photographs outdoors in natural lighting and that he ate the same foods for the same meals, hardly ever varying his diet. Falcon had many photographs published in *Strength & Health*, *Iron Man* and other major physique magazines. A practicing nudist, he also sold photographs to various naturist publications like *Sunshine and Health*.

26. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 20 August 2011.

27. Bonnie Day, "Women, Too, Need Exercise," *Muscular Development*, 14, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 1977), 50 (photos by Dick Falcon); Dick Falcon, "Keeping Youthful at Forty-Six," *Strength and Health*, 45, no. 2 (Feb/March 1977), 49.

28. Bob Hoffman, "Fresh Air and Sunshine," *Muscular Development* 15, no. 4 (July/Aug 1977), 24-26 (photos by Dick Falcon).

29. Doris Barrilleaux and Jim Murray, *Inside Weight Training for Women* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1978) (photos by Dick Falcon).

30. Barrilleaux email message to Harguess, 20 May 2011. Doris is still active as a photographer and works as photo editor for *Florida Muscle News*. She thinks that no other photographer has taken as many cover shots.

31. Steve Wennerstrom, "Women's Bodybuilding: A Contemporary History," in *Picturing the Modern Amazon*, 62-71.

32. For more information on these early contests see: Jan Todd, "Bernarr Macfadden: Reformer of Feminine Form," *Iron Game History* 1, no. 4&5, 3-8.

33. For information on the history of the Miss America pageant see: Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

34. Dan Levin, "Here She Is, Miss, Well, What?" *Sports Illustrated*, March 17, 1980, 64-75.

35. Interview with Mim Scharlock by Todd, San Antonio, Texas, 15 August 2011.

36. Denie's full name is Dennis Walters.

37. Denie, "World Cup Bounty Hunters," *Muscle Training Illustrated*, January 1878, 19-20. See also: Steve Wennerstrom, "Women's Bodybuilding: The Beginning, Part I," *Flex*, October 1984, 25-27, 74-77.

38. Heywood, *Bodybuilders*, 27. See also: Linda Napikoski, "Miss America Protest: Feminists at the Miss America Pageant," viewed at: [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/feminism/a/miss\\_america\\_protest.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/feminism/a/miss_america_protest.htm).

39. Benjamin G. Rader, "The Quest for Self-Sufficiency and the New Strenuous: Reflections on the Strenuous Life of the 1970s and the 1980s," *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 255-266.

40. For a discussion of the importance of Arnold Schwarzenegger, see Ellexis Boyle, "The Intertextual Terminator: The Role of Film in Branding Arnold Schwarzenegger," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34, no. 1 (January 2010): 42-60.

41. McGhee interview with Todd, 14 August 2011.

42. Ibid.

43. Mike Hudak, "Female Bodybuilders," *Strength & Health*, April-May 1977, 56.

44. 41. McGhee interview with Todd, 14 August 2011.

45. Levin, "Here She Is," 64-65; Hudak, "Female Bodybuilders," 7.

46. Paul Lehman, "Women Benefitting from Weight-lifting Techniques," *Evening Independent* (Massillon, Ohio), 1 October 1976.

47. Ibid. An article in the *Journal News* (Hamilton, Ohio), entitled "Great Way to Stay in Shape," Say Women about Weight Lifting," 12 December 1976, claims that McGhee was working with about one hundred women by this time. The same article also appeared in the *Steubenville (Ohio) Herald Star*, 27 November 1976.

48. "Powerlift Contest Scheduled," *Steubenville (Ohio) Herald Star*, 19 March 1977.

49. McGhee interview with Todd, 14 August 2011; McGhee described the meet as the "Ohio Regional Physique Championship." Al Thomas and Steve Wennerstrom concur in *The Female Physique Athlete: A History to Date—1977 Through 1983* (Absolutely/Women's Physique Publication, 1973), 230. A short article on Gina LaSpina titled "Muscle-bound Raquel Welch," *Chronicle Telegraph* (Elyria, Ohio), 25 October 1977, called the meet the "Miss Body Midwest Contest."

50. "Muscle-bound Raquel Welch." See also, Bill Jentz, "Women's Physique Contest Update," *Women and Strength Periodical* (December, 1978), 3.

51. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 20 August 2011.

52. Men's bodybuilding, it is worth noting, was not judged in the same manner in this era. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 20 August 2011.

53. Steve Wennerstrom interview with Todd, September 8, 2011; and Bill Jentz, "Special 1978 National Women's Physique Championship—Mary Beth Pritt Issue" *Women and Strength Periodical*, no. 15 (July 1978), 4.

54. Barrilleaux letter to Bill Jentz, 9 December 1978. Barrilleaux Collection, Stark Center.

55. Mary Beth Pritt letter to Bill Jentz, June 29, 1978, Steve Wennerstrom Collection, Stark Center.

56. Steve Wennerstrom handwritten notes from 1978 Canton meet, Steve Wennerstrom Collection, Stark Center; Jentz, "Special 1978," 3; and Barrilleaux email to Todd, August 17, 2011.

57. Barrilleaux's measurements: 5'4", 123lbs, 36-24-36, sent in email to Harguess on 20 May 2011; Doris Barrilleaux, "The Southeastern Physique Association," *Women and Strength Periodical*, August 30, 1979.

58. In a letter to Bill Jentz late in 1978, Doris told him she'd been asked to guest pose ten times since her appearance in Canton. Barrilleaux letter to Jentz, 9 December 1978, Barrilleaux Collection, Stark Center.

59. Levin, "Here She Is," 74.

60. Barrilleaux letter to Jentz.

61. Ibid., Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 12 August 2011.

62. Bill Jentz, "Southeastern Physique Association S.P.A. Issue," *Women and Strength Periodical*, no. 35 (30 August 1979), 6; and Doris Barrilleaux, "The Southeastern Physique Association," *Women and Strength Periodical*, no. 35 (30 August 1979), 7.

63. Digital copy of "Registration of Trademark" certificate issued by State of Florida on 23 October 1979. Barrilleaux Digital Collection, Stark Center.

64. Barrilleaux letter to Jentz.

65. Ibid. Barrilleaux added that McGhee had removed the "requirement for splits and backbends this time," for which she was grateful. Organization was not, apparently, McGhee's strong suit as Dan Levin's article on McGhee's 1979 Women Nationals also discusses the chaotic nature of the contest and tells how McGhee sat right beside the judges during the contest to coach them on judging. Levin, "Here She Is," 74.

66. Barrilleaux letter to Jentz.

67. Doris Barrilleaux, *SPA News* 1, no. 1 (April 1979); Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 12 August 2011.

68. Ibid. Bodybuilding author Bill Dobbins led a campaign in the first decade of the twenty-first century to have the lat spread recognized as a compulsory pose in women's bodybuilding, see: Bill Dobbins, "Why No Lat Spread for Women," *Bodybuilding.com* at: <http://www.bodybuilding.com/fun/billdobbins4.htm>.

69. Ibid; Doris Barrilleaux, "Appearance Schedule" (1978-1979), Barrilleaux Collection, Stark Center.
70. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 20 August 2011. See also: Bill Jentz, "Southeastern Physique," 2-3.
71. Chris Kennedy, "The First Lady," at: [www.fortunecity.com/olympia/maradona/77/dorisox.htm](http://www.fortunecity.com/olympia/maradona/77/dorisox.htm).
72. Jentz, "Southeastern Physique Association," 2-4.
73. Steve Wennerstrom, "Women's World Bodybuilding Championships," *Iron Man* 39, no.1 (November 1979), 35. It was not uncommon in AAU men's contests in the middle years of the twentieth century to require bodybuilders to demonstrate athleticism; see: John Fair, "Mr. America: Idealism or Racism: Color Consciousness and the AAU Mr. America Contest, 1939-1982," *Iron Game History* 8, no. 1 (June/July 2003): 18-19.
74. Wennerstrom, "Women's World Bodybuilding Championship," 35.
75. Ibid.
76. Mario Casilli, "Body Beautiful," *Playboy* 27, no. 10 (October 1980), 103-107; Robert Maplethorpe, *Lady: Lisa Lyons* (St. Martin's Press, 1991); and Lisa Lyons, *Lisa Lyon's Body Magic* (New York: Book Sales, 1983).
77. Heywood, *Bodymakers*, 28, 92, 110. Although the sexualized commoditization of Lyon's body may be read as an act of complicity with gender's asymmetrical power relations, Lyon saw it as an act of defiance, according to author Leslie Heywood. For additional information on Lyons, see: Steve Wennerstrom, "Women's Bodybuilding: A Contemporary History," 64-69.
78. George Snyder letter to Barrilleaux, (no date) Barrilleaux Collection, Stark Center.
79. Wennerstrom, "Women's Bodybuilding: A Contemporary History." For a discussion of the philosophy of the WBA see the *Official Program for the 1978 United States Bodybuilding Championships* (Warrington, PA: George Snyder, Olympus Gym and Spa, 1978), 5; an ad for the 1979 Best in the World contest appears on page nine of the same program. Steve Wennerstrom Collection, Stark Center.
80. Levin, "Here She Is," 72.
81. Wennerstrom, "Women's Bodybuilding," A Contemporary History," 66.
82. Charles Gaines and George Butler, *Pumping Iron II: The Unprecedented Woman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 34.
83. Barrilleaux interview with Harguess, 5 November 2010.
84. Levin, "Here She Is," 73.
85. Frank Bentayou, "Another Look at those Women Weight Trainers," *Tampa Tribune*, 23 November 1979.
86. Glenn Swengross letter to Doris Barrilleaux, 12 April 1979, Barrilleaux Collection, Stark Center.
87. Wennerstrom, "Women's Bodybuilding: A Contemporary History," 66.
88. Although the USWPA continued to host meets in Canton through 1980, they were not successful at making their organization truly national. Two issues of a magazine inexplicably called *Sartorius* were produced, one in October of 1979 and the other in March of 1980; Steve Wennerstrom Collection, Stark Center.
89. Lisa Lyon, "Lisa Lyon—National Women's Physique Chairperson," *Iron Man*, 39, no. 4 (May 1980), 31.
90. Tony Blinn, "A Brief History of the IFBB as told through its International Congress Reports," viewed at: <http://www.ifbb.com/history/congresshistory.htm>.
91. "Frank and Christine Zane-Biography," *The Official Frank Zane Website*, viewed at: [http://www.frankzane.com/c\\_f\\_biography.htm](http://www.frankzane.com/c_f_biography.htm).
92. Ibid. Doris began as a regional chairwoman for Lyons and the AAU committee that same year.
93. Doris Barrilleaux, *SPA News* 2, no. 7 (1980).
94. Barrilleaux interview with Todd.
95. By October 1980 Lyons was calling her National Physique Association "The National Physique Committee for Women." Lisa Lyons letter to Barrilleaux, reprinted in "Letters to the Ladies," *SPA News* 2, no. 7&8 (October/November 1980), 2.
96. Ben Weider, "Notice to All American Bodybuilders, January 1976." Typescript inserted in *IFBB Report to All Nations*, no. 11, January 1976. This is the official magazine of the IFBB.
97. Ben Weider, "Report from the President of the IFBB," published in *George Snyder & Olympus present the 1978 United States Bodybuilding Championships*, program booklet (Warrington, PA: George Snyder, Olympus Gym and Spa, 1978). Weider explains, "After more than 30 years, the AAU decided to affiliate with the IFBB in an overwhelming vote. The AAU is now the official federation . . . that will have the exclusive right to organize amateur contests." Barrilleaux, *SPA News* 2, no. 7 (1980), 2.
98. "American Federation of Women Bodybuilders," membership brochure, Barrilleaux Collection, Stark Center. See also: Doris Barrilleaux, "What's It All About—SPA, AFWBB, IFBB," brochure, Steve Wennerstrom Collection, Stark Center.
99. Barrilleaux continued publishing *SPA News* through July 1983 and ended it only when she was offered a chance to publish a "real" magazine by Dan Lurie. Interview with Barrilleaux by Todd, 12 August 2011. Copies of SPA news are available in the Barrilleaux Collection, Stark Center.
100. Doris Barrilleaux, *SPA News* 2, no. 12 (March, 1981).
101. "American Federation of Women Bodybuilders," membership brochure.
102. "AFWB News," *SPA News* 3, no. 1 (April 1981), 7.
103. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 20 September 2011.
104. Doris Barrilleaux, "From The Editor," *SPA News* 4, no.1 (April 1982), 14.
105. Ibid.
106. Ibid.
107. Carla Dunlap letter to Barrilleaux, 19 February 1981, Barrilleaux Collection, Stark Center.
108. Laura Combes and Bill Reynolds, *Winning Women's Bodybuilding* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, Inc., 1983), 13.
109. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 27 August 2011. According to Doris the men who attended were Wayne DeMillia and Oscar State.
110. This was also true for the early Ms. Olympia contests.
111. Anthropologist Alan Klein argues that bodybuilding's political economy in this era would have been comparable to the NFL Commissioner owning 80% of the teams and *Sports Illustrated*. Alan Klein, "Muscle Manor: The Use of Sport Metaphor and History in Sport Sociology," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 9, (1985): 6.
112. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, September 20, 2011.
113. Barrilleaux email to Harguess, 23 June 2011.
114. "Pertinent Information," *SPA News* 2, no. 12 (March 1981), 4.
115. Ibid.
116. Bill Dobbins, "Why No Lat Spread for Women"; see also: Doris Barrilleaux, "Mass vs. Class," *Shape*, February 1982, 62-66.
117. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 27 August 2011.
118. Ibid.; Doris Barrilleaux, *SPA News* 4 & 5, nos. 12/1 (March and April, 1983). Doris' last contest as a judge was the IFBB Women's World Championships in Australia in 1984.
119. Jan Todd and Terry Todd, "Reflections on the Parallel Federation to the Problem of Drug Use in Sport: The Cautionary Tale of Powerlifting," Thomas Murray, ed., *Performance Enhancing Technologies in Sport: Ethical, Conceptual and Scientific Issues* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009); see also: Jan Todd and Terry Todd, "Chaos Can Have Gentle Beginnings: the Early History of the Quest for Drug Testing in American Powerlifting: 1964-1984," *Iron Game History* 8, (3) (May-June 2004): 3-22.
120. Ibid.
121. Bob Wolff, "History of the NPC," *Muscle and Fitness*, September 1996, 78.
122. Barrilleaux interview with Harguess. See also, Barrilleaux undated letter to Wennerstrom, Wennerstrom Collection, Stark Center.
123. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 27 August 2011.
124. Kennedy, "The First Lady."
125. Filmed in 1983, this dramatized documentary was the sequel to *Pumping Iron*, the iconic 1977 film that immortalized Arnold Schwarzenegger and men's bodybuilding. Filmmakers Charles Gaines and George Butler, with cooperation from the IFBB, followed women's bodybuilding contestants as they prepared and competed in the Caesar's World Cup, a new contest created expressly for the movie.
126. Doris Barrilleaux, *And I Did* (DVD) (self-published, 2011) available at [www.and-i-did.com](http://www.and-i-did.com).
127. *Body Talk*, Published by Dan Lurie and Doris Barrilleaux, Spring, 1984.
128. Barrilleaux interview with Todd, 20 August 2011.
129. Oscar State letter to Steve Wennerstrom, 22 December 1982, Wennerstrom Collection, Stark Center. See also: Steve Wennerstrom letter to Oscar State, 13 December 1982, Steve Wennerstrom Collection, Stark Center, The University of Texas.

## Editors Note:

To order copies of Doris Barrilleaux's DVD autobiography, *And I Did!*, send \$44.95 + \$5.00 shipping to Doris Barrilleaux, 9427 Oak St, Riverview, FL. or go to: [www.AND-I-DID.com](http://www.AND-I-DID.com).

# JIMMY PAYNE: THE FORGOTTEN MR. AMERICA

How happy is the blameless Vestal's lot?  
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.<sup>1</sup>

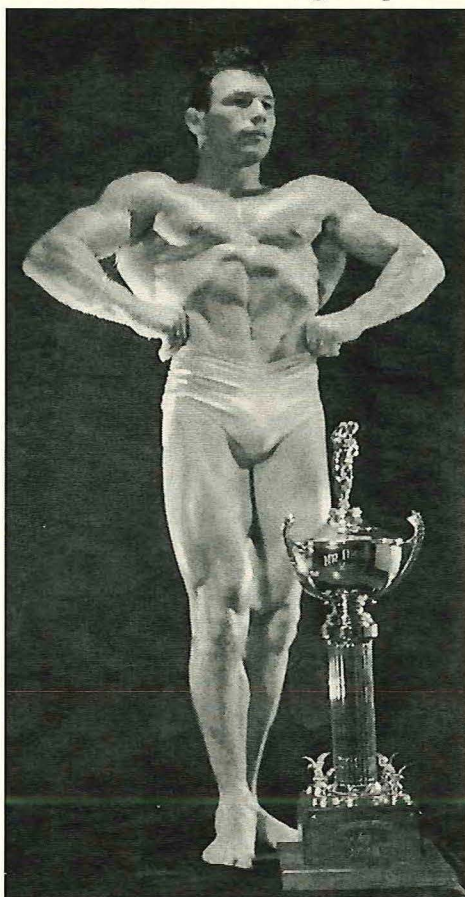
~ Alexander Pope

**John Fair**

**Georgia College and State University &  
The University of Texas at Austin**

Shortly after World War II, the enterprising brothers of iron, Joe and Ben Weider of Montreal, formed the International Federation of Bodybuilders (IFBB) to challenge the erstwhile authority of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and its chief benefactor/power broker in weightlifting, Bob Hoffman of York, Pennsylvania. Although the AAU had sanctioned the world's most prestigious physique competition, the Mr. America Contest, since 1939, the Weiders sought to capitalize on the title by sponsoring a rival event with cash incentives. In 1949 that contest was won by Alan Stephan, the popular 1946 AAU Mr. America, and accompanied by much fanfare and ensuing endorsements by Stephan of Weider products. The 1950 IFBB winner, however, Jimmy Payne, of Oakland, California, received almost no publicity from the Weider organization. In fact, it provided far greater media exposure for the 1950 AAU Mr. America, John Farbotnik, although Payne, by virtue of his splendid physique, was also a deserving champion.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, no compilation of Mr. America titleholders by any federation or magazine over the past sixty years recognizes Payne's 1950 victory.<sup>3</sup> Even an official list furnished by Tony Blinn of the IFBB in 2008, at the behest of Ben Weider, does not include Payne.<sup>4</sup> That the IFBB

strangely stopped appearing in Weider publications for nearly a decade and that this disappearance is unaccounted for in their autobiography a half century later suggests a connection between the two lacunae with implications that focus more broadly on the evolution of iron game politics in the 1950s.<sup>5</sup>



Following his service in the Navy during World War II, Payne became a professional entertainer and gym owner. This photo was taken when he became the 1950 IFBB Mr. America.

Jimmy Payne was born on 3 May 1926, to a Jewish father (Jashmin Jasven) and an Italian Catholic mother in Oakland. When his parents separated and his mother remarried, he took the surname of his step-father. At age 13 Jimmy fractured his skull from falling off a banister at school and was unconscious for four days. Critical to his recovery were the skills he acquired in hand balancing and gymnastics (especially ring work) from watching others at a local playground. The Oakland area was a hotbed of physical culture, and Jimmy became a bodybuilder upon joining Carl Cathy's gym and later Jack LaLanne's studio where he, along with Steve Reeves, received personal instruction from Clem Poechman. At nearby Neptune Beach—an entertainment resort that featured a dance hall, picnic grounds, swimming pools, and a scenic railway—Payne engaged in hand balancing acts with LaLanne and Oakland gym owner Ed Yarick. Entering the Navy in 1943, he met Oregon bodybuilder

Sam Loprinzi, who was a barbell instructor at Treasure Island, a major embarkation point for men being shipped overseas. Loprinzi had, according to Payne, the first barbell gym in the service. Owing to his background in wrestling and boxing from school and his association with Loprinzi, with whom he did hand balancing and barbell work, Payne became a physical trainer in the service. Upon discharge he opened his own health studio with bodybuilder Norman Marks and started entering weightlifting meets and doing hand balancing stunts. According to Alyce Stagg, Yarick's wife and a strength athlete in her own right, Jimmy and LaLanne "worked up a sensational act" and were featured at many shows in the bay area.<sup>6</sup>

Occasionally he and LaLanne would drive nearly four hundred miles to Muscle Beach where "we would perform on the beach all day and go to the Brown Derby and other clubs in Hollywood at night to drink. Jack put away quite a few." In 1950, the same year he won the America crown, Payne worked as a lifeguard, bartender, and entertainer in Sonoma County. "In those days, the Russian River was the place to go, people came from all over the world, and the river was packed with night-clubs. I did shows all over out there," he recalls. Later he did nightclub work in San Francisco. Equally adept at muscle control as he was at hand balancing, he was a much sought after emcee, comedian, and tap dancer. But he did not sing. Payne recalls that he

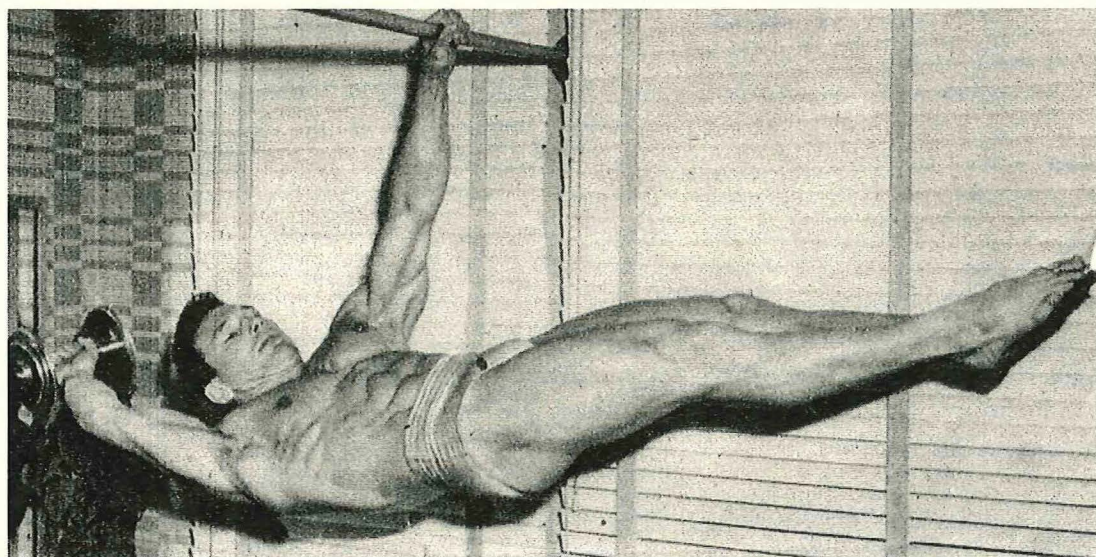
worked in some pretty tough places that were both topless and bottomless. I worked on Broadway in San Francisco when it was amateur night for strippers. I worked with Tempest Storm, Lily St. Cyr, Candy Cane, Sugar, Tassle-twirling Tammy from Big T Texas, and Satin Doll. I never worked with Gypsy Rose Lee. Good strippers didn't show everything. There was no vulgarity. Their acts were suggestive and full of innuendoes.<sup>7</sup>

In the tradition of vaudeville physical culturists, Payne was very versatile, "unlike the current physique guys who can do nothing more than show muscles," he says. His muscles were functional. Although he then weighed only 145 pounds, he states that he could press 245, snatch 210, and clean and jerk 280 pounds, enough to have earned him third place as a lightweight at the 1951 world championships in Milan. He also claims a squat

of 325 pounds, a deadlift of 500, and that on his fifty-second birthday he did fifty-one handstand dips to surpass the mark of thirty-five set by Jack LaLanne. Arguably Payne's most notable feats, however, were in wrist-wrestling where he was four-time lightweight champion and emceed the World Wrist-wrestling Championships for many years in nearby Petaluma for ABC's *Wide World of Sports*. In the early 1970s, as a publicity stunt, Payne recalls that he wrist-wrestled the young Arnold Schwarzenegger who outweighed him by about eighty pounds. When asked how he did, Payne replied, "I whipped his ass."<sup>8</sup>

Like most early bodybuilders, Payne considered the development of a pleasing physique to be a byproduct of training for other kinds of athletic pursuits and not an end in itself. Payne started to enter physique contests in 1945, along with LaLanne, who was nearly twelve years his senior and to some extent his role model and alter ego. Jack was even best man at Payne's wedding. Both were short in stature, athletically gifted, and full of energy. Jimmy appeared to have a better physique, good enough to become a Mr. America. "He has a beautifully proportioned body, with excellent muscular definition, and looks good even besides [sic] men almost twice as big as he is," observed Stagg in 1948.<sup>9</sup> George Jowett, in a 1949 article entitled "Problems of the Short Man," also noted Payne's short stature, but "he did not let height disturb his molding a classical physique. Jimmy stands 5' 5" in height, but his weight trained body is so perfectly proportioned that he gives the illusion of being much taller."<sup>10</sup> LaLanne, at 5' 7", was only runner-up at Walt Baptiste's Professional Mr. America Contest in 1954 and never entered an AAU Mr. America Contest, yet he attracted seemingly endless coverage in all the leading muscle magazines, including twelve covers. According to Payne, Jack "did not look good under lights, but he had the best beach body and was the best all around performer." Payne also believed that Clarence Ross, the 1945 AAU Mr. America, "was the best." In 1947 Payne beat future Mr. America Jack Delinger to win the Mr. Northern California Contest and placed third in Baptiste's professional contests in 1948 and 1949.<sup>11</sup>

By this time the Weider brothers also decided to adopt professionalism to advance their standing in the iron game. In a bold move to exploit and perhaps even appropriate the image of the nation's leading bodybuilding event, they launched their own version of a Mr. America Contest under the auspices of the IFBB. "Cash for Mr. America, Money! Money! Money!" was the



Like many bodybuilders in the early twentieth century, Payne was an "all-rounder," who built his physique through a combination of competitive weightlifting, bodybuilding training, and hand balancing. He and Jack LaLanne even worked together as a professional hand balancing team.

\$1,000 prize for defeating some of the best men on the continent. Weider editor Barton Horvath called it the "GREATEST EVENT OF THEM ALL!"<sup>14</sup>

Despite his high placement in previous California physique contests, Jimmy received scant coverage in Weider magazines prior to the 1950 IFBB Mr. America Contest. It began

headline of a 1948 *Muscle Power* article criticizing the AAU for its old fogey ways and challenging it "to come out of its shell and be modern... If the A.A.U. would give a thousand simoleons, the Mr. America who got it could start something." And an abolition of the one year winning limit, it argued, would provide more incentive for bodybuilders.<sup>12</sup> [Editors' note: The argument that allowing bodybuilders to win a contest for more than one year was sound, and proof arrived in the years after 1965 when the Mr. Olympia Contest was created with "repeat winners" being one of the main reasons for the new event.] On 16 November 1948, at the Roosevelt Auditorium in New York, Alan Stephan, already AAU Mr. America of 1946, won the IFBB title of Mr. America of 1949, a 40-inch trophy, \$250 cash, and a free trip to Miami. According to Weider reporter Leo Gaudreau, Stephan's muscular exhibition was greeted with "a continuous round of applause and cheering from an enthusiastic house that was packed to the walls." Interestingly the second and third place finishers were French Canadians, Joffre L'Heureux and Leo Robert respectively, as was the winner of the short men's class, Ed Theriault. Johnny Icino of New York City won the IFBB Jr. Mr. America Contest. Clarence Ross, so-called "King of Bodybuilders," did not compete, but his guest posing routine was the highlight of the show. "Ancient Greece had nothing like this," exclaimed Gaudreau.<sup>13</sup> Although it was not yet possible for the fledgling IFBB to follow up its Mr. America Contest with a Mr. Universe competition, it did present a Mr. North America Contest in New York City in April 1949 where Ross claimed a

with Alyce Stagg's 1948 feature article in *Your Physique* which introduced him to a national audience as a "Versatile Bodybuilder and Muscular Sensation" and a "West Coast Hercules!"<sup>15</sup> Reader response was immediate and enthusiastic. To accommodate "numerous requests," a later issue of *Muscle Power* reprinted a back view of Payne. "As you know, his story in [the] last issue [of] 'Your Physique' created a sensation and immediately [he] became a popular star."<sup>16</sup> Thereafter, however, he received only incidental mention.<sup>17</sup> At the 1949 Mr. California Contest, where he did not place, Payne is described as having "exceptional muscular definition," but in a group picture with other contestants he appears under-sized and out-of-place.<sup>18</sup> The "special reporter" at the 1949 Mr. USA Contest in Los Angeles placed him in "a select group" that included the likes of Clarence Ross, Steve Reeves, Walter Marcyan, George Eiferman, Floyd Page, Armand Tanny, Leo Stern, and John Grimek (who ultimately won), but he appears diminutive in a photograph with the not-too-tall Walt Baptiste.<sup>19</sup> It did not seem to disturb Jimmy, however, that he did not receive greater exposure. "He has had many offers to travel with vaudeville troupes and circuses," noted Alyce Stagg, "but being a married man with two children prefers to stay at home and work in his studio."<sup>20</sup> He kept a relatively low profile.

Meanwhile the Weiders were seeking a higher level of recognition. According to spokesman Earle Liederma, the IFBB was sponsoring nineteen shows in 1949 and was planning thirty-one for the following year, including three in California, four in the Midwest, two in

Florida, and ten overseas. "At that rate in 1951 we will have a show a week!" Eventually the Weiders aspired to invite champions representing all forty IFBB countries to New York "for the GREATEST SHOW EVER HELD" that would "pack Madison Square Garden." As a means to this end Ben Weider was "on the go again" in early 1950

this time off to England to set up agencies for Weider Publications and equipment. As usual Ben hopped a fast plane—the favorite mode of transportation of busy executives. Ben will be gone for about six weeks and when he returns you can be sure that the Weider Enterprises will be firmly entrenched in England. This proves how quickly the same sincere policy which has made the Weider Company the most successful and liked in America is spreading to other shores.<sup>21</sup>

Thus Ben was overseas promoting the IFBB as time approached for the 1950 Mr. America Contest in Oakland. Nevertheless, according to Liederman, it was "going to be an extremely important event and ALL the best men are invited—most have already said they would appear." Liederman hoped that, owing to AAU restrictions on professionalism, many bodybuilders, including previous Mr. Americas, would take part in the contest. Liederman deemed the participation of 1949 AAU Mr. America, Jack Delinger, particularly desirable.<sup>22</sup>

Neither Delinger nor any other previous Mr. Americas showed up. In fact, the leading contestants were from the Bay Area. Details are sketchy, but the contest was directed by West Coast photographer Russ Warner for the Weiders on 17 February at Oakland Auditorium with Ed Theriault as guest poser. Jimmy Payne recalls it was a packed house with perhaps as many as 1,000 fans and about a dozen contestants, virtually all of whom were Californians. But the quality of physiques was high, with Phil Courtois placing second, Norman Marks third, Vince Gironda fourth, and Bob McCune fifth.

I won \$180 and didn't get the publicity I should have got. But I got the money, and that mattered more to me at the time. I had to ask Warner for the mon-

ey. Warner said 'fuck you,' so I went for him. One of Joe's men held me back, and Joe gave me a check. I don't think Joe wanted me to win. He probably wanted Marks or Gironda, but the audience had a great impact and really favored me. I was proud that I won because I was small and it showed that I could accomplish something.<sup>23</sup>

Remarkably, the Mr. America Contest and its winner received almost no recognition in Weider magazines. A picture of Payne with his trophy is tucked into an article entitled "I Gained 100 Pounds of Bodyweight" by Hollywood strongman Willis Reed in the July 1950 issue of *Muscle Power*, but it is accompanied by no text relating to his victory and superseded by a much larger photo of Phil Courtois and article at the front of the magazine as "a tribute to a great bodybuilder who achieves his greatest triumph after 20 years of weight training" for finishing second!<sup>24</sup> Far more coverage was provided on the 1949 Mr. Armed Forces Contest in Honolulu and the AAU's Mr. Los Angeles Contest in 1950.<sup>25</sup> When asked why so much more attention was devoted to AAU than IFBB physique contests of this era, Ben Weider responded puzzlingly that "there was no particular reason. It is just the way the journalist wrote it up and the information and photos that he supplied."<sup>26</sup>

A more likely reason for this omission and general lack of coverage of its own contests is that the Weider organization, though attracting some leading bodybuilders—Floyd Page, Marvin Eder, Armand Tanny, Abe Goldberg, Leo Robert, Stephan, and Ross—and such notables as Sig Klein, Hy Shaeffer, George Yacos, Tony Lanza, and Lon Hanagan as judges, was having second thoughts about divorcing itself from the American weightlifting establishment. The Weiders may have concluded that rather than continue a fight in which they were overmatched they should seek some sort of reconciliation which, at least, would allow them to play a role in both weightlifting and bodybuilding, even if it was not the leading role. In any case, increasingly favorable references to the AAU in Weider publications indicated that an accord might be in the offing. One even created a hypothetical scenario of the AAU and IFBB "blending in serene harmony."<sup>27</sup> Negotiations ensued with Dietrich Wortmann, the national AAU weightlifting chairman. Then came the surprise announcement in the January 1950 issue of *Your Physique* that the two bodies had "ironed out their difficulties" and would henceforth

"cooperate fully with each other." The Weiders admitted fault in failing to recognize the distinction between amateur and professional, thereby jeopardizing the eligibility of American athletes in international competition. Though still based in Canada, they claimed to have

feelings of patriotism as much as the next guy. We desire, as much as the other fellow, to see the USA remain TOP DOG in the world of weights. So many thousands of young men were entering in physique competitions that we saw we were endangering the supply of future championship material. That we should have foreseen this eventuality is a reproach which could be flung at us, but we HONESTLY believed that so long as a man did not ACCEPT a money prize, then he retained his amateur status.<sup>28</sup>

Even more surprising was the Weiders' willingness to reach an accord with arch enemy Bob Hoffman whose "unostentatious generosity has provided the financial sinews of the American weightlifting teams. ... It is time someone else helped." To this end they intended "to publish a magazine devoted entirely to COMPETITIVE LIFTING."<sup>29</sup> Especially in light of later perceptions of Joe Weider as the bodybuilder's best friend, it seems remarkable that he and his brother seemed so eager to redirect their energies behind weightlifting, the AAU, and Hoffman just when bodybuilding was starting to blossom as a separate sport. One explanation is that Joe Weider's longtime love for weightlifting—the sport which originally brought him into the iron game and the sport which even now he prefers to discuss rather than bodybuilding—contributed to his willingness to offer the olive branch to people he believed had kept him out of weightlifting.

To prove their sincerity in launching this new initiative Weider publications featured an instructional article entitled "Your First Weightlifting Contest" that was highly supportive of AAU efforts to recruit new lifters and tributes to York strength stars John Grimek and Steve Stanko.<sup>30</sup> Likewise Earle Liederman lauded the AAU Mr. Los Angeles Contest for 1950 as "a truly splendid show."<sup>31</sup> Although a separate publication devoted to competitive weightlifting never materialized, a sizable monthly weightlifting news section, edited by Charles A. Smith, a member of the New York (Metro-

politan) AAU, soon appeared in *Muscle Power*, which was eventually dubbed "two magazines in one." Through his international connections, Smith attracted a group of weightlifting experts and *Muscle Power* became a leading source of information and inspiration for aspiring lifters in the 1950s. Noticeably understated were articles or announcements about Weider shows (chiefly Mr. Montreal and Mr. Canada), and the IFBB logo appeared only on pictures of winners mounted on pedestals leftover from the 1940s. Most striking, in light of the absent coverage of the 1950 IFBB Mr. America Contest was the attention lavished by Weider magazines on the AAU Mr. America Contest, its 1950 winner John Farbotnik, and his future plans. Liederman describes Farbotnik as an "anatomical sensation" and "the most sensational poseur these old optics have ever seen," and Charles Smith, despite his partiality towards black bodybuilder Melvin Wells, recognized that Farbotnik was "as good a man to ever wear the crown."<sup>32</sup> Further evidence of the power of the AAU Mr. America title and its influence on the Weiders is their frequent use of it to increase the appeal of their magazines and sale of their products. The April 1950 cover of *Your Physique* featured four AAU Mr. Americas, for instance, and the inside back cover displayed one of them (Ross) making a pitch for "Y-O-U-R MR. AMERICA DE LUXE SPECIAL" barbell set. For all intents and purposes the IFBB was an anachronism.

In light of what appeared to be a meeting of minds and the contrite spirit displayed by the Weiders, it might seem surprising that dissension should set in so soon. However, beyond the fact that Hoffman still harbored a deep distrust of his commercial rivals and never subscribed to the IFBB/AAU accord, it was the ceaseless personal attacks of Harry Paschall on bodybuilders (and by implication the Weiders) in his monthly *Strength & Health* column that destroyed any possibility of ongoing, meaningful cooperation. In the August 1949 issue, for instance, Paschall pointed out that Weider-trained men were just "mirror athletes." By contrast at least four of the six top men in that year's AAU Mr. America Contest were "real strength athletes."<sup>33</sup> Joe responded to these jibes in a strongly worded article, "Getting It Off My Chest," in which he defended bodybuilding, launched a personal attack on Paschall, and urged readers not to buy York magazines.<sup>34</sup> Harry's counterblast was classic Paschall:

Politics makes strange bedfellows. A year ago Weedy was hollering that the

A.A.U. was unfair to bodybuilders, who should be highly paid for their efforts in achieving biceps with a larger circumference than their heads. Now we find him all snuggled up to the A.A.U., using the well known Red tactics of infiltration. ... The plain facts are that the IFBB (Informal Brotherhood of Boobs) did not work out quite as well as Weedy expected, and now he is prospecting for gold on the other side of the street in the field of weightlifting.<sup>35</sup>

Obviously money was a factor in the Weiders' sudden change of heart. It also seems clear—since Hoffman failed to rein in Paschall's *ad hominem* broadsides against the Weiders and their bodybuilders—that he was unwilling to share either his influence over the iron sports or the money he made through such influence. Hoffman was not given to sharing. From the perspective of former Weider writer E. M. Orlick, "Hoffman got angry because he knew Weider was making money. There were things that Joe did that I didn't approve of, but he had as much right to make money as Hoffman."<sup>36</sup>

Neither side gave quarter as the feud was waged through months of mud-slinging articles, but the Weider camp, perhaps as the under-dog, adopted a more philosophical approach and periodically expressed interest in a settlement. For example, in one article, after tracing the roots of their conflict back to his setting up headquarters in Jersey City, the founding of his second magazine (*Muscle Power*), and his earliest challenge to AAU supremacy—all in 1946—Joe offered in the summer of 1950 to "bury the hatchet" and "work hand in hand" with his York rivals. "Thousands will benefit if we swallow our pride and extend the hand of friendship and forgiveness to each other." Indeed Orlick recalls that "Joe never talked ill of Hoffman. I always thought it was Bob who had the ill feelings."<sup>37</sup> Indeed this gesture of cordiality was not reciprocated, and the level of rhetoric only escalated.

Few could have predicted that their quarrel would persist for decades. Throughout this long struggle for power the AAU Mr. America Contest and its winners were vigorously exploited by both sides for commercial and political advantage. One of the latter (George Eiferman), in addition to endorsing York products, admitted to Hoffman that he was training to beat Clancy Ross in the 1948 Mr. U.S.A. contest. "He is representing Weider and if I can beat him it will help a lot I guess—wont it—

[sic]"<sup>38</sup> Though stating in a *Your Physique* article that he was "NOBODY'S PUPIL," Alan Stephan declared that "the Weider system incorporated all the exercise principles that I personally used to develop my own body, and which I teach to my pupils."<sup>39</sup> But Hoffman claimed credit for all Mr. Americas through 1949, insisting they had "trained with York equipment and training methods. ... Three highly publicized Mr. Americas, Clarence Ross, Alan Stephan and Steve Reeves were York barbell men and not publicized by and claimed as pupils by another barbell company, UNTIL THEY HAD WON THE MR. AMERICA CROWNS."<sup>40</sup> Safe to say, both sides exaggerated greatly in trying to tap maximum publicity from bodybuilding's most valuable commodity.

Any possibility of consensus and good will, however, broke down when John Farbotnik was featured in a *Muscle Power* article, which he said he neither approved and for which he said he was never compensated. It stated that the workouts which led to his victory were "almost identical to the Weider System."<sup>41</sup> In a *Strength & Health* rebuttal, Farbotnik took immediate offence to the use of his name and photographs.

I have neither seen nor used a Weider barbell or Weider course. My first training equipment consisted of York super cables and cable courses written by Bob Hoffman. At Fritsche's Gym we used nothing but Milo weights which Bob Hoffman had bought out some time earlier. If my course is so similar to that of Weider's then Weider is using York training methods.<sup>42</sup>

Further confirmation of the Weiders' villainy, according to Hoffman, was evident from the fracas surrounding Farbotnik's victory at the amateur Mr. World Contest held in Paris with the world weightlifting championships in October 1950. When Reg Park, Mr. Britain, was disqualified because he had competed in a professional (Weider) show a month earlier in New York, he protested by claiming (with evidence obtained from Weider) that Farbotnik had also violated amateur rules. Turbulent scenes, involving Park's parents and the French police followed, and Park's disqualification was sustained by the International Weightlifting Federation. But without him, Farbotnik had virtually no competition. As Hoffman put it, "the entries were not as extraordinary as those in the major American A.A.U. physique contest."<sup>43</sup> Mr. World meant far less in real terms than Mr.

America.” It was an empty title.

Indeed the Mr. America title was at that time the hottest commodity in the iron game, and the Weiders continued to use Mr. America iconography and AAU winners through the 1950s, even launching and re-launching a magazine called *Mr. America* in 1952 and 1958.<sup>44</sup> What seems remarkable is that they made no attempt to rejuvenate the IFBB or their own Mr. America Contest during these years. Even in reports of the Mr. Montreal and Mr. Canada contests they continued to administer in the 1950s any mention of IFBB sponsorship is conspicuously absent.<sup>45</sup> Notwithstanding the Weiders’ inability to break the York hold on the AAU, Joe remained true to his agreement with Wortmann and announced in the April 1952 issue of *Your Physique* that during the previous year he had donated about \$2,000 to the Olympic Weightlifting Team Fund from physique contest profits. The likely motive behind this seemingly irrational display of generosity was not so much to support American weightlifting as to demonstrate that the sport did not have to be completely dependent on Hoffman. In a veiled reference to York, he argued that his bodybuilding shows could not only free the AAU but liberate its athletes from “certain controls” wielded by

powerful influences in National weightlifting circles. Only by making our weightlifters and our weightlifting teams completely financially independent can these controlling bonds be shattered. It is not fair to them, or to the people of America that certain dictatorial policies, nourished and condoned solely because of need of private support of our teams, should relegate these sterling athletes to a serf basis. They must not be hampered by restrictions of any sort. ... Therefore, next month I am writing an article which sets down a plan which ... will make our weightlifting teams 100% self sufficient, self respecting and free to act ... to select their coach, trainers and deserving team members, without regard to anyone except those who believe in them the most ... the American Public.<sup>46</sup>

What this editorial shows is that Joe, in the words of Harry Paschall, was still “prospecting for gold on the other side of the street” and that the financial infrastruc-

ture of weightlifting was still the mainspring of power in the sport. However, no plan that would enable him to stake a claim on American weightlifting through his infant bodybuilding enterprises materialized in any subsequent issue of *Your Physique*. Joe simply lacked the resources from his magazines and “Mr. America Barbell Company” to mount an assault on fortress York, whose corporate assets had been growing since the 1930s. Thus in a 1954 editorial in *Muscle Builder*, Ben Weider displays all the signs of a true believer by encouraging prospective competitors to join the AAU and enter its contests.<sup>47</sup>

Although the IFBB remained virtually defunct during these years, Ben later conveys the impression in *Brothers of Iron* that he was busily waging a kind of David vs. Goliath struggle against the National Amateur Bodybuilding Association (NABBA) and Oscar Heidenstam who conducted the annual Mr. Universe Contest in Britain.

The conflict went far beyond Britain, because the NABBA was a sort of bodybuilding extension of the British Empire, which in the early 1950s was still intact. In fact, wherever the British flag flew, over dozens of countries, colonies, and protectorates, bodybuilders took their cues from London-based NABBA. Through the 1950s, I would feel the long arm of Oscar Heidenstam and run into the NABBA wall in such farflung places as Malaya (now Malaysia), Thailand, Singapore, and British-controlled Caribbean Islands. ... But then, one by one, starting later in the ‘50s, the British colonies gained their independence, and sports officials and athletes didn’t want to bow to London any more. ... When the political bonds with Britain were broken, the sun began to rise on the IFBB in the former British colonies.<sup>48</sup>

However true it might be that Britain’s imperial sunset coincided with the international growth of the IFBB, it did not, with the notable exception of India (1947), gain full force until after the independence of Ghana in 1957. Nor does Ben’s story account for the long period of IFBB inactivity in the early to mid-1950s. Most importantly, he neglects to mention that Heidenstam was in

league with Hoffman, who was sending annual AAU Mr. America winners, including Jim Park, Ray Schaefer, and Ron Lacy, to compete in the Mr. Universe Contest in London.

A more likely scenario is that both Ben and Joe Weider, deprived of influence in AAU circles as well as in NABBA, had concluded by 1957 that they would never be given access to the inner circles of power and that they should simply revive the IFBB they had mothballed during their period of seeking rapprochement and go their own way. Another factor in such a decision had to have been the continuous editorial attacks in Harry Paschall's words and cartoons. [*Editors' Note: These attacks sank to an all-time low in 1957, less than fifteen years after the Holocaust had ended, when in the September issue of Strength & Health, Paschall wrote about the Weiders, who were Jewish, that "you can take a kike out of the slums but you can never take the slums out of the kike."*<sup>49</sup>] In any case, these mounting resentments came to a head in 1957 when Joe's entrant to the Mr. Universe Contest, Doug Strohl of Santa Monica, placed only fourth in his height class to overall winner John Lees of England, while Lacy placed first in his class. In a *Muscle Builder* "expose" Joe declared:

The flawless judging, the sincerity and honesty which made the Mr. Universe Contests the most important physique events in the world, now appear to be things of the past. After what took place at the 1957 event, it is difficult to believe that future contests warrant much consideration. From this time on, bodybuilders will wonder if the winner *was really* the winner, or merely a hand picked wearer of the crown.

Just as the misuse of officiating powers has made the Mr. America title a *farce* with the winner so frequently *not being* the best man, so does it now appear that in the future the Mr. Universe title will mean little as far as the selection of the *best man* is concerned!<sup>50</sup>

It was obvious to Weider that Strohl, who "looked the part of a bronzed statue come to life," was "the popular and rightful choice" of the audience.<sup>51</sup> Even London gym owner Lou Ravelle observed in the generally independent magazine *Iron Man* that Lees received only a

"tepid ovation" and that Strohl "got the biggest ovation in the show and many thought he would win."<sup>52</sup> British reports, on the other hand, barely mention Strohl. In fact, W. A. Pullum, editor of *Health & Strength*, noted that "the American standard wasn't so good generally as in most previous years," and NABBA founder, D. G. Johnson, observed that Lees, "before the biggest-ever crowd of delighted fans" at the Coliseum "brought off a magnificent win" and would take "his rightful place among the bodybuilding 'greats.'"<sup>53</sup> Clearly there was a growing differential between the Weiders, who were attempting to become part of the international scene, and the "imperial" powers that be. Despite Ben's efforts to enlist the cooperation of Heidenstam and those of Joe, who even entered the 1951 Mr. Universe Contest to ingratiate himself to the English, their penchant for professionalism could only have reinforced the erstwhile amateur bonds of their adversaries which were rooted in the 1940s and blocked the way to any IFBB revival.<sup>54</sup>

Although NABBA constituted a major obstacle for Ben's dreams of international expansion, it was a domestic event that eventually provided the Weiders with moral justification to challenge the AAU and eventually NABBA. At an impromptu Mr. Universe Contest staged at Virginia Beach by the local Jr. Chamber of Commerce in June of 1956, Hoffman, acting in the capacity of Vice President of the AAU Weightlifting Committee and head judge, rigged the results in order to secure the victory of his favorite contestant, Steve Klisanin. Critical to this outcome was Hoffman's exclusion of Barton Horvath, a Weider editor, on the second night of judging. A full expose of Hoffman's conduct followed in *Muscle Builder*. "For far too long," claimed Horvath, "Hoffman had bellowed his way into the lime-light of AAU bodybuilding contests, usurping powers never officially delegated to him in a series of ludicrous attempts to establish himself as the czar of the muscle world." As further proof that Hoffman had "manipulated" the outcome, Horvath provided pictures comparing the physiques of Klisanin and runner-up Ray Schaefer with other contestants as well as copies of score sheets (made available by contest promoters).<sup>55</sup>

Letters from readers of Weider magazines indicate that Hoffman's arrogation of authority at Virginia Beach was becoming a *cause celebre* and that many bodybuilders formerly supportive of York and the AAU were being swayed by Horvath's evidence. "Each day," observed Joe, "we receive letters, telephone calls and bits of information from many sources which point to a Hoffman dynasty and a dictatorial rule."<sup>56</sup> Weider kept

the pot boiling over the next year by publishing more score cards and sending letters (via Horvath) to National Weightlifting Chairman Clarence Johnson and National AAU President Carl Hansen, requesting an investigation of Hoffman's conduct. "One rumor has it Mr. Johnson, that you are merely a puppet official and that Hoffman pulls the strings while you dance to his tune," wrote Horvath when he received no response.<sup>57</sup> While the overall impact of this incident on opinion in muscledom is uncertain, the message for the Weiders could not have been clearer.

Another factor leading to the revival of the IFBB was the increased involvement by the late fifties of Oscar State, an English schoolmaster from Twickenham who was a founder of NABBA, secretary of the British Amateur Weight Lifters Association (BAWLA) after World War II, and later secretary of the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) from 1960 to 1976.<sup>58</sup> State was also a long-time adversary of Heidenstam and shared some of the same cultural bonds as the Weiders. Not unlike the Weiders, he was a controversial figure and somewhat out of step with officialdom. Though he was primarily responsible for staging the weightlifting events at the 1948 Olympics and the Mr. Universe Contest of that year (prior to the formation of NABBA), State was soon dismissed as BAWLA secretary and then from its executive committee in 1953, for "carrying tales," according to Oscar Heidenstam. "He has always had a grievance against us." What Heidenstam likely meant by "carrying tales" is that State was sharing insider information with the Weiders. It is hardly coincidental that State first appears on the masthead of the June 1953 issue of *Muscle Power* as European Editor.<sup>59</sup> This connection with professionalism, notes former IWF President Gottfried Schodl, nearly denied the international secretariat to State in 1960 when French officials argued that he had "received cash ... for his announcing activity in various international contests and qualified therefore [as] a professional who should not be allowed to attend a congress for amateurs." Resentments over Oscar's appointment, his imperial manner, and North American connections lingered long even though his organizational skills and knowledge of the sport were widely acknowledged. Eventually, as Schodl observes:

Oscar State found the international parquet a bit too slippery. He slipped—and fell. Stiff rather than pliable by nature, he was wont to think in terms of strict paragraphs without leaving room for

any imagination. His stubbornness—despite all his hard work and love for sports administration—had inevitably led to a significant decline in the number of his friends over the years. With 16 years of service behind him, in Montreal Oscar State had to realize with a petrified face that only 24 countries considered him as their preferred candidate for General Secretary.<sup>60</sup>

What Schodl fails to mention is that the election of Hungarian Tamas Ajan as State's successor coincided with the burgeoning dominance of the Eastern Bloc countries on the platform as well as in the political sphere. However, during his years as IWF Secretary, State had been able to establish international links for the Weiders, write feature articles for their magazines, and provide critical behind-the-scenes guidance.

For example, in 1970 State drew up a constitution for the IFBB and provided political leverage for its admittance to the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) which enabled the Weiders to establish international hegemony over the sport of bodybuilding. Upon becoming secretary of the GAISF, Oscar helped establish links for the Weiders with the International Olympic Committee and nurture Ben's dream of making bodybuilding an Olympic event. "Oscar was a rather cool, reserved individual," recalls Ben in the Weider autobiography, "and our relationship took a long time to ripen. After we met I had no idea that Oscar would be the best friend I ever had, outside my family." An entire chapter entitled "Oscar's Golden Key," with an accompanying eulogy, is dedicated to State. It was no exaggeration for Ben to say that "without him there would be less of a story to tell."<sup>61</sup> The great weight of State's confidence and mentoring was most assuredly having an impact on the Weiders by the late 1950s. Consequently their criticisms of AAU bodybuilding steadily escalated.

Then in the fall of 1958 the Weiders made their fateful move, announcing that the International Federation of Bodybuilders would stage a combined Mr. America, Mr. Universe, Mr. Canada, and World's Most Muscular Man Contest on 25 January 1959, in Montreal. "To earn a place in either of these gala strength affairs is like playing in the World Series or driving at Indianapolis," *Muscle Builder* hyperbolized. "It's the top attainment for the bodybuilder." It was to represent a "new conception in physique contests" whereby the IFBB would fund

three days hotel stay and board for non-Montreal residents and unlimited free training facilities. Furthermore, in what was alleged to be an obvious contrast to AAU/NABBA judging, “all will get fair and impartial treatment throughout! Judging will be based on muscularity, shape, and symmetry—and on nothing else!”<sup>62</sup> Much publicity ensued for the winners, Mr. America Chuck Sipes and Mr. Universe Eddie Silvestre, both of whom were soon prominently featured on covers and in articles of Weider publications. “Mr. America ‘Goes Weider’ All The Way” was the title of an article in the August 1959 issue of *Muscle Builder* that explained how Sipes built his magnificent physique with Weider principles of super-sets, flushing methods, and peak contraction movements. No mention was made of any previous IFBB Mr. Americas.<sup>63</sup>

Emboldened by their successful revival, the Weiders moved forward on two fronts to establish a new tradition. Ben embarked on an international friendship tour, combined with a wedding trip with the former Huguette Drouin, to London, Paris, Rome, and Israel to publicize the IFBB and its new contests.<sup>64</sup> It was reminiscent of his recruitment visits to “twenty-two countries” in the spring of 1947 where he reportedly created IFBB offices in France and South Africa.<sup>65</sup> Additionally Joe, in announcing the combined America/Universe contest for 1960, declared that it would be “the greatest spectacle of muscle and might since the days of the Roman gladiators” and that judging criteria, unlike AAU contests, would be based solely on muscularity.

You **don’t** have to prove your athleticism by running the mile—playing a game of tennis—swimming the backstroke. You are not required to throw the javelin—wrestle—you don’t have to lift a ton of weights to prove that you’re a worthy candidate for championship.

No one will examine your educational background to see if you had a 98.6 average in high school—you’ll not be asked to recite a literary selection to prove that you can speak intelligently—no one will examine your mouth to see if you have all 32 teeth.

The contest is to determine who shall win the various titles by reason of his **superior physique ... no other reason**

is or should be valid! And that’s why the I.F.B.B. was organized.”

Weider contended that it was owing to these kinds of “odoriferous shenanigans” that **“the country’s best-built men now enter the Mr. America contest** held each year in Montreal in conjunction with the **Mr. Universe contest.”**<sup>67</sup> This latter scenario hardly accorded to reality, as the victory of Gene Shuey, one of the sport’s lesser lights in 1960 attests, but the Weiders did eventually attract Larry Scott, who refused to compete in the AAU version after winning the Mr. California title in 1960, and went on to become IFBB Mr. America (1962), Mr. Universe (1964), Mr. Olympia (1965 and 1966), and one of the brightest stars in the bodybuilding firmament.<sup>68</sup>



In the early 1960s, Jimmy Payne and his wife, Jane, began appearing in a weekly TV program called *Mr. and Mrs. America*. Aimed at children, the show featured exercises named for animals and a recurring guest was “Miss Americalf.” Payne lifted the growing calf on his shoulders, as did Milo of Ancient Greece.

Meanwhile memories of earlier IFBB Mr. Americas diminished amidst the maelstrom of high muscle politics. While pictures and occasional articles on Alan Stephan persisted into the late 1950s, only occasionally did images, usually stock photographs, of Payne surface but with no further identification beyond that of Professional Mr. America.<sup>69</sup> A 1952 *Muscle Power* article entitled "Why Some Develop Muscles Faster Than Others" for instance, features a full page picture of Payne, but he is disembodied from the text which employs such AAU Mr. Americas as Clarence Ross, Alan Stephan, John Grimek, Steve Reeves, George Eiferman, Roy Hilligen, and other higher profile figures to illustrate the story line.<sup>70</sup> Readers were apt to wonder who Payne really was and even confuse him with Floyd Page, who won Baptiste's Professional Mr. America Contest in 1948 and was featured prominently in Weider magazines in the 1950s.<sup>71</sup> Ironically, the fullest coverage Payne received for the first six years after his Mr. America victory was a cover photo and related short story in a 1953 issue of *Strength & Health*, but with no mention of his affiliation with the hated Weider organization. "I didn't care what Hoffman thought," responded former managing editor Jim Murray when asked how he was able to get away with it. "Payne had a good physique."<sup>72</sup> [Editors' note: Even so, the fact that Murray worked for York could have possibly influenced the decision to omit the IFBB connection.] It also probably helped that few at York could remember his IFBB victory. Finally a full-fledged story on Payne, with numerous illustrations appeared in the March 1957 issue of *Muscle Builder*, but its main purpose was to refute an unintentionally strange article by John Grimek in *Strength & Health* condemning the use of unusual or "unnatural" exercises as harmful to one's muscles and joints. The *Muscle Builder* article responded sarcastically that Payne, who operated his own gymnasium in San Pablo, California, and drove a \$6,000 Jaguar, "used nothing but 'unnatural' exercise to reach his present position in the barbell game, his athletic ability, and financial success." Although his 1950 title is mentioned in passing, no reference is made to the IFBB, and it appears that the sole thrust of the article was to use Payne as a weapon in the ongoing struggle with York to win the hearts and minds of bodybuilders after the Virginia Beach fiasco.<sup>73</sup>

Undoubtedly Payne could attribute much of his development to versatile training and the athletic feats he was able to perform. Yet he adhered to a developmental philosophy more akin to that adopted by the AAU Mr. America Contest in the 1950s, which stressed functional

muscles, rather than the revived IFBB standard where "superior physique" and "no other reason" determined title winners. Indeed Payne did more to promote a traditional Mr. America image beyond the contest itself than most other champions. "I believe that it is the quality of the muscle that counts and not size," he argued. A big bicep "sure looks good, but what can you do with it?" For his son and daughter, aged two years and three weeks in 1948, he had high aspirations—that they become the Mr. America and the Miss America of 1968, suggesting a link with the annual Atlantic City pageant which, through the efforts of promoter Lenora Slaughter, was no longer just a body show.<sup>74</sup> In the meantime, owing to his having failed to receive the kinds of publicity afforded to AAU Mr. Americas and AAU weightlifting by the Weider organization during the same period, he was never able to maximize his title or fully exploit it for commercial gain.

Only in the early 1960s did an opportunity arise outside the Weider network to capitalize on his fame through a template furnished by his lifelong boon companion Jack LaLanne. A decade after Jack launched his highly successful television fitness series for women, Jimmy started a weekly family TV program called "Mr. and Mrs. America" with his wife Jane. It was featured in a much belated article in *Muscle Builder* with no political overtones that calls him "America's most versatile athlete" whose talents surpass those of the great Jim Thorpe.

On the rings Jimmy works out like an Olympic star. He is a consummate artist on the high horizontal bar . . . the parallel bars . . . the trapeze. He is a champion weightlifter . . . an expert tumbler . . . a trampolinist of the first order . . . and he excels in diving, judo, wrestling, muscle control and all the track events at which Jim Thorpe was noted for!

He can perform a One-Finger Chin with each of his index fingers *four* times. He does a complete routine while suspended 400 to 500 feet above a crowd while fastened to a Helicopter.<sup>75</sup>

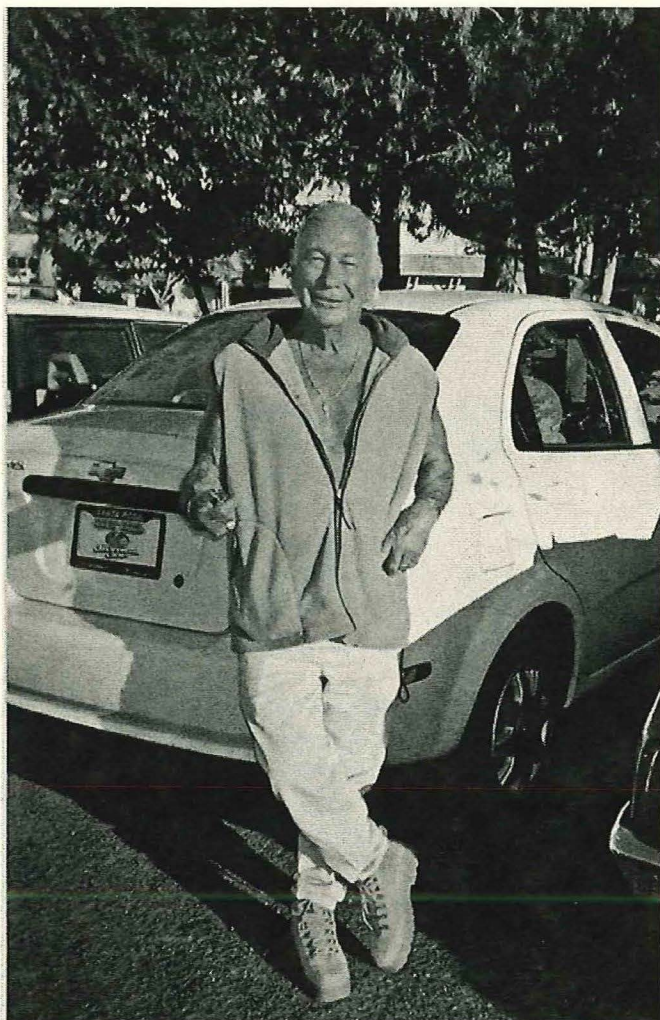
Still the author, Clem Poechman, Payne's early trainer, makes no mention of him ever having won the Mr. America title. But Jimmy continued to get recognition elsewhere, being introduced as Mr. America when he

appeared on the “You Asked for It” and “Wide World of Sports” television shows and when he emceed the World Wristwrestling Championships in Petaluma. And his own televised program became a “Junior Mr. & Miss America Club,” sponsored by “Super-Strength Alcoa Wrap,” on which he led groups of children in such exercises as elephant squats, zebra steps, panther push-ups, rhino raises, and duck dips; and during which Jimmy lifted a calf on his shoulders (Milo of Crotona style) named Miss Americalf.<sup>76</sup> That he was unable to transform this local exposure into a national medium owes to an ineffective marketing strategy. “LaLanne was smarter,” Payne admits. “He hit the women’s market. I did kids.” Yet he has no regrets. “Family always came first, and I’ve had to work to support four kids.” Indeed his greatest delight comes from children and having his great grand-daughter tell her friends that he was Mr. America. He gets “a real kick out of that. I’ve had a

happy life.”<sup>77</sup>

Payne’s absence from the limelight and consolation in simple pleasures may also be attributed to the complicated and inconsistent political strategy of the Weider brothers in the late 1940s and their stalled efforts to promote a Mr. America Contest that would rival that of the AAU. Their attempt to gain credibility by association and power by attaching monetary value to the title through their recently formed bodybuilding federation quickly broke down in 1950. Despite the impression conveyed by the Weiders in *Brothers of Iron* that the story of the IFBB was an unbroken chain of success, they promoted virtually no major contests from 1950 to 1959, searching instead—and in vain—for a way to work within the system in both weightlifting and bodybuilding. This search led them to seek an accord with AAU Weightlifting Chairman Dietrich Wortmann, but besides his association with Bob Hoffman, Wortmann’s long association with amateur sport made it difficult for the Weiders to tack against the strong winds of amateurism which prevailed in the iron game at that time. As Payne rightly suspected, “the AAU was very tough on athletes in those days,” and the Weiders were “afraid of getting in trouble.”<sup>78</sup> A change of strategy developed slowly, and only when it became obvious that any permeation of the existing power structure was effectively blocked by the influence wielded by Oscar Heidenstam over NABBA on the international level and Bob Hoffman over the AAU in America. A realization that something had to be done outside the existing order sprang most visibly from resentments over the incessant personal attacks by Harry Paschall as well as over the conduct of the officials at the AAU Virginia Beach Mr. Universe Contest in 1956 and the NABBA Mr. Universe Contest of 1957. Arguably, the most important agent of change was Oscar State and the subtle confidence and insider knowledge he provided. He was truly a *deus ex machina*—a “god from the machine”—for the Weider cause in the late 1950s as he laid the basis for the resurrection of the IFBB. Eventually, the recognition State was able to secure for the organization in the GAISF, along with the disintegration of the AAU power block and its nexus with NABBA, enabled the Weiders to dominate the sport by the 1960s and appropriate the Mr. America title in the late 1970s.

The chief casualty of these machinations was Jimmy Payne. While the IFBB lay dormant for nearly a decade, the Weiders continued to feature other fledgling physique stars (mostly Canadian) and AAU Mr. America champions to their mutual commercial advantage.



Although Payne never fully capitalized on his Mr. America victory he fathered four children and told author John Fair, who took this photo when Payne was seventy-eight, “I’ve had a happy life.”

Payne, however, was never able to exploit fully his own IFBB title. Unlike Alan Stephan, who was best known and heralded for his AAU amateur title, Payne's professional title actually worked to his disadvantage as the Weiders strained to get in step with the amateur mainstream. Although this strategy delayed any possible hegemonic aspirations, they survived commercially and reemerged boldly at the end of the decade with a series of blockbuster contests—Mr. America (1959), Mr. Universe (1959), Mr. World (1962), and Mr. Olympia (1965) that would change the face of bodybuilding and eventually, with the star power of Arnold Schwarzenegger, provide the Weiders with a lock on the image of modern bodybuilding. In the meantime Jimmy Payne, lacking the promotional boost afforded to other Weider champions, faded into relative obscurity, while his friend and training partner, Jack LaLanne, went on to fame and fortune. Unheralded in his prime and denied by circumstances a place in bodybuilding's heritage, Jimmy Payne became the "Forgotten Mr. America."

## NOTES:

- Alexander Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard* (1713), ed. James E. Wellington (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1965), 115.
- Any uncertainty about who had the superior physique was probably resolved by Payne's third place finish to Farbotnik and the legendary Vince Gironda at the Professional Mr. America Contest staged by Bay gym owner Walt Baptiste in 1951. "Professional Mr. America," *Your Physique* 15 (September 1951), 7.
- See for instance, "Muscle Builder Salutes The International Federation of Bodybuilders And Its First 7 Mr. America Winners," *Muscle Builder* 8 (March 1966), 70-77; "List of AAU, NABBA, IFBB & WBBG Big Winners," *Muscle Training Illustrated*, 40 Years of Bodybuilding, Summer 1980, 5; David Webster, *Barbells & Beefcake* (Irvine, Scotland: author published, 1979), 148; Bill Pearl, George and Tuesday Coates, and Richard Thornley, Jr., *Legends of the Iron Game, Reflections on the History of Strength Training*, 3 vols. (Phoenix, OR: Bill Pearl Enterprises, 2010), 3:157, 259-60; and <http://www.musclememory.com/>.
- Ben Weider letter to the author and Tony Blinn letter to the author, 5 May 2008. According to Ben, "Tony is very precise and has all of the information about the IFBB since its inception." Letters in the author's possession.
- Joe Weider and Ben Weider, *Brothers of Iron: How the Weider Brothers Created the Fitness Movement and Built a Business Empire* (Champaign, IL: Sports Publishing, LLC, 2006).
- Interview with Jimmy Payne, 6 June 2004, and Alyce Stagg, "Introducing Jimmy Payne—West Coast Hercules," *Your Physique* 10 (October 1948), 44.
- Interview with Payne. See also *The Healdsburg Tribune*, 18 & 19 February 2004; and the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, 20 March 2011, for an update.
- Interview with Payne.
- Stagg, "Introducing Jimmy Payne," 45.
- George F. Jowett, "Problems of the Short Man," *Your Physique* 11 (September 1949), 17.
- Interview with Payne. Pictures of Payne with winner Floyd Page and runner-up Norman Marks in the 1948 contest appear in "Weight Training Instruction," *Body Moderne* 2 (January 1949), 41, and with winner Armand Tanny and runner up Bob McCune in the 1949 contest in Floyd Page, "Making Champions!" *Your Physique* 12 (March 1950), 13.
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- Leo Gaudreau, "Mr. America of 1949," *Your Physique* 10 (February 1949), 10, 18, 36.
- Barton R. Horvath, "Mr. North America Contest," *Your Physique* 11 (August 1949), 10, 38.
- Stagg, "Introducing Jimmy Payne" and "Pictorial Display of Jimmy Payne," *Your Physique* 10 (October 1948), 5, 9. An earlier picture of Payne appeared on the winners' pedestal of the 1948 Professional Mr. America Contest, but juxtaposed to an article on Eric Pedersen who had recently placed 4th in the Mr. USA Contest. Spartan, "Most Muscular Man in America," *Your Physique* 9 (June 1948), 26-27.
- George F. Jowett, "Bending Iron is Easy," *Muscle Power* 7 (December 1948), 13.
- See for instance, David P. Willoughby, "The Lower Back," *Your Physique* 12 (October 1949), 14; and "The I.F.B.B. 'Mr. California' Contest and Strength Show," *Muscle Power* 7 (May 1949), 14; Special Reporter, "Mr. & Miss U.S.A.," *Muscle Power* 8 (July 1949), 21; and Hereward Carrington, "Cold Weather Health," *Muscle Power* 9 (January 1950), 25.
- "The I.F.B.B. 'Mr. California' Contest and Strength Show," 14.
- Special Reporter, "Mr. & Miss U.S.A.," 20-21.
- Stagg, "Introducing Jimmy Payne," 45.
- Earle Liederman, "Let's Gossip," *Muscle Power* 9 (February 1950), 47.
- Earle Liederman, "Let's Gossip," *Muscle Power* 8 (July 1949), 40; Liederman, "Let's Gossip," *Muscle Power* 8 (November 1949), 32; Liederman, "Let's Gossip," *Muscle Power* 9 (April 1950), 42; and Liederman, "Let's Gossip," *Muscle Power* 9 (February 1950), 47.
- Interview with Payne and follow-up conversation with Payne, 24 March 2011.
- See "Muscle Power Congratulates Phil Courtois" and Willis Reed, "I Gained 100 Pounds of Bodyweight," *Muscle Power* 10 (July 1950), 5, 23.
- "Mr. Armed Forces' 1949 Contest, Pacific Area," *Muscle Power* 9 (April 1950), 28; Earle Liederman, "Mr. Los Angeles 1950" *Muscle Power* 10 (June 1950), 26-27.
- Ben Weider letter to the author, 8 May 2008. Letter in possession of the author.
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- "The IFBB and The AAU," *Your Physique* 12 (January 1950), 16-17, 39.
- Ibid.
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- Earle Liederman, "Let's Gossip," *Muscle Power* 10 (July 1950), 46, and Charles A. Smith, "The 1950 AAU Mr. America Contest," *Muscle Power* 10 (October 1950), 43.
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40. "Do You Know These Men," *Strength & Health* 18 (January 1950), 29.
41. Barton R. Horvath, "How Mr. America Trains," *Muscle Power* 10 (November 1950), 11.
42. John Farbotnik, "My Association with Weider," *Strength & Health* 19 (December 1950), 7.
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44. The first version of *Mr. America* was actually a continuation of *Your Physique* and ran from August to November of 1952. The latter version was published from January 1958 to March 1973.
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47. Benjamin Weider, "Editorial," *Muscle Builder* 3 (August 1954), 3.
48. Weider, *Brothers of Iron*, 134.
49. Harry Paschall, *Strength & Health* 19 (September 1957), 59.
50. Joe Weider, "Expose—Mr. Universe 1957," *Muscle Builder* 1 [sic] (June 1958), 36.
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53. W. A. Pullum, "Another Great Day," *Health & Strength*, November 20, 1957, 5, and D. G. Johnson, "A Triumph for Try-Again Lees," *Health & Strength*, November 20, 1957, 6.
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58. See "British Weight Lifting," <http://britishweightlifting.org/index.php/Content/About-BWL.html>, and "Oscar State, OBE," <http://www.ifbbpro.com/hall-of-fame-welcome-message/oscar-state-obe/>.
59. Oscar Heidenstam letter to John Terpak, 15 February 1972, Hoffman Papers in the author's possession.
60. Gottfried Schodl, *The Lost Past* (Budapest, Hungary: International Weightlifting Federation, 1992), 125, 143.
61. Weider, *Brothers of Iron*, 135.
62. "Canada to Stage the Greatest Physique Contest in History," *Muscle Builder* 1 [sic] (December 1958), 9, 33.
63. Charles Sipes, "Mr. America 'Goes Weider' All the Way," *Muscle Builder* 9 (August 1959), 12, 39. For further coverage of Sipes and Silvestre see also "Let's Gossip, Muscle Talk with a Personal Touch," *Muscle Builder* 9 (July 1959), 25 and Charles Sipes, "I Used a Weider Super-Set Routine to Build My Mr. America Arms," *Muscle Builder* 9 (September 1959), 13.
64. "Let's Gossip, Muscle Talk with a Personal Touch," *Muscle Builder* 10 (May 1960), 9, 51-52.
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71. See for instance, his editorial in *Muscle Builder* 4 (June 1955), 3.
72. Jim Murray, "The Man on the Cover," *Strength & Health* 16 (December 1953), 36; and conversation with Jim Murray, 14 March 2011, Columbus, Ohio.
73. "What 'Unusual' Exercises Did for Jimmy Payne," *Muscle Builder* 8 (March 1957), 10-11, 45-47.
74. Stagg, "Introducing Jimmy Payne," 45. See also "Mr. and Miss America Contests: A Tale of Contrasting Cultures in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of the Georgia Association of Historians*, 23 (2002).
75. Clem Poehman, "Mr. and Mrs. America," *Muscle Builder* 12 (July 1962), 9, 49.
76. Junior Mr. & Miss America Club Exercise Booklet, Payne personal scrapbook.
77. Interview with Payne. Later in life he owned a health spa in Healdsburg, California. At age fifty-seven, after losing some of his youthful vitality and suffering various aches and annoyances accompanying old age, he found relief in electro-magnetism and promoted a product called Electro Training Magnets. "Blood flows through your body seven complete times a day," he explained. "The magnets shake up the blood. And this allows your body to absorb nutrition better, eliminate waste better, and send oxygen to different parts of your body faster." Rich Mellott, "Jimmie Payne, A Guy With A Definite Attraction," *Muscle World* 4 (November 1983), 60, and "At 58, Jimmy Payne Discovered the Power of Electro-Magnetism and Regained the Incredible Strength and Endurance that Helped Him Become Mr. America!" *Iron Man* 44 (March 1985), 69.
78. Conversation with Payne.



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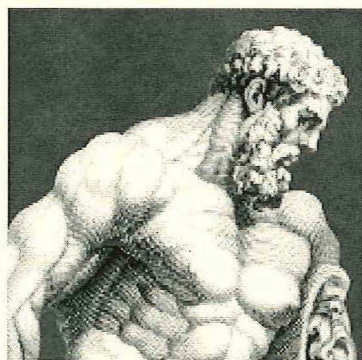
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