

IRON GAME HISTORY

THE JOURNAL OF
PHYSICAL CULTURE

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 2
SUMMER 2021

HAROLD "ODDJOB" SAKATA:
ATHLETIC HERO OR HEEL?

by John Fair

MABEL RADER:
A CHAMPION FOR WOMEN'S LIFTING

by Kim Beckwith

THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF
POLYMATH DAVID P. WILLOUGHBY

I. EDUCATION AND THE IRON GAME

II. THE MEASURE OF A MAN

by Jan Todd and Ryan Murtha

MY REMEMBRANCE OF
JEAN PAUL GETTY

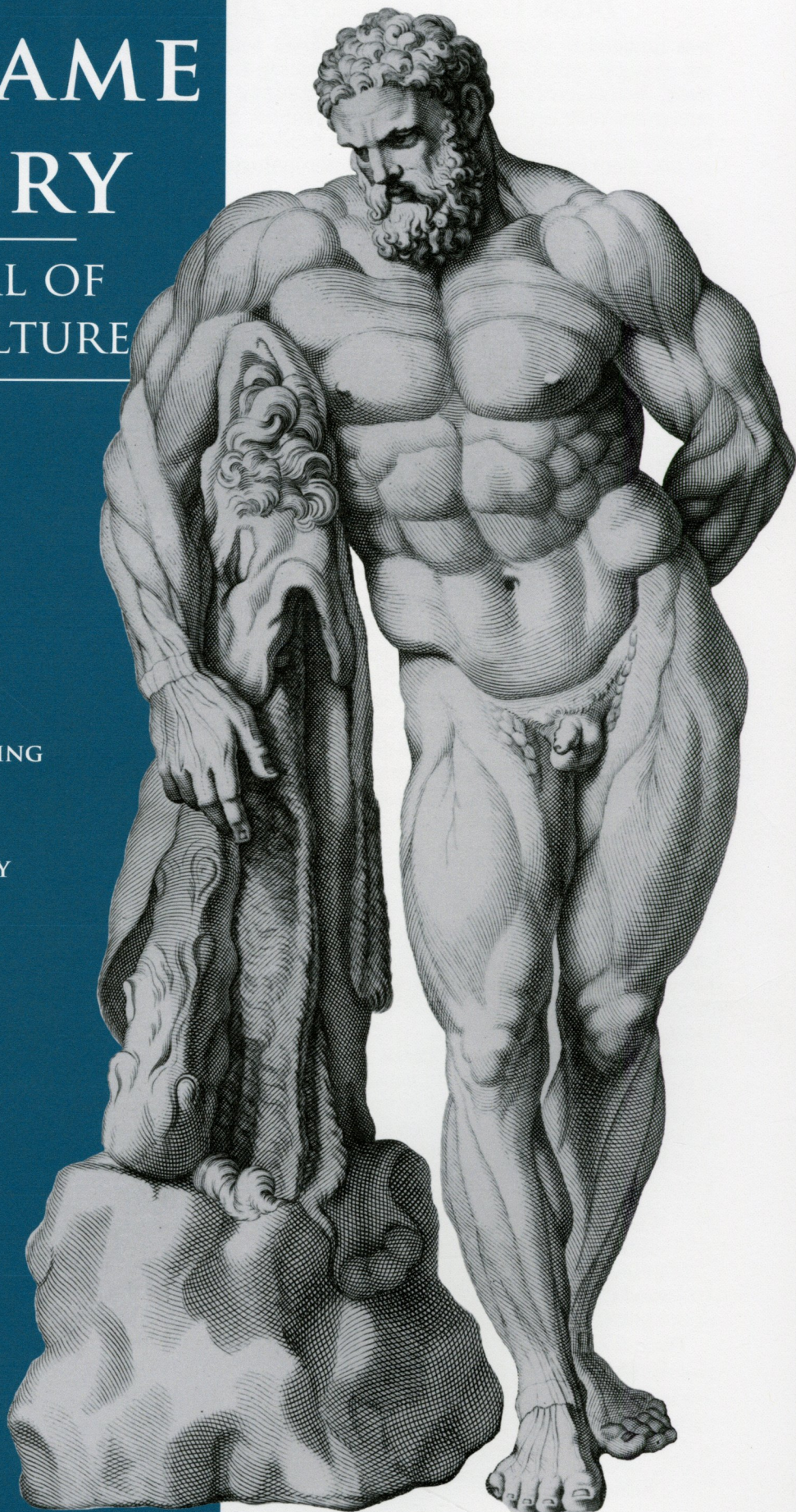
by David P. Willoughby

BOB HOFFMAN'S LAST WILL
AND TESTAMENT

by John Fair

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 1
WINTER 2021

SPECIAL CONFERENCE ISSUE:
PHYSICAL CULTURES OF THE
BODY 2021 (PAGE 69)



IRON GAME HISTORY: THE JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL CULTURE...

was founded in 1990 by Terry and Jan Todd who wanted to promote academic scholarship related to the history of the strength sports, exercise, nutrition, training for sport, and other aspects of physical culture. Like the Stark Center itself, *Iron Game History* defines physical culture as “the various activities people have employed over the centuries to strengthen their bodies, enhance their physiques, increase their endurance, enhance their health, fight against aging, and become better athletes.” The journal has published a wide variety of articles over the past thirty years exploring physical culture from historical, sociological, anthropological, and gender and race-based approaches.

Editorial Board

Jack Berryman (University of Washington - Seattle)
Simon Bronner (Penn State - Harrisburg)
David Chapman (Seattle, WA.)
Broderick Chow (University of London)
John Fair (University of Texas at Austin)
Thomas M. Hunt (University of Texas at Austin)
Charles Kupfer (Penn State - Harrisburg)
Joe Roark (St. Joseph, Ill.)
David P. Webster (Glasgow, Scotland)

Executive Editor:

Jan Todd, Ph.D.

Assistant Editors:

Conor Heffernan, Ph.D.
Ryan Murtha, M.S.

Co-Editors-in-Chief:

Kim Beckwith, Ph.D.
Jason Shurley, Ph.D.
Tolga Ozyurtcu, Ph.D.

Technical Editor:

Kyle Martin, B.S.

Postmaster: Send address corrections to: *IGH*, NEZ 5.700,
D3600, University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712

(ISSN 1069-7276)

SUBMISSIONS

Please visit our website for complete article submission details: <https://starkcenter.org/research-2/iron-game-history/>.

Like other academic journals, *Iron Game History* is peer-reviewed, non-profit, and welcomes contributions from scholars at all stages of their careers and from all academic disciplines. It also welcomes memory pieces and other kinds of articles that are not traditionally “academic.” Please write if you have an idea for an article so our editorial team can discuss it with you.

To submit articles for consideration, please send your manuscript to Kim Beckwith at kim@starkcenter.org as a WORD document—not PDF. Manuscripts should include a title page with the article’s title, and your name, email, phone and other contact information. Please also include a 50-word biography of each author on this page. The names of the authors should only appear on the cover page. Please consult the *IGH* Style Sheet at the above URL for additional information on our unique parameters and footnote requirements.

Images for inclusion must be scanned at 300 or 600 DPI and should be attached to the email. Please indicate in the text where they should appear and write captions. If they are too large for emailing, please place in a Google Drive folder and share the link with your submission.

Iron Game History Thanks Our Patrons and Fellows for Their Support of the Journal.

PATRON SUPPORTERS

Richard Abbott	Daniel John
Neil Ballard	Irving Kirsch
Regis Becker	Ray Knecht
Laszlo Bencze	Red Lerille
Dean Camenares	Don McEachren
Kevin Collins	Lou Mezzanote
Lucio Doncel	David Mills
Colin Duerden	Graham Noble
James Duggan	Ben Oldham
Salvatore Franchino	Rick Perkins
Brad Gillingham	Pittsburg Sport
Mike Graham	Sylvia Robinson
David & Julie Hartnett	David Small
Howard Havener	Edward Sweeney
Bill Henniger	Donald Swingle
Caity Henniger	Harold Thomas
Chester Hicks	Tom Townsend
Jarett Hulse	Steve Wennerstrom
Walter Imahara	

In Memory of:
Joe Assirati
Chris Dickerson
Pete George
Tommy Kono
John Leitgeb
Jim Murray
Steve Reeves
Terry Robinson
Chuck Sipes
Les Stockton
Pudgy Stockton
Dr. Al Thomas
Jack Woodson

FELLOWSHIP SUPPORTERS

Bob Bacon	Barnet Pugach
Clarence Bass	Earl Riley
Alfred C. Berner	John T. Ryan
Richard Cottrell	George Schumacher
John Crainer	Travis Smith
Roger Gedney	Lou Tortorelli
Don Graham	Dan Wathen
Randy Hauer	
Daniel Kostka	
Thomas Lee	
Patrick Luskin	
Robert McNall	
David E. Meltzer	
H. Movaghar	
Kevin O'Rourke	
David Pelto	
William Petko	

HAROLD “ODDJOB” SAKATA: ATHLETIC HERO OR HEEL?

by John Fair
The University of Texas at Austin



This strong man who could kill with one blow of the hand has so much friendship in that hand to offer. —Bill Fryer

Harold (Toshiyuki) Sakata (1920-1982) was an Olympic weightlifter, professional wrestler, and film actor, but he is best known for his hat and the secondary role he played as the infamous “Oddjob” in the 1964 James Bond blockbuster *Goldfinger*. Much uncertainty persists, however, about the image Sakata conveyed as a prominent public figure. The first three decades of his life reveal a rags-to-riches story of a struggling Japanese American from an impoverished immigrant family who gained fame in the highest echelon of athletic competition. However, exigencies of the marketplace transformed him from a hero on the weightlifting platform into an anti-hero in the wrestling ring and a villain on the movie screen. Although fame and financial success was his ultimate reward, it obscures the true identity of Harold Sakata, who was a remarkable strength athlete who sought chiefly to share his talents in the entertainment world to enrich the lives of others. Despite his menacing appearance and violent actions, he was not a destroyer. Contrary to the public image he projected, Sakata did not let his celebrity status deter from the natural humane instincts derived from his weightlifting days. He promoted good will rather than ill will and was more in step than out of step with societal norms.



Harold Sakata sports the steel-rimmed bowler hat from his trademark role as “Oddjob” in the 1964 movie, *Goldfinger*.

BECOMING AN OLYMPIC HERO

The most complete rendering of Sakata’s life and career are Joseph R. Svinth’s biographical treatments in the *Journal of Alternative Perspectives* and the *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History*.¹ A valuable feature of Svinth’s accounts is the background he provides on the Nuuanu YMCA in Honolulu, which became the early center for weightlifting activities in Hawaii. He notes

that it was preceded by organized baseball and the presence of Asian students from Tokyo and Shanghai who attended the YMCA college in Springfield, Massachusetts. Most critical to its establishment were the efforts in 1912-13 of B. M. Matsuzawa of the Tokyo YMCA, who came to Honolulu to open a YMCA for Asians, and Lloyd Killam, a religious leader from the University of Missouri.² According to Svinth, “they began offering English and Japanese-language Bible classes in a room at the Central YMCA. During a sabbatical to the Midwest in 1915, Killam convinced several friends to join him in Hawaii, and in 1916 these missionaries began campaigning for an interracial YMCA in the Islands. The existing (white) leadership of the Hawaiian YMCA opposed this, so in March 1917 the missionaries set about raising money for a dedicated Asian facility.”

According to Svinth, the fundraising campaign worked, and they opened the Nuuanu YMCA’s first meeting rooms in April 1918.³

When the new facility was dedicated, 600 Japanese sailors were ushered into a luncheon for Korean members. “When the eight Koreans sat calmly and enjoyed their lunch meeting and did not throw a sugar bowl or a dish at one of the naval men,” said Killam afterwards, “I knew that

Correspondence to: Dr. John Fair, NEZ 5.700, Dept. of Kinesiology & Health Education, Stark Center, University of Texas at Austin, 78712. Email: john.fair@austin.utexas.edu.

the inter-racial plan would be a success.” Over the next five years both membership and facilities grew. The large gymnasium was completed in 1922; the swimming pool opened in 1924. By 1937, as Killam proudly noted in articles published in the *Nippu Jiji*, there were 119 boys’ clubs affiliated with the Nuuanu YMCA, and 2,766 young men used the facility on a regular basis.⁴ It is unlikely that weightlifting was practiced at this racially segregated facility located at the corner of Fort and Vineyard until the 1930s, but by the time a new Nuuanu YMCA was constructed across the street in 1963 it had gained a reputation as a hotbed for the sport.

Harold Sakata was born on 7 January 1920, on the big island of Hawaii, near Holualoa, the son of Risaburo, an Issei (Japanese immigrant) and Matsue, a Nisei (American born) in a family of six brothers and four sisters. After dropping out of school in 1936, Sakata worked on the family’s coffee farm, then on sugar and pineapple plantations on Maui until he moved to Honolulu in 1938 where he worked variously as a carpenter’s helper, truck driver, stevedore, ditch digger, and finally fireman for the city of Honolulu and Hickam Field. At the outset of World War II, he recalls that “it was rough for the Japanese, even if we were American citizens. Everyone had to wear identification badges, and ours had a black rim that we were restricted. It was ugly.” While working on the waterfront as a stevedore, every time he boarded a ship “a Marine would search me, make me open my lunch bucket. I resented being treated like a spy.”⁵ At age eighteen, “Sakata stood 5’8” but weighed only 113 pounds,” notes Svinth, “After seeing some physical culture magazines he decided to start lifting weights ‘so I’d look as good as the other guys.’”⁶ When he showed up at the Nuuanu YMCA is unclear, but at an outdoor competition at Kapiolani Park he pressed 190, snatched 210, and clean and jerked 265 for a 665-pound, three-lift total as a middleweight on 28 September 1941.⁷

At a succession of “strength and health” shows in 1942, Sakata increasingly played a major role in the staging of weightlifting competitions while steadily improving his own lifts. At an integrated meet on 5 July 1942 at the



Pudgy and Les Stockton visited Hawaii in 1949, and based on signed photos such as this one by Harold Sakata, they became friends with some of the local Olympic lifters. Sakata signed his picture “To Pudgy & Les, Best Wishes -Aloha- Harold Sakata.”

Central YMCA, he set a record total of 705 pounds with lifts of 205, 220, and 280 at 160 pounds bodyweight, easily surpassing the three other lifters in his class.⁸ Over the next year, encouraged by bantamweight champion Richard Tom, his training partner at the Nuuanu gym, Sakata gained strength and became a light-heavyweight. At the annual Hawaiian AAU Weightlifting Championships on 27 June 1943, he clean and jerked 300 pounds to total 780 pounds, just 20 pounds shy of the 800 total registered by John Terpak in winning the Senior National Championships in Los Angeles the previous day.⁹ His picture, along

with Tom, who set a world record total at that meet, appeared in the January 1944 issue of *Strength & Health*.¹⁰ Some of Sakata’s progress may be attributed to the nature of his military service in the 1399th Engineer Construction Battalion (nicknamed the Chowhounds because of their large appetites), which completed 54 defense-related construction projects, including water tanks, warehouses, airfields, and roads on Oahu. Assigned to the Special Services division at Schofield Barracks, Sakata was able to spend time in the Army at the post gym lifting weights and getting stronger.¹¹ By the end World War II, he was heralded by the local press as “an up and coming world champion” and “our local pride and joy.”¹² His growing celebrity status was recognized at a benefit dance where he was dubbed the “Strongest Man in Hawaii” and performed, along with other strength athletes doing posing, muscle control, and hand balancing routines. In July 1946, before 500 spectators in the Nuuanu auditorium, Sakata became the fourth Mr. Hawaii amidst a field of 21 contestants.¹³ More significantly, on a national level, he totaled 775 pounds at the 1946 Senior Oahu Weightlifting Championships, which was five pounds more than the 770 registered by H. Vinkin of the United States Navy in the 1945 national championships. Then at the territorial championships on 28 June he registered an 825-pound total via lifts of 265, 250, and 310, which was just short of Frank Kay’s 836-pound aggregate at the nationals in early June in Detroit.¹⁴

Owing to the generosity of the Hawaiian AAU, Sakata was able to compete in the 1947 Junior National Championships in Dallas on 21 June where he posted a total of 800 pounds with a 240 press and snatch and 320 clean and jerk to win the light-heavyweight title. “He showed good form and power in all the lifts,” commented Bob Hoffman, “and will do much better when he has a little more training time in this country.”¹⁵ A week later at the Sr. Nationals in Chicago, as runner up to John Terpak of the York Barbell Club with an 805-pound total via lifts of 240, 250, and 315, Sakata qualified for the upcoming world championships in Philadelphia.¹⁶ In the meantime, he, along with Richard Tom, was invited to train, at Hoffman’s expense, with America’s best weightlifters in York.¹⁷ One of them was Pete George of Akron, Ohio, who would cop the world lightweight title. Pete has “fond memories” of Sakata, who “told me fascinating stories about the Hawaiian Islands.” He never dreamed that he would “spend most of my life there.”

Coming from Ohio, I couldn’t imagine a land in which winter never came. We were in York in late September, and he was complaining how cold it was. One day as we were walking from the Y to the York Barbell Club to train, he lit up a cigarette, but he shortly threw it away so that he could place both hands in his pockets to keep them warm. He then asked me why so many trees in the area were dying. I asked why did he think they were dying.

He said because their leaves were drying up and falling. I told him about deciduous trees, and he said, ‘Oh, yeah, I remember a teacher in grade school telling us about them.’ In contrast to his image as ‘Odd-job’ he was friendly, generous and usually smiling.¹⁸

At the championships, Sakata finished fourth with an 810½-pound total, behind Terpak (854½), Keeval Day (British Guiana, 815½), and Juhani Vallamo (Finland, 810½), who garnered third by virtue of two pounds less bodyweight. Sakata, however, made a valiant attempt to place second, according to Hoffman, on his final clean and jerk. Wrote Hoffman, “A lot of nice things can be said about Harold Sakata, and one of them is that he has a lot of courage. He has proven himself to be the strongest man in Hawaii and he is not so big either. His weight of 178¾ at this championships does not prove a thing either for he has a lot of surplus weight.” Continuing on this theme, Hoffman wrote, “He had been eating three and four heaping platters at each meal at Dorcas Lehman’s restaurant where the training table for the world’s championship team had been established.” Hoffman also claimed that Sakata had grown fat. “His cheeks puffed out like a squirrel’s with nuts in its mouth, and he had considerable [fat] over all his body. He looked more like a long distance swimmer, which he is, than a weight lifter.” However, Hoffman complimented Sakata, “he showed that there was great power under that smooth, suntanned exterior by a successful second attempt with 325. . . . Sakata tried manfully to make a success with 336, more than he had ever lifted in his life, and narrowly missed success.”¹⁹

No doubt disappointed that he was the only American not to figure in the team championship scoring, Sakata lapsed into obscurity until the Senior Nationals in June 1948 at the Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium, which also served as tryouts for the London Olympics. Hoffman, as American Olympic Coach, was clearly impressed with his performance against formidable competition as he showed improvement on all three lifts and displayed a captivating manner. “We like to see Sakata in action,” wrote Hoffman. “He’s a man of rare courage and confidence, a fighter, he approaches [the bar] as if he owned the Shrine gymnasium, a serious look on his face, he calmly places his feet, and lowers into a perfect starting position with buttocks low, back flat and puts all he has into the lift. . . . Harold showed that he is improved and any man who keeps him off the world champion team this year must be good.”²⁰

Although his 830 was 50 pounds less than that of reigning world champion Stan Stanczyk, it was good enough to earn a berth on the Olympic team. In a lead-up to the competition, Hoffman renewed his faith in Sakata as “a good fighter. I like that man Sakata, a nice, smiling fellow normally, possessing a fine likeable personality, when the going is easy he appears cocky and a bit chesty as he walks out to the bar, but when all depends on a lift or two, he approaches the bar with a look of grim determination and he usually makes the lift.”²¹ In London, Sakata

fulfilled Hoffman's confidence by posting an 837¼ total, overtaking his nearest rival, Klas "Porky" Magnusson of Sweden, by 11 pounds and surpassing Juhani Vallamo, who had edged him out in 1947 by 55 pounds. It hardly mattered that Stanzyck's winning total of 920¼ was 83 pounds greater. What impressed Hoffman was that Hawaii's strongest man had "come through so gloriously" to win a silver medal and valuable team points for America.²² The response in Hawaii was even more effusive towards the heroic achievements of Sakata and other native sons, bronze medalist Richard Tom, Emerick Ishakawa, and Richard Tomita upon their return from the Olympics. Speaking for the group, Sakata said they were all capable of lifting more but played it safe because of the strict enforcement of the rules. Given the fact that "more than 600 strong men from 30 nations vied for honors in the lifting competition," observed the *Honolulu Advertiser*, "the Hawaiian lifters made a brilliant showing."²³ The athletes were no less buoyant about their performance. A *Star-Bulletin* article picturing Sakata hoisting his three lightweight teammates makes much of their eagerness to compete again in the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki. Calling it the "biggest thrill" of his life, Sakata "has changed his mind about turning a pro rasser. He wants to try out for the Olympics again in '52 and hopes to do even better than he did in London this year." Coach Henry Koizumi revealed that weightlifting was taking on "aspects of a major sport at the Nuuanu Y" where its weightlifting club had been "flooded with applicants . . . ever since the news of

what the Hawaii boys did in the Olympics."²⁴

GOIN' PRO

How he would turn his silver medal performance into one meriting gold, however, remained unclear. On 18 December 1948, Sakata reportedly "pulled a superman stunt" at the annual Nuuanu YMCA Senior Invitational meet by shattering four Hawaiian heavyweight records. "All during the night Hal had the capacity house cheering him on to new records."²⁵ Although his 870 total bettered the previous mark by 115 pounds, it fell far short of the winning heavyweight total of 995.5 pounds registered by John Davis at the recent Olympics.²⁶ Sakata then took a turn at bodybuilding. On 18 March 1949 in front of an estimated audience of 5,000 at the civic auditorium, he won the title of Mr. Waikiki. To Walter Christie, Jr., his victory was more the result of his Olympic fame than the quality of his physique. "While many body building specialists were quick to point out that the massive Sakata lacks muscular definition, the judges' selection was popular with the crowd as a deserved recognition for his Olympic performance." Far more memorable was the performance of guest poser, Clarence Ross, 1945 Mr. America.²⁷ Sakata's hope of reaching a higher weightlifting echelon persisted through the spring of 1949 but culminated on 22 May in a disappointing third place finish in the heavyweight class at the national championships in Cleveland, Ohio.²⁸ Meanwhile, Sakata had begun professional wrestling training under the tutelage of Ben Sherman, Hawaii's foremost mat

celebrity. Despite his love for Olympic weightlifting, several compelling factors were driving Sakata to a more remunerative way of life. With three years until the next Olympics, scant improvement in his lifts, and virtually no financial rewards in amateur weightlifting, he rightly reasoned professional wrestling would be a viable alternative. Sakata was led to this way of thinking, according to a 1949 article in the *Pacific Citizen*, when "a very wise man asked me if I were happy. Sure, I said. 'And you're proud of those silver trophies?' Sure I'm proud. 'Now let's see if you can eat them,' he said."²⁹ The choice was clear. He decided to retire from amateur weightlifting on 14 June and devote his energies fulltime to professional wrestling under the

auspices of promoter Al Karasick who staged wrestling bouts every Sunday night at the civic auditorium.³⁰

Sakata's instructor was "Blazing Ben" Sherman, reputed to be one of the world's top grapplers who at one time operated a gymnasium with the legendary George Hackenschmidt in London. Sports reporter Dan McGuire waxed effusive in praising Sherman, "A master of every hold—Greco-Roman or catch-as-catch-can—Sherman has a lot to offer any aspirant to the crown once held by such as Hackenschmidt, Frank Gotch and Strangler Lewis. The Blazer, however, is at his best as far as the crowd is concerned when he shifts to the unorthodox and turns on the showmanship as only he can."³¹

At his debut on 13 August at the Hilo Armory, Sakata, described as "powerful" and "beautifully built," pinned veteran Bucky O'Neill in twelve minutes after a missed drop-kick.³² On 28 August he "gave the crowd a big thrill" at the Honolulu civic auditorium where he displayed tremendous strength and "a good knowledge of holds" to pin Earl Rasmussen in 7 minutes and 20 seconds with a Boston crab. "His feats of strength brought the house down," reported the *Honolulu Advertiser*.³³ Much to the delight of local fans, Sakata employed the crab and pile driver as well as weightlifting and leverage tactics in subsequent months to defeat a succession of opponents.³⁴ He also displayed his public spirit and continued commitment to weightlifting in a variety of ways. In the fall of 1949 he conducted weightlifting and bodybuilding classes for high school boys on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons at the Nuuanu YMCA. He also performed feats of strength and assisted with judging at local meets.³⁵ Svinth explains that as a war veteran and Olympic medalist, "Sakata didn't have to play a heel. Instead, he was billed as 'Mr. Sakata, the Human Tank' and given scripts that allowed him to win using honorable methods."³⁶ It was a cozy fit whereby he was able to thrive in a less than respected profession in a respectable way.

His way of life changed suddenly, however, when his organization, seeking to capitalize on Sakata's success in the larger wrestling venues of North America, dispatched him for an indefinite stay in the Pacific Northwest. "I'll be there as long as there's money to be made," was his response.³⁷ His mainland debut took place on 3 April in Seattle where, in scoring a win over Pacific Coast Ju-

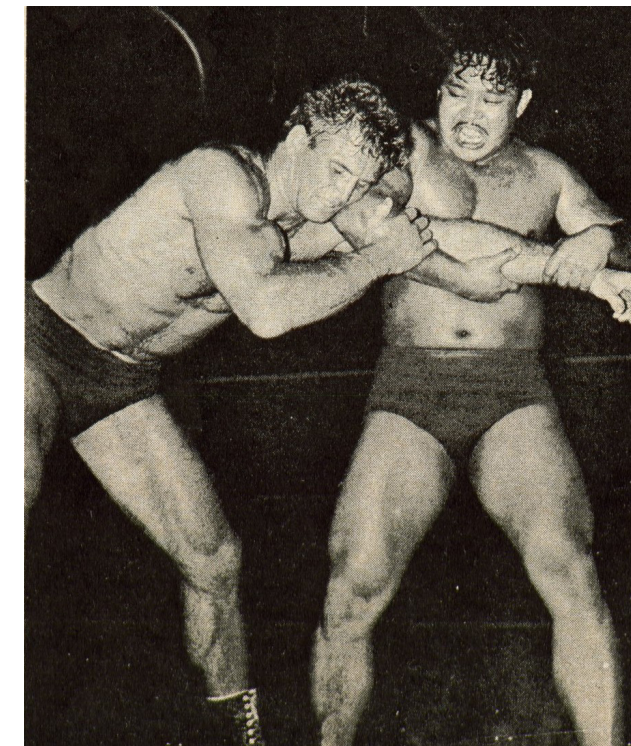
nior Heavyweight Champion Bob Cummins, he created a crowd sensation by wearing a flamboyant Japanese robe, replete with getas (wooden clogs). By July, he told his former weightlifting coach Henry Koizumi, he was averaging five matches a week, mostly in Washington.³⁸ But, it was a rough-and-tumble existence, as columnist Larry Tajiri of the *Pacific Citizen* observed in January 1951. Sakata was not only performing four or five times weekly, but "appearing on wrestling bills hundreds of miles apart on successive nights. One night, for instance, he headlined a show in Klamath Falls, Ore., and the next night was in Vancouver, British Columbia, more than 400 miles to the north. He has appeared in fishing towns like Nanaimo on British Columbia's Vancouver Island and in cities like Seattle, Portland, Spokane and Tacoma."³⁹

He also wrestled throughout Utah, Oregon, and Idaho in the Intermountain West, traveling by train, bus, and plane until he could afford a new sedan, which enabled him to extend his tours to the United States Midwest and Canada.⁴⁰ It is not surprising that he eventually sought to return to the more stable and familiar environs of his homeland. He did so by competing in a tag-team match in a tournament staged by his old promoter Al Karasick. He and partner Dave Levin won two out of three falls over Andre Adoree and Wally Dusek. Sakata clinched the match with judo hip throws, followed by a press and pin on Dusek.⁴¹

Meanwhile Karasick was making arrangements with Tokyo businessman Moe Lipton and San Francisco promoter Joe Malcewicz to send leading American professional wrestlers to Japan for the benefit of Shriners Crippled Children's Hospitals. Under sponsorship by the Torii Oasis Shrine Club of Tokyo, they would conduct matches in Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Yokohama, and Kobe, and perform at American military bases in Japan and Korea. Included in the entourage were Dr. Leonard Hall (Seattle), Bobby Bruns (Chicago), Andre Asselyn (Montreal), Casey Berger (Dallas), Andre Adoree (Los Angeles), and Sakata.⁴² According to Svinth, their first show took place at the Tokyo police gym on 25 September for Japanese officers, followed two days later by one for United Nations soldiers recuperating at the Tokyo Army Hospital. "The first public show took place at Tokyo's Memorial Hall on 30 September 1951. According to the *Nippon Times*, Sakata seemed to use a jujitsu



The 1947 United States World Weightlifting Team included several Hawaiian lifters: (back row, L-R) John Davis, Norbert Schemansky, Stan Stanzyck, Harold Sakata; (middle row, L-R) Tony Terlazzo, Frank Spellman, Peter T. George, John Terpak; (front row, L-R) Emerick Ishikawa, Bobby Higgins, Joe DePietro, and Richard Tom.



The link between weightlifting and wrestling has always been strong and at mid-century, with no real way to earn money as a lifter, Sakata's decision to turn to pro wrestling made great economic sense. He's shown here in the January 1953 issue of *Muscle Power* putting an arm lock on bodybuilder Eric Pederson.

trick in his flying hip move to throw the giant Casey Berger.” In succeeding weeks, while the wrestlers entertained numerous audiences in Southern Japan, they were joined by former world heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis (1937-1949). Svinth makes much of Louis’s impact at these shows. On 2 December when the troupe reached Yokahama, he took on six opponents in a match. On another occasion, one of Louis’s adversaries, a Navy heavyweight champion named Lee Giles, was intimidated by his size, noting that “when I walked out to face the guy, I couldn’t see around him. Luckily it was an exhibition. He moved in a kind of halting way. You know that shuffle that he had? I was fast enough to keep away. So I did everything but run. I was Ali without the sting. I remember hitting him once, right in the forehead. It was like hitting a wall.”⁴³

It appears from Svinth’s account, that the wrestlers were often upstaged by Louis in match promotions. Most significant of the details that can be gleaned about Sakata is that he was adept at speaking conversational Japanese and that he took this opportunity to marry a Japanese woman named Lita Ohki while in Tokyo.⁴⁴

A less than rosy picture of Louis’s involvement with the tour is provided in Red McQueen’s report in the *Honolulu Advertiser* which states that his appearances were “such colossal flops” that the Brown Bomber and his handlers decided to leave “considerably in advance of their schedule.” Most programs consisted of two or three wrestling matches followed by Louis’ exhibition, but McQueen’s informants told him that “Japan fans for the most part have been giving the shows a wide berth. . . . According to Harold Sakata, local weightlifting champ who is in the grappling group, they were doing a lot better with their own shows before Louis was brought in as the big come-on. The wrestlers are happy that he is leaving.” Nor was there any more discussion by Karasick about the possibility that Louis might referee a wrestling match or give an armed forces exhibition in Honolulu on his return journey.⁴⁵

Upon returning to Hawaii in January 1952 Sakata resumed his local wrestling performances where he encountered former Mr. USA and strongman Armand Tanny of Santa Monica, California. On 16 March he handed Sakata a rare defeat when he countered an airplane spin with a backdrop, followed by a press and pin in a match that lasted 13 minutes and 22 seconds.⁴⁶ On 14 and 15

March Sakata had an opportunity to renew old friendships with Hawaii’s Olympic weightlifters by serving as “featured performer” at a Japan vs. Hawaii International Goodwill Weightlifting Tournament at the civic auditorium where he displayed feats of strength. Organized by Dr. Richard You, AAU Committee Chairman, the two-day muscle show featured four Hawaiian weightlifters against an equivalent group of Japan’s best and included a Mr. and Miss Nisei physique contest. All proceeds went to the general Olympic fund that enabled Hawaiian weightlifters to compete in the national championships at New York City in June 1952, which also served as tryouts for the Helsinki Games a month later.⁴⁷ It was the occasion when a Hawaiian contingent of Ed Bailey, Emerick Ishikawa, John Odo, Richard Tom, Richard Tomita, and George Yoshioka, under You’s guidance, upset the York Barbell Club after a reign of twenty years. Sakata, of course, contributed to the weightlifting culture that led to this victory by his exemplary performances over the previous decade. Likewise, Tommy Kono, who would become Hawaii’s greatest weightlifter, contributed indirectly in a no less critical way. Representing the U.S. Army, Kono denied York Barbell valuable team points by outscoring its champions, Frank Spellman and Joe Pitman, in the lightweight class.⁴⁸



Harold Sakata’s wrestling persona was “Tosh Togo,” named after his middle name—Toshiyuki—and a famous Japanese admiral.

In May, Sakata returned to the Pacific Northwest and for the next two years wrestled throughout North America. During this time, Sakata shed his “good guy” image to become a heel with the pseudonym of Tosh Togo. Becoming a villain enabled him to become “one of wrestling’s most colorful performers,” according to a 1964 account: “In the ring, Togo’s great strength, his knowledge of karate and judo and the coldly expressionless countenance which he can assume at will combine to make him one of the ring’s great villains. He is often booed and hissed as he enters the ring in his ceremonial robes. But like Liberace he does his smiling on the way to the bank.” Sakata is quoted in that article as saying, “Cheerful-looking wrestlers die broke. In my own case, I didn’t make much money when I first started out as a clean-cut college boy type. Then one day the audience started booing me and I knew I had found the secret of success in the ring.”⁴⁹

Sakata adopted the name Tosh Togo, “because Toshiyuki is my middle name and Togo was a great man in Japan. Not Tojo—Togo, the admiral who outmaneuvered

the Russians in 1906” in the Battle of Tsushima Straits, Svinth noted.⁵⁰ While touring on the mainland wrestling circuit, Sakata entertained American audiences by breaking bricks with his bare hands, a skill he learned from Korean karate master Mas Oyama.⁵¹ In 1954, as Tosh Togo, he returned to his Big Island home where his wife gave birth to a son, Jon Tatsumi Sakata, on 15 September and he wrestled several matches. The Hilo newspaper referred to him as a fan favorite, a “former Kona boy who made the big time in pro wrestling” and “one of the strongest men in the world.”⁵² In Honolulu, however, Sakata showed evidence of his new villainous persona. In January 1955, the *Advertiser* referred to him as “naturally strong” and a wrestler who has “learned his ropes well during a trip to the mainland and uses his great strength and knowledge of judo effectively. Like most of today’s wrestlers, Sakata plays it rough and for keeps. He says it doesn’t make a hit with fans, but it wins the matches and creates greater demand for his services.”⁵³

From 1955 to 1958 Sakata spent most of his time wrestling in Japan, during which time he and his wife had a daughter named Glenna. He also did tours of India, Pakistan, and other Asian countries. In 1959 he was a “hot card” in Texas and became a favorite of television audiences.⁵⁴ On returning to Hawaii in 1962 after an extensive tour of Europe, Tosh was described as “a ‘compact’ wrestler, small as heavyweights go, but with tremendous strength and stamina and the experience and skill necessary to remain among the top-ranked wrestlers for the past decade.”⁵⁵ On 7 July an estimated 3,000 fans watched him pin Lou (Shoulders) Newman of British Columbia in two out of three falls at the Kona Lions 16th District Fair in Kealahou. As a preliminary, Sakata also gave a karate exhibition where he broke three one-inch boards held by referees with the ball of his foot, broke a brick in half with his hand, bent a 50-penny railroad spike, and twisted a beer can into an S-shape.⁵⁶ Seemingly contrary to his villainous ring role, he took the opportunity during visits to the Islands to engage in public service activities for his homeland. Though not otherwise displaying an interest in politics, he assisted Duke Kawasaki, with whom he had served in the 1399th Engineer Construction Battalion during World War II, in a heated 5th District (Maui) Senate race. He also continued offering physical education classes at the Nuuanu YMCA.⁵⁷

A HIGHER FORM OF VILLAINY

In early 1963 Sakata toured Australia, where he wrestled under the name of Tosh Tojo, reminiscent of Japan’s World War II Prime Minister, Hideki Tojo, in an attempt to incite fans against him.⁵⁸ He then went to Great Britain where he was “discovered” by producers Harry Saltzman and Albert R. Broccoli who were casting actors for their upcoming film *Goldfinger* starring Sean Connery as James Bond. They saw him on TV in a televised main event being held in Birmingham, England.⁵⁹ The film was based on Ian Fleming’s 1959 novel in which Bond uncovers a gold-smuggling operation by the nefarious Auric Goldfinger that would contaminate the United States Bul-

lion Depository at Fort Knox. Much of Goldfinger’s dirty work was carried out by a Korean henchman named Oddjob, whose physical talents bordered on the miraculous. Goldfinger proudly referred to him as “my handy man. . . . I call him Oddjob because that describes his functions on my staff.” Exactly what those functions entailed was clarified for James Bond, with Goldfinger’s statement, “We will have a demonstration.”

He pointed at the thick oak bannisters that ran up the stairs. The rail was a massive six inches by four thick. The Korean obediently walked over to the stairs and climbed a few steps. He stood with his hands at his sides, gazing across at Goldfinger like a good retriever. Goldfinger gave a quick nod. Impressively the Korean lifted his right hand high and straight above his head and brought the side of it down like an axe across the heavy polished rail. There was a splintering crash and the rail sagged, broken through the centre. Again the hand went up and flashed down. This time it swept right through the rail leaving a jagged gap. Splinters clattered down on to the floor of the hall. The Korean straightened himself and stood to attention, waiting for further orders. There was no flush of effort in his face and no hint of pride in his achievement.⁶⁰

Duly impressed by Oddjob’s great strength, Bond asked casually, “Why does the man always wear that bowler hat?” While Oddjob held the household cat he was savoring for dinner, Goldfinger pointed to a wooden panel near the fireplace: “Still holding the cat under his left arm, Oddjob turned and walked stolidly back towards them. When he was half way across the floor, and without pausing or taking aim, he reached up to his hat, took it by the rim and flung it sideways with all his force. There was a loud clang. For an instant the rim of the bowler hat stuck an inch deep in the panel Goldfinger had indicated, then it fell and clattered on the floor.”⁶¹ The implication of these violent stunts was that Oddjob could easily dispose of Bond at a moment’s whim from Goldfinger. “You see my power, Mr. Bond. I could easily have killed you or maimed you.”⁶²

Whether Sakata could fulfill this murderous role convincingly on film was the object of an impromptu screen test at the producer’s London office. “He won the role of Oddjob easily,” according to a subsequent report, “demonstrating his strength by kicking off the mantel of Saltzman’s fireplace with his bare foot.”⁶³ According to Sakata’s version of his hiring, he showed up with a couple bricks and a board to show he was no weakling. “The director said ‘Harold, we know you’re strong. You don’t have to prove it’ but the kids in the crew looked disappointed so I gave the bricks a bare chop and snapped the

board with my hand and that made everybody happy—even the director, since the next thing I knew I was standing in line to sign a contract.”⁶⁴

When asked whether snapping off a head with the brim of his hat was easy, Sakata responded, “Sure. After five and a half months of practice. It’s not the throwing; it’s the whip, the spin, the slicing blade. Like a boomerang that doesn’t come back. I worked with a plaster statue of a girl and aimed for the neck. It got so I could topple the head off every time. It made me very conscious of necks. Every time I’d meet a pretty girl, I’d say ‘My, you have an attractive neck.’ I really felt terrible about that lovely girl in the film. ‘Can’t I kill an old ugly one?’ I asked the producer. ‘No Oddjob,’ he said.”⁶⁵

Director Guy Hamilton found Sakata to be an “absolutely charming man,” according to Bond biographer Laurent Bouzerau. “He had a very unique way of moving, [so] in creating Oddjob I used all of Harold’s own characteristics.”⁶⁶ However, during the filming of *Goldfinger* in the summer of 1964 Hamilton did not think Sakata’s behind the neck judo chop of Sean Connery looked realistic enough in one of the scenes, noted columnist Eddie Sherman. “When Togo tried it again, he really applied the muscle. Connery didn’t report for work till three days later.”⁶⁷ Given his professional wrestling background as a heel, Sherman claimed that the role of a cold-blooded Korean killer fit Sakata to a T. “For sheer brutality, his performance as Oddjob tops anything he ever attempted in the ring. For a starter, he kills one attractive girl by painting her body with heavy gold paint. Another beauty he calmly dispatches by breaking her neck with his heavy metal-brimmed hat. And in a violent judo encounter with James Bond, he gives Fleming’s indestructible hero the fright of his life.” The most electrifying scene in the movie, however, comes at the end when the seemingly indestructible muscle man is electrocuted while trying to retrieve his steel-rimmed derby from a grill into which Bond has hurled a live wire.⁶⁸

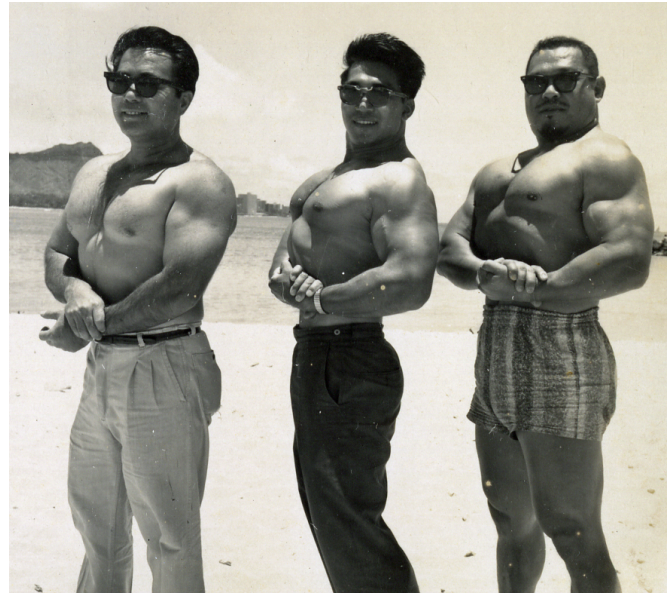
Initially Sakata was worried about whether he was good enough to play the role until Ian Fleming made a rare appearance on the set one day. “He looked at me and told me that I was a better Oddjob than he could have ever imagined. I cannot be more pleased.” Sakata also had great affection for Fleming who died of a heart attack soon thereafter without ever seeing the completed film. “When I was working on *Goldfinger*,” he recalls, “the producer wanted

me clean shaven, but Fleming insisted I keep my mustache because it made me more sinister.”⁶⁹ It was “Oddjob, who makes the strongest impression in *Goldfinger*,” is the view of Bond biographer Steven Jay Rubin. “Sakata’s only dialogue in the entire film is a series of grunts and groans, but one look at his immense, sumo wrestler-like bulk made audiences shudder. In person, he was a kind, gentle man, who was always careful to avoid hurting his acting partners. In the film as a massive, indestructible ‘wicked oriental’, stuffed into ridiculous formal wear and equipped with the razor sharp bowler, Oddjob became the prototypical Bond villain. After *Goldfinger*, the writers were always dreaming up Oddjob types to fight Bond.”⁷⁰

By November 1964, *Goldfinger* was breaking all box-office records in Britain, according to Hamilton. “You are a real knock-out in the film,” he told Sakata, “and a big name in this country.”⁷¹ Soon he and his bowler hat were scheduled for guest appearances at movie premieres in the United States and Asia and tapped for a mean role in a Kraft Suspense Theater production in Hollywood.⁷² In Germany, Sakata became a national hero, according to one press report. “Everywhere I go people ask for my autograph and shake my hand,” he asserted, and he had many movie offers. A sure sign of his newfound celebrity status was the creation of a cocktail called the “OJ-7” in London.⁷³ His likeness stands at the entrance to the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud’s Wax Museum in London, and his spectacular screen death received coverage in

Life magazine, which called it “Shocking, shocking!”⁷⁴ To what extent Sakata’s portrayal of Oddjob contributed to the film’s popularity cannot be determined, but worldwide box office receipts for *Goldfinger* eventually reached \$124,900,000, far in excess of the \$3,000,000 production cost.⁷⁵

Meanwhile Sakata, unsure of his stardom from a movie in which he spoke not a word, continued his wrestling career, albeit with uneven success. He would occasionally lose a bout, but his worldwide fame greatly enhanced crowd appeal and tripled his salary.⁷⁶ It was based on his image of Toshi Togo as being one of the meanest villains in motion pictures and in the wrestling arena. Ironically, it contrasts with the Harold Sakata in real life. Aside from the rigors of movie-making and wrestling tours, he led an easy-going and non-violent lifestyle in lavish homes he owned in Honolulu and Tokyo and sought every oppor-



Harold Sakata loved to hang out with the Olympic lifters of the Nuuanu YMCA when he got a chance to return to Hawaii. Emerick Ishikawa, Tommy Kono, and Sakata participate in a friendly “Best Chest” competition during one of their reunions at the beach. They remained friends to the end.

portunity to reinforce ties with his family on the Big Island.⁷⁷ When home, he continued to conduct his weekly weightlifting lessons at the Nuuanu YMCA and was always available to perform for charity events. In December 1964, he was on the program of the annual Honolulu Christmas Fund Show to wrestle karate expert Fuji Fujiwara at the Honolulu civic center to assist needy families.⁷⁸ When the new Shriners Hospital was constructed in May 1966, he was named director of the physical training program.⁷⁹ In a 1965 interview for *Playboy*, Sean Connery confirms the kindhearted nature of Sakata’s off-screen personality. When asked whether he was as strong as he looked, Connery responded, “tremendously so. He knows karate and judo and wrestling and weight lifting. With it all, though, he is a very sweet man, very gentle.”⁸⁰ Indeed, Sakata described himself as “a gentle man, not a criminal at large. I have a daughter 8 and a son 11 who live here [Honolulu] with my former wife. Kids and women are fascinated by my hat.”⁸¹ He told Gene Hunter that “he’d like to change the image of evil he projects on the screen. ‘I’m marked now as a killer,’ he said. ... But when Sakata assumes the grim, heartless expression of Oddjob and menacingly fingers the steel-brimmed black hat he used to break the neck of that beautiful girl in *Goldfinger*, he doesn’t look like a man destined to be cast as a kindly parish priest.” The hat with which he killed and in turn was killed in the movie “remains his trademark. ‘Wherever I go, I wear that,’ Sakata said. ‘You should see the commotion it causes. It frightens the women, but they still want to touch it.’”⁸² As John Hagner, founder of the Hollywood Stuntmen’s Hall of Fame assures us: “In almost every film there’s that one moment of extraordinary action which is the focal point of the entire movie, a moment seldom forgotten by the public.”⁸³

How difficult it was for Sakata to escape his villainous image was revealed in an interview conducted by Honolulu celebrity columnist Cobey Black. About his latest film, *The Poppy Is Also a Flower*, Sakata complained to Black: “I am a trafficker in opium, and in the picture before that, *Death Travels in a Box*, I am in the box—doing all the nasty killing again. If the public likes the image, I’m not going to fight it, but not long ago I said to my agent, I’m tired of the dirty work. Must I always be a killer? ‘What would you rather do?’ he asked. ‘I’d like to hold beautiful girls in my strong arms very gently,’ I said.”⁸⁴

The harshness of Sakata’s screen personality was ameliorated somewhat by the charitable nature of his film’s release to the public. Sakata was one of 20 stars and featured performers, including Angie Dickinson, Rita Haworth, Yul Brenner, Trevor Howard, Anthony Quinn, and Omar Sharif, who donated their talents to a televised version for the United Nations International Children’s Emergency (UNICEF). It also featured a prologue by Princess Grace of Monaco, and tickets for the Vienna premier attended by European royalty in March 1966 cost \$100. “I’m only a former Kona boy who’s not had too much schooling,” was Sakata’s stunned reaction.⁸⁵ “I met kings, queens, princes, ambassadors—all kinds of dignitaries—during my three weeks in Europe. And Europe’s top mov-

ie stars.”⁸⁶ It was an unforgettable experience. These benefits enabled Sakata to hobnob with the rich and famous on yachts and private homes in the Mediterranean.⁸⁷

Perhaps the most poignant example of Sakata’s considerate nature occurred during the dissolution of his marriage in the early 1960s. According to Gary Sumida, son-in-law of the great weightlifter Tommy Kono:

My Father in Law said that one day Harold had picked him up to go somewhere, though he didn’t say exactly where they were going. After he got into the car, Harold told my father-in-law that he needed to stop at the Papeete Bar at the old Waki-kian Hotel. Harold’s wife was a waitress there, so Tommy didn’t think anything odd about that. However, at some point during the car ride, Harold asked my father if he knew a particular bartender, who worked there. Tommy said ‘Yes, I know the guy.’ At which point Harold told Tommy that before Hal had gone on his last wrestling tour on the mainland, he had asked that bartender to look after his wife while he was gone. Well, turns out that the bartender made the obvious mistake in charming Hal’s wife while he was gone. And now Hal was gonna go talk to that guy. Tommy was now afraid for that bartender’s life. He told me that if Hal went after the guy, he did not think he could stop Hal from hurting the guy...real bad. So, he braced for the worst. When they got there, he said the bartender took a look at Hal’s face and knew that Hal knew what was going on. Hal told the guy he wanted to sit down and talk to him, and the guy knowing that he could not out run Hal obliged. All 3 of them sat at a table. Hal looked the guy in the eye and told him that he was divorcing his wife. He also told him that he had better take care of her well and make her happy, or else. Then he stood up and walked out.⁸⁸

Whether Sakata was ever less than loyal to his wife, though he had ample opportunities, cannot be determined, but his prolonged international trips either for wrestling or movie-making undoubtedly took a toll on the marriage.

THE FRUITS OF FAME

By the mid-1960s Sakata had enjoyed fame in three disparate areas which required him to display his muscular might. Almost every local newspaper reference to him makes mention of his weightlifting heroics of yesteryear. Upon returning home for a rest in January 1966, he headed straight for the Nuuanu YMCA where he was doing lots of weightlifting “to get back in shape,” and said, “I sure miss the sweat and smell of the game.” At the an-



Harold Sakata's wrestling and acting careers put a strain on his family life in the early 1960s. Here he is in happier times with his wife, Lita Ohki, and their children in 1958.

nual state AAU weightlifting championships in July 1966, he offered a trophy to any competitor who could better his 17-year-old total record.⁸⁹ Though much in demand for personal appearances as well as for movie and television acting roles, Sakata continued his wrestling engagements in Hawaii and overseas. "Tosh is big stuff in Europe," noted the *Star-Bulletin*, "with autographers hounding him."⁹⁰ When he purchased a new Mercedes-Benz in 1967, Sakata got red-carpet treatment from the dealer with a custom-made gold-hat on the front of the vehicle.⁹¹ Toy and gimmick manufacturers created replicas of the man with the lethal hat in dolls, puppets, miniatures, and puzzles.⁹² Another signifier of his celebrity status came from him being easily recognizable in public. Once when strolling down a street in Cologne, Germany, he was approached by a young woman who asked if he was the actor who was in *Goldfinger*. Sakata politely doffed his bowler, bowed, and answered affirmatively. Soon he and the young woman, Hilda Deatrech, were engaged and she was working as a hostess at the Pagoda Restaurant in Honolulu and studying hotel management. On another occasion, while he was visiting a Barcelona nightclub, a customer recognized Sakata and insisted on talking to him. It happened to be world-renowned, surrealist artist Salvador Dali, but Sakata had never heard of him.⁹³

While televised appearances of his wrestling matches and guest appearances, such as the one on the premier of the new *Jerry Lewis Show* in September 1967, kept Sakata and his hat before the public eye, there emerged in early 1968 an opportunity to display his strength and villainous behavior.⁹⁴ Al Ricketts' column in the *Star-Bulletin* sheds light on how Sakata embarked on this new phase of fame with Vicks Formula 44 cough medicine. Ricketts

describes how the physical culture values instilled in him as a youth trying to get strong and healthy caused Sakata initially to turn down this lucrative commercial offer. "I refused because it's a cough medicine and I felt that it wasn't for me," explained Sakata. "I'm a healthy man" and "I stay in shape because it's part of my job." However, after thinking it over, he decided to do it. "You've seen the commercials, I'm sure," writes Ricketts.

Old Oddjob comes home from a hard day at the office and breaks up the house with his coughing spells. Tables, chairs, lamps and windows are smashed before his wife finally reaches him with a spoonful of cough medicine.

'You should see the new one coming out this fall,' grins Sakata. 'This time I'm breaking up a whole city block! Impossible but it happens. I don't know where it's going to end. This time I'm coming home on the bus. I step out into a beautiful residential district. I'm smiling.

I'm smiling because the day has been so beautiful. All of a sudden a sneaky cough comes up to me . . . and a fence goes down! Before I know it I slam again and a tree goes down. And when the tree goes down the birds start singing.

All the way to my home the cough is building up. All of a sudden a stone wall goes down. Then my hat falls off and my uncontrollable hand slams down on a fire hydrant. The fire trucks come. By this time I'm home and I'm supposed to knock, but instead of the knock I cough and my hand goes right through the door!⁹⁵

In a sudden appearance on *The Tonight Show*, Sakata walked on the stage as Johnny Carson was introducing the show's lineup and utterly demolished the set with his hands, feet, and hat, leaving the host stunned and able only to utter, "That's a damn nasty cough."⁹⁶ In these televised performances, as in his movie and wrestling roles, Sakata spoke not a word, but used his muscles to convey a more powerful message.

So pleased was the Vicks organization with Sakata's coughing fits that it offered him a three-year contract for eight more episodes, all with a destructive theme.⁹⁷ Although he continued his wrestling engagements in Hawaii and abroad, his agent, Lew Sherrill, was always putting together more picture deals for Sakata. Such was Sakata's popularity that he was invited to a weeklong, all-expense paid, guest appearance at the Warner Brothers studio in Hollywood, along with the likes of Frank Sinatra and other celebrities. "Oddjob is moving up," quipped the *Honolulu*



When Arnold Schwarzenegger visited Hawaii in 1969, he and Paul Graham, a bodybuilding friend from Australia, met with Hawaii's lifting royalty. Seated next to Arnold is Sakata, Paul Graham (leaning forward), Tommy Kono, and Emerick Ishikawa (kneeling). Seated on the floor are Richard Tomita, holding a photo album, and Richard Tom.

Star-Bulletin, "but his black homburg still fits."⁹⁸

Indeed, Sakata was never distracted by the glitter and gold of movie culture or lost sight of his humble origins. Although he traveled the four corners of the world to act and wrestle before audiences of tens of thousands, he sought every opportunity to visit his family on Kona and to renew his weightlifting friendships on Oahu. In May 1968, the latter gained new meaning when Sakata, Emerick Ishikawa, Richard Tom, and Richard Tomita sought to promote a revival of the sport to the golden days of 1948. "Once upon a time," observed columnist Jim Easterwood in the *Star-Bulletin*, "when Tommy Kono was in his prime—weightlifting was a big thing in Honolulu. But now it's slowly withering on the athletic vine," owing in part to Tommy's leaving to coach Olympians in Mexico. University of Hawaii student Pat Omori, ranked sixth nationally as a bantamweight, was the only lifter left with championship potential. What Sakata and Ishikawa planned, with support from Dr. You, was a "get-together" at the Kanraku Tea House for old-time weightlifters and new ones to stimulate interest.⁹⁹ Further, to encourage the kind of camaraderie needed to generate enthusiasm, Sakata hosted a feast at his "palatial pad," featuring

whale meat, squid, and octopus, with abundant beverages for former weightlifting greats along with muscle boosters from other sports. "There's talk of forming a weightlifting association with 'Oddjob' as head," reported the *Star-Bulletin* "with the idea to promote an Olympic weightlifting champ in 1972. 'Munich should be the greatest Olympics yet,' said Sakata, 'and Hawaii will be represented. . . . I'm sure of that.'" Any athletes with championship ambitions were encouraged to call him personally at 949-3682.¹⁰⁰ No Hawaiian weightlifters qualified for the Munich Olympics, and only Omori (1977 and 1979) and John Yamauchi (1972, 1975 and 1976) became national champions over the next decade. However, other future Hawaiian champions, including Brian Miyamoto, Brian Okada, Mike Harada, and Russ Ogata, benefited from the upswing in activity generated during this period by former greats of the game.

For Sakata, this involvement went beyond occasional reunions, social events, and his own regular coaching at the Nuuanu YMCA. It included a strongman performance on Thursday evenings at the international ballroom of the Pagoda Restaurant and Hotel where his fiancé worked.¹⁰¹ According to *Advertiser* columnist Wayne Harada, it took place within a "Tokyo-type revue—col-

orfully costumed, pleasantly paced and musically varied” 2½-hour program that offered “a tasty sampling” of Japan and Okinawa.

But Oddjob steals the show. His appearance is not widely publicized; that’s because he is not firmly committed to the show. If a movie role or a wrestling match takes him away from Honolulu, the teahouse show goes on minus his might.

He quips about his Vicks 44 commercials—‘I dare not cough,’ he muses with tongue firmly in cheeks—as he slips out of his getas (wooden slippers) and kimono to reveal his karate outfit. With his hand, with his foot he splits pieces of wood with remarkable ease. (Yes; he brings his hat, too).

And he also hurls a barbell in mid-air positions. Entertaining? You bet.¹⁰²

Contrary to sports fans who underestimate weightlifting as lacking drama and action, it meant virtually everything in life for Sakata. “Weightlifting has been good to me,” he mused in 1970. It enabled him to gain fame and affluence and to lead varied careers in wrestling, movies, television, and commercials. “It’s been a good life. The struggle and hard work early in life built up my body and

discipline and weightlifting gave me the chance I needed to make something out of life.”¹⁰³

During the 1970s Sakata, as Tosh Togo, became a household name as much for his television appearances and commercials, where he increasingly assumed talking roles, as for his films. Often in these engagements, the killer hat excited as much interest and villainous identity as the man. Sakata’s movie roles post-*Goldfinger* followed a familiar pattern established in his wrestling career of a heavy on the wrong side of morality and justice. In what was billed “the most amazing spy thriller of all time,” Sakata played the role of Big Buddha in *Dimension 5*, where he headed an Asian crime ring that intended to destroy the city of Los Angeles with a hydrogen bomb. The plot is foiled, of course, and Big Buddha dies in the process. But according to reviewer Dave Sindelar,

it comes across as if someone had been told about James Bond style thrillers, and decided to make one of his own without the benefit of having seen any of the originals. Yes, there are pretty girls and suave spies who specialize in witty repartee. However, the story would easily fit into thirty minutes of a real James Bond thriller, the pacing is non-existent, the repartee painful, the music anonymous and without any of the brassy charm of a real James Bond soundtrack. About the only thing that really comes across as Bondian



In this movie still, Harold Sakata, playing Oddjob, prepares to throw his hat and decapitate a statue on Goldfinger’s estate. Sean Connery, who played James Bond, and Gert Frobe, who played Auric Goldfinger, look on.

is the presence of Harold ‘Oddjob’ Sakata as the main villain, and even he’s been dubbed by [voice actor] Paul Frees.¹⁰⁴

A few years later he had another Buddhist role in a Universal Studios pilot for a television series called *Sarge*. At last, Sakata had an opportunity to be a good guy who carried out the muscle work for Academy Award-winning star George Kennedy, who plays a San Diego police detective sergeant who becomes a priest in his former precinct to avenge the hoodlums who murdered his wife. As a friendly cook without his Oddjob attire or attitude of a cold-blooded killer, there is nothing distinctive about Sakata’s role. Although he gets to speak, much of Sakata’s talent is wasted in this softer version of himself.¹⁰⁵ In one episode, however, he has a stronger role. “I smash four guys. When I was going home they try to jump on me.” But it was trivial for Sakata who had been jumped on many times in his wrestling career. “My talent is for action. Since I’m a good guy in this one I don’t hit people first. But when they start hitting me, that’s another story.”¹⁰⁶ Despite favorable public reaction, the series, pitted against CBS’s *Hawaii Five-O* and *The ABC Tuesday Movie of the Week*, was broadcast for just one season from September 1971 to January 1972.¹⁰⁷

A more consequential experience for Sakata was his role as Karate Pete in *Impulse*, a horror film starring William Shatner who plays a serial killer of wealthy widows. But much of the horror stems from Sakata who brought to the screen a character, according to a contemporary account, “so sinister, moviegoers will be talking about him for years to come.” His performance evoked “a sense of terror not felt since Boris Karloff first stalked across the graveyards of England.” Even more intense was the physical abuse Sakata had to endure during the screening. “In *Impulse*, Harold was beaten by the whirling brushes of a car wash, scalded by steaming water, hot-waxed, hung by his neck, battered his hands through tables (not break-away but real tables) and car windows, then run over by an automobile! Not one word of protest nor complaint, instead, Harold was the recipient of many admiring glances at the end of that grueling night as he calmly lit his pipe and walked away, stopping once to look back with a sullen glare . . . which immediately broke into a wide grin.”¹⁰⁸

Quite the most serious and disconcerting aspect of this ordeal was a fight scene with Shatner that simulated a hanging. Only quick action by Shatner, who slipped the rope off his neck, and Sakata’s strong neck muscles gained from years of wrestling saved him from death. Despite these brutal experiences on and off screen, Sakata was regarded by fellow actors and crew as “the most gentle of men. Polite in the tradition of his ancestors, he is a joy to be with. A ready smile under any circumstances, Harold brushed off his close call with death.”¹⁰⁹ For him the making of *Impulse* provided an opportunity to enjoy fishing in the waters off the Florida coast and to savor fresh sashimi daily in Tampa.¹¹⁰

Although Sakata never ceased appealing to audi-

ences, his subsequent movie roles were less impactful. In *The Wrestler*, his characterization of Oddjob is minimized in a swirl of dozens of other stars and or promoters. Gene Siskel gave it two out of four stars in the *Chicago Tribune*, noting that it was as “predictable” as a wrestling match. “All of the material outside the ring seems phony compared to the real phoniness inside the ropes.”¹¹¹ *Mako: The Jaws of Death* (1976) and *The Happy Hooker Goes to Washington* (1977) were two other low-budget films in which Sakata had minor roles. The former, he observed while basking in the sunshine of Puerto Rico during its filming, was strikingly similar to the 1975 blockbuster *Jaws*. “We all get eaten,” he chuckled. “The shark is a superstar—he refuses to die in this movie.”¹¹² In *Goin’ Coconuts* (1978), a frivolous confection designed to showcase the fun-loving personalities of Donnie and Marie Osmond, Sakata appears incongruously as a heavy-handed henchman of a petty crime lord. It was the last of a series of movie roles in which he struggled to reinforce and redefine his identity as an actor. It was only his role as Oddjob that continued to resonate with television audiences in rebroadcasts of *Goldfinger* throughout the 1970s.¹¹³ As the *Star-Bulletin* observed in September 1978, “Togo can’t shake his image as ‘Odd Job,’ the character he played in the Bond movie ‘Goldfinger.’ He just got a call to zip to Haolewood [sic] to play a heavy in an ‘Adventure’ TV movie. ‘Oh, and bring your black suit and the steel-brimmed bowler hat,’ they said.”¹¹⁴

Sakata simply could not escape the kind of fame he had unintentionally brought on himself as he transitioned into the movie culture. He continued to attract much favorable attention, not only by his repeated television appearances, but on those occasions, even in ill-health, when he mingled with the public. Ben Wood reported in May 1981 that Sakata had

recently returned from London where he was photographed for a Range Rover magazine ad in his formal Oddjob attire—morning coat, striped trousers, and deadly, steel-brimmed hat. The ad was shot on the same spot where Oddjob crushed a golf ball with his hand and decapitated a statue with his hat in the film. . . . Sakata stayed at the ritzy Dorchester Hotel and said that when he wore his Oddjob outfit he created “mild excitement” among the hotel’s guests and employees, even though *Goldfinger* was filmed way back in 1964. . . . Sakata took a letter from Mayor Eileen Anderson to the Lord Mayor of London and spent two hours with the lord mayor and other officials in Mansion House. While in the building, Sakata said Queen Elizabeth’s husband Prince Philip, was there on business and he chatted with the prince briefly . . . London has been good to Sakata. Besides the *Goldfinger* film, he placed second in the light-heavyweight



Sakata gave this movie still to Tommy Kono on 24 July 1966. He wrote, "To Tommy Kono, my good friend and the greatest weightlifter. Aloha-Honolulu-Oddjob, 'Tosh Togo.'" Several other lifters signed it as well.

weightlifting class in the 1948 London Olympics and wrestled professionally there in 1960.¹¹⁵

Obviously, Sakata enjoyed the adulation, but he never sought it. It sought him. By the same token, he never regretted his less than stellar roles in B-grade movies. He enjoyed the activity for its own sake, much in the same

way that he appreciated the muscular brutality of professional wrestling and the physical demands of competitive weightlifting.

During the 1970s Sakata's wrestling career was consuming less of his attention and time. By the fall of 1971, at age 51, he had wrestled an estimated 3,000 matches, and an increasing number of his matches were tag-team and the carnival-like battle royal bouts that were

less taxing on the body.¹¹⁶ There were also random acts of fan violence that professional wrestlers had to endure. On one occasion in 1968 at a match in Germany, an irate fan hurled an apple with an embedded nail at Tosh which penetrated his skull. "One inch either way and the doctor said I could have been a goner," he later related to a gathering of weightlifters at the Kanraku Tea House. At this point he started wrestling less and doing more movie and commercial work.¹¹⁷ Tommy Kono witnessed another occasion, according to his son-in-law, while Tosh was wrestling on the mainland.

Hal and another Asian wrestler had a tag team match with a couple of white wrestlers, which Hal and his partner won (by cheating, of course). While waiting for Hal and his partner to return to the dressing room, he [Tommy] stood watching them walk into the tunnel that led to the dressing room. As Hal and his partner reached the tunnel, someone in the crowd (which was booing really loudly at this point) reached over the railing and slashed Hal's partner on the arm with a knife. He decided at that point that wrestling was not for him. Being an Asian Wrestler back in those days meant you were going to be a 'Heel,' and the crowds were never going to cheer for you. In fact, you'd be lucky to get home safe.¹¹⁸

Such random acts of violence were rare for Sakata who never engaged in any fights outside the arena. However, he recalls that he once received a semi-challenge. "This man saw *Goldfinger* and asked if I was really that strong. I asked if he would like to try me. He said NO. Then I said, 'Would you be kind enough to have a drink with me.' He accepted."¹¹⁹ Characteristically, despite his fierce aspect and formidable reputation for strength, Sakata never imposed his will on any potential challengers outside the ring or movie screen.

A HUMANE HEEL

Indeed, much of his extracurricular time was spent in using his celebrity status to promote public welfare and goodwill. It was especially notable when he showed up on 18 July 1972 for the fourth annual Junior Olympics along with 15,000 fans in the stands, Hawaiian Olympic celebrities such as Ford Konno, Bill Smith, and Evelyn Kawamoto Konno, and Mayor Frank Fasi who carried the Olympic torch down the home stretch and opened the festivities. Sakata "got a bigger hand than the Mayor," according to a press report.¹²⁰ He also showed up for the statewide Special Olympics held at Kaiser High School in Oahu in May 1981 where he proudly led the "olympians" from Naalehu School, located on his native island of Hawaii, in the opening night parade.¹²¹ Sakata also visited patients and mentally disabled children at the Leahi Hospital, and inmates at the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility, and the Oahu Com-

munity Correctional Facility.¹²² Perhaps the best example of Sakata's unpremeditated willingness to do good was an incident related by journalist Don Chapman that occurred at a hotel swimming pool in Kaanapoli, Maui. "Until then I had only known him as a fearsome heavy with the lethal black derby in the James Bond movies. But there he was, gently and patiently teaching a couple of young children to swim, holding them up as they flailed away at the water. I shall remember him more for that moment than for all of his films or his silver Olympic medal."¹²³ Indeed, much of Sakata's charitable work centered in Hawaii and his Kona homeland, often during his annual New Year's visit to his mother and other family members in Holualoa. "I never fail to go home, to reminisce, go through my youth again, and I realize I shouldn't become proud," Sakata told one reporter. "I visit my grandmother's and grandfather's and father's graves. I see the old homestead where I was born and the house my mama and father built. I never dreamed from the hills of Kona, I'd be where I am today. ... Now I lift such beautiful barbells, but I tell myself not to forget the broomsticks and mama. It's so easy to forget. I don't want to forget where I'm from."¹²⁴

Nor did Sakata forget how much weightlifting meant to his subsequent success in life. It enabled him to scale the heights of fame as an athletic hero and to transition into a world-renowned villain in the ring and on the screen. Winning the silver medal at the 1948 Olympics was probably the most defining moment of his life. "My proudest moment," he recalled two decades later, "was standing with the winners, receiving my medal."¹²⁵

What made Sakata so appealing was his ability to reconcile the image of one of the meanest villains in the entertainment industry with the reality of a friendly person with a heart of gold. Even his mother seemed incapable of coping with the contrast. When she saw *Goldfinger*, Sakata said, "she was terrified. She didn't talk to me for two months." Tommy Kono had a better understanding of him as "a robust person who had a good philosophy of life. . . . Although he always played villains or bullies in movies, he was very soft-hearted." Nor did Sakata have difficulty separating himself from the characters he played or even rationalizing their behavior. "Oddjob was such a sinister, terrifying character," he believed, "but he was beautiful to me. He was loyal, sincere, would never betray his boss and would give his life if necessary. He was a classical villain."¹²⁶ Much of Sakata's appeal stemmed from his nonchalance to fame and that he never took himself too seriously. The image he projected as a heel generated widespread fan excitement, but it was offset by his humane nature and many acts of kindness and consideration.

Sakata's last major public appearances occurred on 29 March 1982 when he attended the Academy Awards ceremony at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles in full Oddjob regalia where Albert "Cubby" Broccoli, co-producer of *Goldfinger*, was honored with the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award. He even appeared in a musical rendition of "For Your Eyes Only" with fellow Bond actors Sheena Easton and Richard Kiel on the biggest motion picture stage in show business before a live

and televised audience of millions.¹²⁷ It was arguably the most courageous performance of his career, however, as he stood speechless and still before the camera. By this time, he was greatly weakened by the ravages of what was diagnosed a month earlier as liver cancer.¹²⁸ Despite a desperate struggle to beat the disease, his body weakened over the next several months until he was barely able to communicate. Yet he retained his fame to the end. Shortly before his death at 2 A.M. on 29 July at St. Francis Hospital, he was offered \$25,000 to make a television ad for Toyota. He died in the arms of his daughter Glenna who recalled his final moments. “He took one last look at me, took one last breath and died—and with a smile on his face. And there weren’t even any wrinkles on his face, no lines at all. . . . I think it was a reflection on what a beautiful person he was. It was like God blessed him.”¹²⁹ In recognition of how he gained the great strength to excel in four careers, it was appropriate that the pallbearers for his funeral at the Hosoi Garden Mortuary on 3 August 1982 were all weightlifters identified with the Nuuanu YMCA, fellow Olympians Tommy Kono, Pete George, Emerick Ishikawa, Richard Tom, and Richard Tomita.¹³⁰

NOTES

- See Joseph R. Svinth, “Harold Sakata: Olympic Weightlifter and Professional Wrestler,” *InYo: Journal of Alternative Perspectives on the Martial Arts and Sciences* (April 2001), viewed at: https://ejmas.com/jalt/jaltart_svinth_0401.htm; and Joseph R. Svinth, “Harold Sakata,” *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*, edited by Brian Niiya (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum), 355-56.
- “Super Finds Three New Y.M.C.A. Department Heads,” *The Hawaiian Star*, 23 May 1912, and “Y.M.C.A. Plans New Bureau to Help Japanese,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 7 February 1913.
- Svinth, Harold Sakata.”
- Svinth, “Harold Sakata.”
- “Oddjob Continues to Get a Lift Out of Life,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 27 February 1979.
- Svinth, “Harold Sakata.”
- “Weight Lifters Hold Tourney,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 2 October 1941.
- “Harold Sakata Sets New Weight Lifting Record,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 11 July 1942.
- “Weightlifter Here Better World Record by 5 Pounds,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 29 June 1943; and Vic Tanny, “1943 Senior National Championships,” *Strength & Health* 10 (August 1943), 10-11.
- “Weightlifting News,” *Strength & Health* 11 (January 1944), 10-11.
- Svinth, “Harold Sakata, and Abbie Salyers Grubb, “1399th Engineer Construction Battalion,” *Densho Encyclopedia*, viewed at: <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/1399th%20Engineer%20Construction%20Battalion/>.
- “Weightlifting Meet Slated Tomorrow,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 8 September 1945, and “AAU Weightlifting Champions Crowned,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 13 September 1945.
- “First Annual Benefit Dance,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 15 September 1945, and “Harold Sakata is New Mr. Hawaii,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 20 July 1946.
- “Four Records Set in Weight Lift Tourney,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 30 April 1946, and “Harold Sakata Named Standout AAU Weightlifter,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 2 July 1946. During the next nine months, Sakata went on to exceed Kay’s marks with totals of 845 and 855 pounds. Henry Koisumi, “Hal Sakata Sets New Marks in Weightlifting,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 25 March 1947, and “Sakata Wins Awards for Weight Lifts,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 30 March 1947.
- “Sakata Cops Jr. Weight Lifting Title,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 23 June 1947, and “The 1947 Junior National Weightlifting Championships,” *Strength & Health* 15 (September 1947): 47.
- Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 9 July 1947. Bob Hoffman’s report of the

- competition, inaccurately credits Terpak with an 840 total and includes the 835 of Frank Spellman who was disqualified for violation of amateur rules. Bob Hoffman, “The National Championships,” *Strength & Health* 15 (August 1947): 21 and 43-47.
- Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 17 July 1947.
 - Pete George to the author, 24 December 2019.
 - Bob Hoffman, “U.S. Makes Clean Sweep . . . Wins Every Class!” *Strength & Health* 15 (November 1947): 30.
 - Bob Hoffman, “1948 Senior National Championships,” *Strength & Health* 16 (June/July 1948): 27.
 - Bob Hoffman, “The United States Olympic Team,” *Strength & Health* 16 (August 1948): 28.
 - Bob Hoffman, “Olympic Weightlifting—Part II,” *Strength & Health* 16 (November 1948): 33.
 - “Weight Lifters Back From Olympics,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 31 August 1948.
 - Ken Misumi, “Isle Lifters Want to Make Olympics Again,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 31 August 1948.
 - “Harold Sakata Shatters Four Isle Weightlifting Records,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 20 December 1948.
 - David Webster, *The Iron Game, An Illustrated History of Weight-lifting* (Irvine, Scotland: John Geddes, 1976), 76.
 - Walter Christie, Jr., “Harold Sakata, Lillian Chang Win Waikiki Contest Honors,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 19 March 1949. One of the judges for the Miss Waikiki contest was Dr. Richard You who would soon play a significant role in the development of Hawaiian weightlifting.
 - “Hawaiian Team Finishes Second in Lift Tourney,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 23 May 1949, and Bob Hoffman, “Schemansky Wins Heavyweight Class at Nationals,” *Strength & Health* 17 (August 1949): 15 and 34-35.
 - Svinth, “Harold Sakata.”
 - “Harold Sakata Training for Professional Mat Career,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 15 June 1949.
 - Dan McGuire, “Sakata Has Had Expert Guidance,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 28 August 1949.
 - “Sakata Triumphs in Rasslin’ Debut,” *Hilo-Tribune Herald*, 15 August 1949.
 - “Claybourne, Pencheff Grapple to Stalemate,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 29 August 1949.
 - See for instance, the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* for 5, 8, 10, and 19 September and 31 October 1949.
 - “Sakata to Instruct Weightlifting Class,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1 October 1949, “Weightlift Meet Slated at Palama,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 6 February 1950, and “Tom, Yoshioka Weightlifting Duel Forecast,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 17 February 1950.
 - Svinth, “Harold Sakata.”
 - “Hal Sakata to Invade Mainland,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 25 February 1950.
 - “Hal Sakata Doing Well in Pro Mat Game on Coast,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 12 July 1950.
 - Svinth, “Harold Sakata.”
 - Ibid.
 - “Terry McGinnis Pins Travis for Mat Belt,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 21 August 1951.
 - “Karasick, Lipton to Introduce Mat Stars in Tokyo,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1 September 1951.
 - Svinth, “Harold Sakata.”
 - Ibid.
 - Red McQueen, “Kid ‘Em Along,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 4 December 1951.
 - “Simunovich, Masked Grappler Meet Sunday,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 18 March 1952.
 - “Several of World’s Best to Show Friday, Saturday,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 13 March 1952.
 - “Results of the Senior National Weightlifting Championships,” *Strength & Health* 20 (October 1952): 9.
 - Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 9 July 1964. In a 1999 interview for *Rafu Shimpo*, Sakata’s contemporary, Kinji Shibuya, confirms the appeal of this kind of entertainment for wrestlers and fans. “The meaner I acted in the ring, the richer I walked out of it. Playing the bad guy was fun. I would have been a run-of-the-mill wrestler without the dirty stuff. As a villain, I became a champion.” Greg Oliver, “Obituary, Kinji Shibuya,” *Nichi Bei*, 20 May 2010.
 - Svinth notes that the Battle of Tsushima Straits actually occurred in 1905. Svinth, “Harold Sakata.”
 - Svinth, “Harold Sakata.”
 - “Kona Births,” *Hawaii Herald-Tribune*, 23 October 1954, and “Former Kona Boy on Rassling Card,” *Hawaii Herald-Tribune*, 27 December

- 1954.
- “Hal Sakata Matched with Buddy Lenz,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 12 January 1955.
- Goatee and Wrestlers, *Honolulu Advertiser*, 23 February 1959.
- “Tosh Togo to Meet Bockwinkel Here,” *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 1 July 1962.
- “15,000 Persons Attend Kona Lions District Fair,” *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 7 July 1962.
- “Help in the Clinch,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 25 September 1962, and *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 18 November 1962.
- Svinth, “Harold Sakata.”
- A cinematic context for *Goldfinger* is provided by Laurent Bouzerau, *The Art of Bond* (London: Macmillan, 2006) and Steven Jay Rubin, *The James Bond Films, A Behind the Scenes History* (Westport, CT: Arlington House Publishers, 1981).
- Ian Fleming, *Goldfinger* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 91-93.
- Ibid.
- Ibid.
- “Wrestler Tosh Togo Turns Movie Actor,” *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 9 July 1964.
- “Who’s News with Cobey Black,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 23 December 1965.
- Ibid.
- Bouzerau, *The Art of Bond*, 165.
- “Notes to You,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 7 August 1964.
- This scene was almost too realistic, as explained by journalist Gene Hunter. “They had to shoot Oddjob’s death scene twice—once from a distance and once as a close-up. Technicians used fireworks to simulate the sparks shooting out from the electric fence, but something went wrong. Sakata got a painful burn on his right hand and wrist. For the second scene he was offered an asbestos glove but refused to wear it. The second time one of the sparks shot into the seat of Oddjob’s pants. ‘I showed agony in my face as I was dying,’ Sakata said. “‘That was real pain.’” Gene Hunter, “Screen’s Evil ‘Oddjob’ Wants to be a Good Guy,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 22 December 1965.
- Ben Wood, “There’s Hope for Other 98-Pound Weaklings,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 27 November 1969. “Harold, I don’t know if I wrote this book with you in mind or if you walked into the pages” is how journalist Cobey Black characterizes Fleming’s encounter with Sakata. “Who’s News with Cobey Black,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 23 December 1965, and “Dashing Along,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 14 August 1964.
- Rubin, *The James Bond Films*, 43.
- “Critics Like Sakata’s Job,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 25 November 1964.
- Ray Maneki, “Island Wrestler Stars in Latest James Bond Film,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 12 November 1964, and Eddie Sherman, “Mynah Matters,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 8 January 1965.
- “Communiques,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 9 June 1965, and Eddie Sherman, “Merry-Go-Round,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 5 February 1965.
- “Who’s News with Cobey Black,” and “Agent 007 Takes On a Solid-Gold Cad,” *Life*, 6 (November 1964): 118.
- “Goldfinger (1964),” *The Numbers, Where Data and the Movie Business Meet*, <https://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Goldfinger#more>.
- Eddie Sherman, “Merry-Go-Round,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 5 February 1965.
- “Wrestler Tosh Togo.”
- “Togo in Christmas Fund Mat Show,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 8 December 1964.
- Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 2 May 1966.
- “Sean Connery: A Candid Conversation with James Bond’s Acerbic Alter Ego,” *Playboy* (November 1965).
- “Who’s News with Cobey Black.”
- Hunter, “Screen’s Evil ‘Oddjob’.”
- John Hagner, “The Hollywood Stuntmen’s Hall of Fame,” Starr Talk with Sonny Starr, stuntstarstudios.com, Northwest Productions. DVD in possession of the author.
- “Who’s News with Cobey Black.”
- “Sakata to attend Vienna Premier,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 3 May 1966. See also, “The Poppy Is Also a Flower,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 24 April 1966.
- “Sakata Has Role in Movie,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 21 May 1966, Sakata also met Queen Juliana and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands at the Amsterdam premier of “Poppy.” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 16 August 1966.
- “Tropical Salad,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 13 May 1966.
- Sumida to the author, 15 January 2017.
- “Oddjob Sakata Home, Plans Mat Comeback,” *Honolulu Star-Bul-*

Summer 2021

- letin*, 29 January 1966, and “Weightlifting at ‘Y’ Saturday,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 7 July 1966.
- See “Four-Show Mat Series Starts Saturday Night,” *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 1 July 1966, and *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 31 July 1966.
 - “‘Oddjob’ Throws His Hat in the Ring for Mercedes-Benz,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 7 May 1967. Similarly, strongman Paul Anderson mounted a weightlifter figurine on the hood of the Cadillac he used to travel across the country giving exhibitions.
 - “Dolls with Derbies,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 26 May 1967.
 - “Hulapaluzas,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 31 October 1969, and “Ah, Fame,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 21 July 1967.
 - Honolulu Advertiser*, 3 September 1967.
 - Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 5 September 1968. See also “1967 Vick’s Cough Syrup Commercial Oddjob” at: <https://youtu.be/bXRzZzcGPfH>.
 - See “Harold Oddjob Sakata on the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson,” at: <https://youtu.be/kslCu2Y0thk>.
 - Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 2 April 1970.
 - “Short Takes,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 13 February 1969.
 - Jim Easterwood, “Want a Lift?” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 9 May 1968.
 - “A Whale of a Blast,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 26 December 1968.
 - At their gathering at the Kanraku Teahouse on 3 July 1970, the weightlifters were joined by local bodybuilders and strength and fitness instructors as well as the legendary Mr. America/Mr. Universe John Grimek, his wife Angela, and son John, Jr. “Lift Stars Slate Second Reunion,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 17 June 1970. In his report of this festive occasion, Grimek remarked that his son was most intrigued by Sakata. “Oddjob may not have known it but he made for himself an admirer in L’il John for life that night.” John C. Grimek, “Touring Through Gymorama,” *Muscular Development*, 7 (November 1970): 53.
 - Wayne Harada, “Oddjob Steals the Tea Scene,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 5 March 1970.
 - Andrew Mitsukado, “Odd-Job Leads the Good Life,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 5 July 1970.
 - “Dave Sindelar’s Movie of the Day Archives,” *Dimension 5* (1966), Article #1501 (21 September 2005), viewed at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20150430054316/http://www.scifilm.org/musing1501.html>.
 - “Prayer for Sarge,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 12 September 1971.
 - Ben Wood, “Sakata Finds His Talent Is Action,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 20 October 1971.
 - “Sarge (TV Series),” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarge_\(TV_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarge_(TV_series)).
 - “‘Impulse’ Co-Star Will Be Here Wednesday,” *Kingsport Daily News*, 30 July 1974.
 - Ibid.
 - Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 1 July 1973.
 - Gene Siskel, “Pinning the Wrestler,” *Chicago Tribune*, 7 August 1974.
 - Jim Easterwood, “YBA for Hawaii, Too,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 15 January 1976.
 - See for instance, notification of its widespread broadcast in the islands and on the mainland in the *Honolulu Advertiser*, 5 May 1974.
 - Honolulu Advertiser*, 27 September 1978.
 - “Ben Wood’s Hawaii,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 17 May 1981.
 - Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 17 October 1971, and Dalton Tanonaka, “Full, Howling House for Wrestling’s Return,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 23 June 1977.
 - “Not the Apple of his Eye,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 6 June 1968.
 - Gary Sumida to the author, 15 January 2017.
 - Ben Wood, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 4 November 1972.
 - “900 Vie in Jr. Olympics,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 19 July 1972.
 - “Rychener,” *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 4 June 1981.
 - “Harold—Oddjob—Dies at 62,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 30 July 1982.
 - “Don Chapman,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 2 August 1982.
 - “Oddjob Continues To Get a Lift Out of Life,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, 27 February 1979.
 - Ben Wood, “There’s Hope for Other 98-Pound Weaklings,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 27 November 1969.
 - “Harold—Oddjob—Dies at 62,” and “Oddjob Continues To Get a Lift Out of Life.”
 - Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 28 March 1982; “54th Academy Awards,” viewed at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/54th_Academy_Awards and, “For Your Eyes Only,” <https://youtu.be/8hHjRi12uZk>.
 - Although there was no speculation in the press about possible cirrhosis of the liver from alcohol consumption, one of Sakata’s favorite pastimes, in addition to fishing and cooking, was drinking, sometimes excessively, with his friends.
 - Honolulu Advertiser*, 13 August 1982.
 - Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 6 August 1982.

MABEL RADER: A CHAMPION FOR WOMEN'S LIFTING

by Kim Beckwith
The University of Texas at Austin

On 30 April 1988 United States' Weightlifting Federation (USWF) President, Murray Levin, called 70-year old Mabel Rader to the front of the room. They were in the middle of the first USWF National Weightlifting Championships in which the men and women competed together. Levin held in his hands a plaque that represented the creation of a new annual award to be given to "an outstanding contributor to women's weightlifting." Mabel was the first winner of the award, which is only fitting since it was named the Mabel Rader Achievement Award.¹ No honor was ever more justly deserved.

Although men's weightlifting was contested at the 1896 Olympic Games, women's lifting was fighting the good fight for the same recognition well into the last decades of the twentieth century. Mabel was a pioneer in this battle for acceptance and agency for women on the lifting platform. Although, she was never a competitive lifter herself, Mabel used many of her other talents and qualities to engage in the push for equality. A large part of Mabel's success was the family business—*Iron Man* magazine. This essay examines Mabel Rader's contributions to the world of lifting, with a special focus on the role she played in the struggle to admit women to Olympic Weightlifting. This is the first scholarly treatment of her life and the enormous contributions she made to women's sport. It is long overdue.

THE NEBRASKA FARM GIRL

Mabel's parents, Jerry F. Kirchner and Mamie L. Kirchner, were farmers. They were some of the "Kincaiders" who used the Kincaid Act of 1904 to farm in the rural Sandhills of Nebraska.² According to the 1920 census, the family arrived in Nebraska by 1914 after briefly living in Kansas and a longer stint in Oklahoma. Mabel Lovera Kirchner was born on the family homestead in the Nebraska sandhills in June 1917, the youngest of nine siblings.³ The family lived in a sod house with a dirt floor. Her moth-



Mabel Rader used her organizational skills, and unstinting dedication to the principle of equality to fight for women lifters to be welcomed on the platform.

er, Mamie, died when Mabel was seven years old and her father, Jerry, was not able to keep the family together. Due to the lack of a centralized family, Mabel moved often and lived with a different family nearly every year. However, Mabel was expected to attend school. During her grade-school days, she walked or rode a horse to the various one-house, country grade schools in and around Mullin, Nebraska. By the time she was to start high school, she had followed several of her older brothers and sisters to Alliance, Nebraska. She worked for her room and board with the families with whom she resided by performing housekeeping chores and nanny duties for each family. "I would get up and help for a while, go to school, and then come back home when school was out and do some more work," Mabel remembered, "That was my life."⁴ Mabel met her future husband while in high school.

Born in Peru, Nebraska, in October 1909, Peary Rader found the Iron Game when his father bought him a Farmer Burns wrestling course at age 12. This "stimulated a very intense desire for physical development" which became his "major ambition in life." Because of this early interest in building his body, he continued to study anatomy and physiology. Not happy with his 5'11" 128-pound frame, Peary tried many of the early lifting programs that were popular, including Earle Liederman's bodybuilding course. Although he initially met with little success, he eventually learned the value of heavy squats and became the local heavy-weight champion on the competitive lifting platform. This success led him to open his own gym so others could benefit from his knowledge.⁵

Eight years Mabel's senior, Peary quit after only two years of high school to help with the family finances. He went to work at the Emerson Street School where his father also worked as a janitor and maintenance worker, which was also Peary's first job. One of Mabel's older brothers went to school with Peary and he introduced them at Alliance Christian Church in 1935. They hit it off and married in 1936, a year after Mabel graduated high school.⁶ That same year, Peary pulled a broken hecktograph[sic] pan (a primitive ditto-like machine) from the trash bin of the school where he worked. He fixed it

and printed a badly typed pamphlet that he titled *Super Physique*; it had a drawing of John Grimek on the cover. Starting with the second issue, however, he called it *Iron Man* and the Raders ran it for the next fifty years. Isolated in western Nebraska, Peary wanted to keep in touch with fellow Iron Gamers and to spread his knowledge and passion for lifting, therefore he began *Iron Man* magazine. It became known as the most trusted magazine in the Iron Game and both Raders shared equally in its production.

THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Although the middle of the Great Depression was not a good time to start a business, they managed to make it work. A tireless worker, Peary indicated on the 1940 census that he had worked eighty-four hours in the week prior to the census documents arriving at his door. Those hours probably didn't include any of the time he devoted to the new magazine since he only indicated his custodial job at which he made \$900/year (slightly below national average for rural males.)⁷ During his free time, he wrote articles to help his friends become better lifters and develop better physiques. To "scratch that itch" that often occurs when someone is bitten by the lifting bug, Peary often traveled to competitions in order to lift, to officiate, or to take notes so that he could comment on the event in his growing publication.

By 1940 the Raders also had two small boys to care for—Jack and Gene—and so Mabel's ability to travel to meets with Peary was curtailed for a time. However, she helped in the office—managing the books, handling subscription orders, and shipping books and products to their customers. Unlike Peary's interests in physique development and competitive lifting, Mabel had grown up working for her room and board with no time for extra-curricular activities.⁸ She had learned to be a responsible and hard-working young woman early in life due to her constantly being shifted from family to family. Therefore, when she first saw Peary lifting she believed "it was the dumbest thing I ever saw in my life."⁹ But, Mabel understood that Peary loved everything about lifting. When interviewed in 2004 for her induction into the USA Powerlifting's Hall of Fame she commented, "I couldn't get him to quit, so if you can't change 'em, join 'em. I didn't just stand by, I got involved. It was our life!"¹⁰

In a 2015 interview when asked how she became involved in traveling and working alongside Peary, the 97-year-old Mabel responded rather energetically, "Oh, that is easy. I just told him." Even though the traditional

gender roles of the era, combined with the fact that lifting weights was not a socially-approved activity for women, dictated that the normal state of affairs would be for Peary to leave Mabel at home with the boys while he went on these trips, the boys must have been a bit demanding during Peary's absence, because Mabel ended up telling Peary, "If you're going to these [events], then I'm going too."¹¹ She exercised some unusual feminine forwardness and just decided that she would go with him; occasionally the kids traveled with them, but most of the time they stayed with their grandmother Rader.¹² That simple decision—to travel with her husband to these various activities—would have a great impact on future women who expressed interest in various strength sports. Mabel enjoyed traveling with Peary to places as far as Hawaii and Rome or as near as staying within the state boundaries to help in any way she could with the various lifting sports that were becoming popular in the United States, and around the world, during the mid-to-late twentieth century.¹³



Although the weights "didn't cotton" with her, Mabel helped Peary with everything he did, even if that meant being the resistance for a strength exhibit at a local school.

MABEL AND THE WEIGHTS

How much she actually lifted herself is a bit vague. Peary said she "trains with weights and loves to run" in a 1969 biographical letter; Mabel herself admitted that she trained "very little"—the weights just "didn't cotton with me."¹⁴ Therefore, even though she didn't compete herself—not that there was any real opportunity for women to do so early in the century—she kept score, judged, compiled paperwork associated with the running of a meet, and took photographs to use in the magazine.

According to Peary, she took photos at all the major contests they attended, which was why he pleaded with C. Robert "Bob" Paul, the United States Olympic Committee's Press Chief, for credentials for Mabel to assist him at the weightlifting event at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. Peary indicated that she would "take between 400 and 500 photos of the lifting" and he would do the write-ups.¹⁵ A similar request was made for "M.L. Rader" to attend the 1976 Montreal Games, but apparently they were both denied—not by Bob Paul, but by the event organizing committees—since she only went to the earlier 1960 Rome Olympic Games.¹⁶ That Peary went to such lengths to take Mabel with him is testament to how important she was in his life and work. Peary admitted to a writer for *Strength & Health* magazine that Mabel was "the finest wife a man could have" and that "I could not have done the things I have without her help."¹⁷

An important "first" for women was that Mabel

obtained her Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) referee's certification for weightlifting. In fact, Peary told Bill Starr in 1969 that Mabel was the first woman ever to obtain a National Referees card.¹⁸ This was no mean feat because the AAU required anyone taking the referee exam to have at least five years of experience with the sport in order to be eligible to take the exam. All her years of helping Peary with the sport allowed Mabel to get her referee's certification. However, she did not stop with weightlifting. Physique contests, or what modern day scholars would call bodybuilding shows, often followed the weightlifting events, so many of the same judges would be used for these competitions as well. Therefore, Mabel obtained her referee's card for the sport of bodybuilding. She must have been a competent judge because in September 1973 Mabel wrote in her Weightlifting Committee Report that she had been "asked to be one of the seven judges for the Mr. America contest" that year. That was quite an honor and as far as Mabel knew, it was "the first time a lady has been asked to serve in this capacity."¹⁹ In the 1960s, the sport of powerlifting started to gain popular traction with the strength athletes; therefore, Mabel became certified for that sport as well, making her the first female to simultaneously hold an active national referee's card in the three sports.²⁰

Because of their involvement at so many meets, and their witnessing of many bad and controversial calls, both Peary and Mabel held refereeing in high regard. At a 1967 National AAU Weightlifting Committee meeting, Peary advocated for a referee's clinic to be held before all weightlifting meets that would cover "knowledge required of competent officials." Furthermore, as a sign of the intermingling of the three lifting sports at the time, he believed that "balanced referees should not only be able, but be willing to officiate powerlifting and physique competitions," and not just weightlifting events.²¹ A few years later in 1969 Peary speculated, "Officiating would be much better if we had more women officiating. They see things that most men don't and are fair and impartial. They are unafraid to call lifts as they see them."²² Mabel was a "balanced referee"—to use Peary's words—and she officiated events in all three sports for many years. In fact, Chris Dickerson, the 1982 Mr. Olympia winner, remembered both Peary and Mabel sitting in the judges' chairs during many of his contests in the 1970s.²³ When Mabel began pushing women to become competitors, one of the first things she advocated was for women to become referees. However, it was hard because of the five-year rule; most women involved in the sport had been so for much



US Weightlifting Federation's President Murray Levin presents Mabel Rader the newly created Mabel Rader Achievement Award at the 1988 Women's National Championships. Excitedly looking on is Judy Glenney, the person who took over the Women's Committee Chair responsibilities and a pioneer in her own right. Photo by Bruce Klemens

less than five years and therefore were not eligible for the exam. Mabel pushed for changes in this rule, and eventually (many years down the road), adjustments were made to the rulebooks to reduce this lead-time, but it was a barrier for many of the earliest female lifters.

Participating in such a male-dominated field, not as a competitor, but as a female official, unfortunately meant that Mabel had to develop a thick skin. Many of the men did not view her very kindly when she accompanied Peary to the meets, much less welcome her in a position of power. "They didn't accept me around very much," Mabel remembered, "for a long time."²⁴ Being a gender-barrier bender, if not breaker, was "very difficult for me, but I stuck. I just ignored it—the feeling against me . . . some of them [the lifters] were rather rude to me. But I just hung in there."²⁵ Mabel would not be swayed. She stuck it out, and ultimately, most men in the field acknowledged her because of the fairness, the hard work, and the dedication she poured into the sport.

In 1969 Mabel became the Mid-Western Region AAU Weightlifting Chair, taking over from Peary when he was forced to step down due to AAU term-of-office rules. Peary claimed that "she was doing most of the work as Secretary of the Committee she might as well have the title too . . . She is doing a much better job than I did." He believed that this was another first for women in weightlifting leadership positions.²⁶ As the Mid-Western Region Chair, she kept the lifters of the region up-to-date on the goings-on of the lifting world through the pages of *Iron Man* and the *Mid-Western AAU Weightlifting Newsletter*. She kept up with memberships, meet announcements and results, mailing referee exams when requested by her Region's state chair-persons, and giving referee clinics and exams at competitions as necessary. She held this position until at least 1976 because she wrote in the self-published January 1976 *Mid-Western AAU Weightlifting Newsletter* that Bill Clark in Missouri would be holding the first meet "for the ladies in both power and Olympic on February 14."²⁷

In 1977, the AAU announced that it was sanctioning the first official powerlifting contest open only to women lifters. Called the All American Women's Open, the contest was held in Nashua, New Hampshire, on 17 April 1977. AAU Powerlifting chair, Joe Zarella, ran the contest and held a meeting afterwards so women lifters could consider how to move forward. Jan Todd, then living in Canada, had been pushing for a women's committee to be formed, and so at the meeting they held elections to form the first Women's Committee. Cindy Reinhardt

was named as the first chairperson, with Mabel Rader and several other women lifters elected as members.²⁸ In his post-meet report, Terry Todd claimed that this meet would be considered "the official birth of women's competitive lifting—power or Olympic."²⁹ Although women lifters like Ivy Russell in England in the 1930s, Jean Ansorge in Michigan, and Abbye "Pudgy" Stockton in California in the 1940s either competed themselves or held lifting meets for women, the idea that women could actually lift and compete in weightlifting never really caught on.³⁰ The 1977 "All Girls" Meet, as the *Muscular Development* writer called it, and its 27 lifters, however, represented a solid start to what has become the most popular strength sport for women. One indicator of just how popular it has become, is the fact that in 2019 more than 350 women competed at the collegiate national championships.

Mabel continued to support women's powerlifting by serving on various AAU, United States Powerlifting Federation (USPF), and American Drug Free Powerlifting Association (ADFPA) committees. When Jan Todd was elected Women's Committee Chair after Cindy Reinhardt left in 1979, Mabel was on the Women's Executive Committee. The issue that forever changed the face of the sport of powerlifting pertained to drug-testing and it was fought most vehemently in the women's ranks with Todd at the forefront.³¹ Jan pushed for drug-tested competitions and Mabel was her solid supporter. Mabel and Peary had written about the apparent increase in the use of drugs in their magazine during the 1960s and 1970s and it was easy to see they were against them. When the powerlifting organization split into two in 1981 over drug-testing ideals—the United States Powerlifting Federation (USPF) that replaced the AAU in 1978 (against testing) and a new federation, The American Drug Free Powerlifting Federation that mandated drug testing in all meets, Mabel and Peary moved their affiliation to the new group. Mabel and Peary stayed with the drug-free faction.³² Mabel added to her referee duties and became an official drug-testing referee. Looking back in 2004, Mabel thought it "was going a little overboard having to watch them in the bathroom," but she also understood that "not everybody had a conscience."³³ Some lifters would do anything to win.

THE FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S WEIGHTLIFTING

However, this wasn't the only thing she was involved in during these exciting, but turbulent years. Because of her constant advocacy for women's lifting Murray Levin, president of the USWF, appointed Mabel as the first chairwoman of the Weightlifting Federation's Women's Committee in 1980. Now she was in charge, not just



Mabel Rader, as we go to press, is 104 years old. This picture is from her 100th birthday party in 2017. Family and friends gathered in Alliance, Nebraska to celebrate: L-R, Mabel, son Gene Rader, Janice (Gene's wife), son Jack Rader, and Terry Todd.

in a supporting role. She immediately got to work calling and writing people that she thought could help women's lifting. Because of their forty-plus years of publishing *Iron Man*, she had contacts among lifters, officials, and sponsors. She arranged to have information printed in *Iron Man* and other similar publications. She also contacted the male weightlifters and coaches who had wives or girlfriends lifting. These men responded and began recruiting other women. Like the women of powerlifting had done a few years earlier, Mabel almost immediately petitioned the USWF Executive Committee for permission to hold a women's national competition. However, unlike the relatively new sport of powerlifting, the established Weightlifting Federation had rules that indicated lifters must be male and had a much more historical and ingrained resistance to women lifting weights. This prompted a heated discussion about the proposition at the Board's 1980 annual meeting in Colorado Springs.³⁴ Many men were opposed to the idea of women lifting and they voted against the women's national competition; however, an equal number of men saw no reason to hold them back. Murray Levin eventually broke the 5-5 tie in favor of the women. Mabel excitedly sent letters to her readers:

Good News! A date and place are now firm for the Women's National Weightlifting Championship!! They will be held in Waterloo, IA on May 23rd [1981]. Joe Widdel will be the Meet Director. . . . I'm getting this information to you now so there will be time to schedule training for best results. There has been a lot of interest shown concerning this first Nationals and we are hoping for a good turnout. There have been reports of possible two or three teams entered. That would be just great!!³⁵

As part of her foundation-building process, Mabel began the *Women's Weightlifting Newsletter*. In the

Newsletter she drummed up excitement such as the above announcement for and from the women. She posted meet information, published meet write-ups, and alerted women to issues that concerned them, for example the progress of designing new lifting attire for women and new weight-in policies. She highlighted women, such as Mary Beth Cervenak who lifted against men and won, or Rachel Silverman's setting of records in California.³⁶ Athletes' Representative Judy Glenney submitted training hints for the women, including titles such as, "A Little Help for a Weak Jerk," "Get on the Stick with your Pull!" or "Try a Little Bodybuilding."³⁷ Mabel also posted notices in women-friendly publications like Bill Clark's *Missouri Valley AAU Weightlifting Newsletter* and Michelle Greenspan's *Powerful Times*.³⁸ Levin thought of Mabel and Judy Glenney, as the "anchor in getting the [women's] program off the ground" because of their early efforts to get women involved.³⁹

In 1983, after two successful national competitions and a growing populace of women lifters, Mabel reached out to Tamas Ajan, the General Secretary for the International Weightlifting Federation. She informed him, "The sport [weightlifting] is growing very fast here in the States and it seems to be quite popular. I'm wondering what your thoughts are concerning getting Women's Olympic Weightlifting started in other countries . . . I have heard from Mr. Danesi in Italy saying he is interested in getting it started in Italy. I know Canada has some women lifters who are competing."⁴⁰ Ajan replied, "As you know, according to the present Constitution of the IWF, weightlifting is only for men, therefore up to now we have not dealt officially with women's weightlifting. However, life goes on and a demand of this kind has been arising all over the world." He further commented that he had "raised this subject before the IWF Executive Board two years ago already, but that time my colleagues thought it was too early to speak about it." He intended to bring it up again at the Board's next meeting in Erevan, USSR, on 18 October 1983 and invited Mabel to come and participate in the meeting.⁴¹

However, Mabel never got the chance to respond to his request from her position as Chair of the National Women's Weightlifting Committee since she was replaced by Judy Glenney. Ajan sent Rader another letter in September 1983 requesting her to come to the meeting, but Mabel responded by saying she was no longer the Chair and, although she would have liked to come, "felt what I wrote would no longer carry much weight." Ever the champion of women's lifting she implored Ajan that "with all the material I have sent you concerning the Women's Weightlifting in the United States, you will be able to make a fine presentation for us. We are depending on you!!"⁴²

The process by which Mabel was replaced by Judy Glenney as Chair of the women's committee is unclear. Judy remembers Murray Levin just out-right telling her that she would be the new Chair and she thought that maybe he had decided that the women's program was not moving fast enough.⁴³ Murray remembers that an election occurred because the other women lifters wanted someone younger than the 66-year-old Mabel and an actual lifter to lead them.⁴⁴ Maybe the women's eyes had been opened to the possibilities that lay before them and they had the proverbial bit of independence between their teeth and



Mabel Rader was the first woman to hold referee cards for the three major strength sports: powerlifting, weightlifting and bodybuilding. The fact that she did so without ever lifting on a platform herself is remarkable.

they were running with it. By whichever means the transition occurred, Mabel was hurt even though she put on a stoic face in her last *Newsletter*. "Since this is the third year of the Women's Organization," she wrote, "the National Chairman of the Weightlifting Committee, Murray Levin, felt there should be an election of officers. He had previously appointed the Women's National Chairman. The election resulted in Judy Glenney."⁴⁵

According to Judy Glenney, the leadership change resulted in a "falling out" between the two women. Mabel took it "very hard. I tried to make it the best as I could, but it was not easy on her after being in that position and then having it taken away from you." Sadened about the situation because she held nothing but the utmost respect for Mabel for all her contributions to both weightlifting and powerlifting, Judy "couldn't pacify Mabel in any way; it was just hurtful to her. I held out

an olive branch on a couple of occasions, but [the situation] wounded her pretty deep."⁴⁶ Mabel may have held it against Judy, but she felt more betrayed by Levin, and many years later said she believed that she was merely a "scape-goat" for the men who didn't think she would have much impact in developing a women's program.⁴⁷ If so, how wrong those men were.

The IWF Executive Board decided in 1983 to eliminate the "for men only" clause and began "to control women's weightlifting on the national level." However, they were more cautious about world level competitions and wanted "at least 12-15 countries guaranteed."⁴⁸ Once again, Mabel supported the women by expressing her concern to Ajan about expecting high numbers at the outset. She believed that if you offered them the chance, the women would come and participate.⁴⁹ In the end, she was correct. Women competed internationally for the first time at the 1986 Pannonia Cup in Budapest, Hungary. The first Women's World Championships occurred in Daytona Beach, Florida, in 1987. Eventually, the women accomplished their ultimate goal—recognition by the International Olympic Committee and entrance into the 2000 Olympic Games—more than one hundred years after the men.

Age forced the Raders to slow down in the mid-to-late 1980s and they sold *Iron Man* to John Balik in August of 1986. Peary passed away in 1991 and Mabel hasn't been involved in the Iron Game since. In 2017, Mabel celebrated her 100th birthday with over one hundred attendees present. Most, however, did not know of her experiences within the lifting world. Terry and Jan Todd attended and commented that, other than themselves, there seemed to be only one other person that knew Mabel from her work at meets in the past.⁵⁰ Jan Todd gave a speech that shared some of Mabel's past to the many great-, great-greats-, and great-great-great nieces and nephews that came to honor their matriarch. While the information may have been new to the family, her legacy is firmly in place in the annals of women's lifting. Her tireless energy, her forward thinking, and her ability to use the contacts and pages of *Iron Man* magazine to promote and advertise lifting for women gave Mabel a unique and immensely influential position. She attracted, encouraged, and sometimes cajoled women to be strong in more ways than simply lifting a barbell, and even though Mabel never competed herself, she should be remembered as a pioneer for working as an administrator in the world of men's lifting; for being the first woman to be a referee in all three sports; and, most importantly, for being one of the first feminist voices to speak out and fight for women's right to lift weights and be strong. Her quiet, matronly demeanor was a powerful weapon that swayed many male officials to say "yes" to women's lifting. All women lifters are in her debt.

NOTES

1. Bruce Klemens, "The USWF Nationals," *Iron Man* 47, no. 10 (October 1988): 79; "USWF Establishes Awards," *Weightlifting USA* 6, no. 3 (1988): 2.
2. For more information about the Kincaid Act and the Nebraska Sandhills, see: Arthur R. Reynolds, "The Kincaid Act and Its Effects on Western Nebraska," *Agricultural History* 23, no. 1 (January 1949): 20-9. Accessed at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3739379>. Mabel mentioned living for a brief time with the family of an older sister that lived in the Sandhills, Mabel Rader telephone interview with Jan Todd and Kim Beckwith, 16 May 2015.
3. According to the 1920 census only seven children still lived at home. 1920 United States Census, Cherry County, Enlow, Nebraska.
4. Mabel Rader interview.
5. Peary Rader letter to Bill Starr, 21 Jan 1969, *Iron Man*-Rader Collection, 2011 - Box 12 Files - Rader Biography folder, Stark Center. Hereafter, this collection will be referred to as IM-RC.
6. Mabel Rader interview.
7. 1940 United States Census.
8. Mabel Rader interview.
9. Michelle James, "Pioneer of Women's Powerlifting—Mabel Rader," USAPL Women's Hall of Fame 2004, viewed at: <http://www.usapowerlifting.com/womens-hall-of-fame/mabel-rader/>.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Mabel Rader interview. For information about social acceptance of lifting and traditional gender roles, see: Jan Todd, *The Origins of Weight Training for Female Athletes in North America*, *Iron Game History* 2, no. 2 (April 1992): 4-14.
12. Mabel Rader interview.
13. Terry Todd, "Expansion of Resistance Training in US Higher Education through the mid-1960s," *Iron Game History* 3, no. 4 (August 1994): 11-16.
14. P. Rader letter to Bill Starr; and Mabel Rader interview.
15. For more information on C. Robert Paul see, "Remembering Bob Paul," <http://www.teamusa.org/News/2011/January/18/Remembering-Bob-Paul>; and "Remembering Bob Paul & His Olympic Legacy," *CoSIDA Digest*, February 2011: 14-5. Peary Rader letter to C. Robert Paul, 8 Dec 1971. IM-RC, Correspondence Files - Peary Rader folder.
16. Peary letter to C.O.J.O. '76, Bureau d'accreditation-press, 1 July 1976, IM-RC, Peary Rader and Olympic Correspondence Folder; Mabel Rader interview.
17. P. Rader letter to Bill Starr.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Mabel Rader, "Weightlifting Committee Report," 9 Sept 1973. IM-RC, Correspondence Files - Mabel Rader folder.
20. Mabel actually counted men's and women's powerlifting as two different sports and therefore believed she had referee status in four sports, Mabel Rader interview; James, "Pioneer of Women's Powerlifting."
21. Ralph Countryman, "Meetings of the National AAU Weightlifting Committee," *Iron Man Lifting News* 14, no. 1 (September 1967): 15.
22. P. Rader letter to Bill Starr.
23. Chris Dickerson conversation with Terry and Jan Todd and the author, 26 May 2015, Fort Lauderdale, FL.
24. Mabel Rader interview.
25. *Ibid.*
26. P. Rader letter to Bill Starr.
27. Mabel Rader, *Mid-Western AAU Weightlifting Newsletter*, 28 January 1976: 1. Todd Collection, Powerlifting Files, From Mabel Rader-Women Folder, Stark Center.
28. For Women's Committee membership, see Joe Zarella mailing to Peary Rader, "National Committee Appointments, 1977-78 National Powerlifting Committee," October 25, n.y., Todd Collection, Powerlifting Files, USPF Miscellaneous, Stark Center. Information on the competition can be found in Terry Todd, "Women's Power Championships," *Iron Man* 36, no. 5 (July 1977): 50, 56-8; and Al Thomas, "All-American Girl Power Championships," *Muscular Development* 15, no. 4 (July/August 1977): 42-4, 67.
29. T. Todd, "Women's Power Championships," 50.
30. Jan Todd, "Weightlifting," Karen Christiansen, Allen Guttmann and Gertrud Pfister, eds., *The International Encyclopedia of Women and Sport* [NY and Great Barrington, MS: Berkshire Reference Works/Macmillan Reference, 1999]: 1260-1264.
31. Jan Todd, "'Chaos Can Have Gentle Beginnings,' the Early History of the Quest for Drug Testing in American Powerlifting: 1964-1984," *Iron Game History* 8, no. 3 (May/June 2004).
32. *Ibid.*
33. James, "Pioneer of Women's Powerlifting."
34. Levin interview.
35. Mabel Rader letter, 20 February 1981. Mabel Rader File, IM-RC.
36. See Rader, Mabel, *Women's Weightlifting Newsletter*, n.d.
37. *Ibid.* 4; Rader, Mabel, *Women's Weightlifting Newsletter*, September 1982: 3; Rader, Mabel, *Women's Weightlifting Newsletter* No. 7, 22 August 1983: 1.
38. Greenspan's New England publication developed as outreach of her all-women's gym and its byline was "a newsletter network for women in weight training, bodybuilding, powerlifting, and weightlifting."
39. Kim Beckwith, "'The Spark Which Lights the Fire of Women's Lifting': Judy Glenney, a Pioneer of US Women's Weightlifting," North American Society for Sport History Annual Meeting, Glenwood Springs, CO, May 30-June 2, 2014; and Murray Levin Letter to Women's Weightlifting Competitors, n.d., Judy Glenney Papers, Xerox copies at H.J. Lutchter Stark Center.
40. Mabel Rader letter to Tamas Ajan, 31 March 1983, Mabel Rader File, IM-RC.
41. Tamas Ajan letter to Mabel Rader, 26 April 1983, Mabel Rader File, IM-RC.
42. Tamas Ajan letter to Mabel Rader, 28 September 1983; and Mabel Rader Letter to Tamas Ajan, 7 October 1983, Mabel Rader File, IM-RC.
43. Glenney interview.
44. Levin interview.
45. Mabel Rader, "Editor's Message," *Women's Weightlifting Newsletter* No. 7, 22 August 1983: 1.
46. Glenney interview.
47. Mabel Rader interview with Jan Todd, 2000.
48. Tamas Ajan letter to Mabel Rader, 23 November 1983, Mabel Rader File, IM-RC.
49. Mabel Rader letter to Tamas Ajan, 8 December 1983, Mabel Rader File, IM-RC.
50. Conversation with Terry and Jan Todd upon their return from the birthday celebration, 19 June 2017.

THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF POLYMATH DAVID P. WILLOUGHBY

PART ONE: EDUCATION AND THE IRON GAME

By Jan Todd and Ryan Murtha
The University of Texas at Austin

“Some know the value of education by having it. I know its value by not having it.”
—Frederick Douglass

David Patrick Willoughby was just a year old when the Milo Company began manufacturing barbells in 1902. When Willoughby was born there was no governing body for weightlifting in the United States; there was no agreed upon list of official lifts; there were very few gyms with weights for customers to use; and the sports of bodybuilding and powerlifting had yet to be invented.

Compared to our modern, densely populated world of strength, the Iron Game was a virtual desert in the early twentieth century containing only a few oases. In the decades after his birth, however, as Willoughby grew to manhood, became an excellent weightlifter, and then used his typewriter and incredible intellect to promote weight training in all its manifestations, that almost barren landscape became ever more verdant, and people came to live within its borders and constructed gyms, associations, publications, and contests. He wasn't alone, of course. Alan Calvert,

founder of both the Milo Barbell Company and *Strength* magazine helped plant and nurture the modern Iron Game; as did Bob Hoffman of York Barbell and *Strength & Health* magazine; and, later, bodybuilding impresario Joe Weider also played a seminal role. And, of course, we cannot forget the contributions of Eugen Sandow, Bernarr Macfadden, George Jowett, Sig Klein, and many, many



Taken in 1926, when he was 25 years old, David P. Willoughby autographed this photograph of himself posed as “The Thinker,” for physical culture friend Ernest Edwin Coffin. Willoughby was both a champion weightlifter and internationally recognized for his excellent physique and he had a major impact on the evolution of the Iron Game.

others, who planted seeds, pulled weeds, and watered the world of strength when rain was scarce.¹ However, in several important ways, it was Willoughby who understood the breadth of the field and who, unintentionally perhaps, nurtured the seeds that developed into the modern sports of bodybuilding and weightlifting. It was Willoughby who helped organize and suggested competitive standards for weightlifting in the 1920s. It was Willoughby's writing that clarified and defined what bodybuilding should be in the 1930s. And it was Willoughby who resurrected the early

history of strength in his research-based articles in popular magazines and thus provided the Iron Game with a record of past achievements for modern lifters to aspire to, and a pantheon of heroes and heroines that helped it find cultural meaning. Thanks to Willoughby, the achievements of modern lifters shone more brightly when readers understood how they compared to the best men and women of the past. By demonstrating that the Iron Game had such a long, distinguished lineage and linking that history to both science and statistics, Willoughby's

writings helped the public understand why a person might want to lift weights and even why it mattered. Vic Boff, founder of the Oldtime Barbell and Strongman Association, summed it up succinctly in 1995 when he wrote, “Without any doubt, David P. Willoughby's contributions as a writer, theorist, and historian in the field of physical culture are without equal, and we are still very much in his debt.”²

In this first scholarly examination of the life and contributions of David P. Willoughby, we focus on un-

packing Willoughby's personal life story—about which he was fiercely private—and then primarily consider Willoughby's important role in helping to establish the Iron Game—the term we use to describe those activities such as bodybuilding and weightlifting based on resistance training.³ Willoughby's legacy however, reaches well past the boundaries of the strength world, for this self-educated polymath used his brilliant mind and endless energy to also make important contributions to such academic fields as endocrinology, anthropometry, paleontology, zoology, art history, and even the NASA space program. Although we won't be able to do justice to all of his achievements, this article is longer than normal because the life of this Iron Game icon was so wide-ranging and complicated. However, his published legacy, ranging across numerous academic fields and all the major muscle magazines, is evidence of Willoughby's power of perseverance, dedication, and his unstinting desire to improve himself. Although often thwarted by poverty and lack of education, Willoughby believed in the Progressive Era philosophy of self-improvement and, both physically and intellectually ignored the odds and continued to find ways to move forward.

Willoughby, unlike many Iron Game authors, almost never discussed his family or early life in his articles, choosing when he published “David Willoughby: An Autobiography” in *Iron Man* magazine, to speak almost entirely about lifting—his own, and the organization of the sport—and to share no important details about his parents, siblings, marriages, or how and why he became passionate about measurements and chronicling the greats of the Iron Game.⁴ Willoughby's autobiography appeared in print in January of 1983, the same month that he passed away. Written when he was 82 years old, his choice of primarily focusing on his lifting career in the 1920s and not discussing what happened in the five decades that followed those halcyon days is even more surprising. But throughout his published works, he displays an unusual reticence to speak about his parents, the hardships they faced as a family, and the peripatetic nature of his early life and thereby masks the true enormity of his achievements as a writer, artist, statistician, and researcher. But, Willoughby's accomplishments cannot be fully appreciated without knowing that his formal education lasted only five



This cabinet card shows Mary Ann Small, David's mother, who had a tumultuous life before she married David's father in 1897. Mary Ann ran away with a circus performer at age 16, and when that relationship dissolved, taught herself to be a trapeze and slack-wire performer and worked in a variety of circuses for the next 16 years. She even played the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 at the same time as Sandow and Al Treloar.

years. He began attending school at age eight and stopped in order to begin full-time work in ninth grade; he did not attend college. Using several memoirs written by his mother in 1934, his personal notes, correspondence, and the annotations he wrote on the back of photographs in his personal archive, we have attempted to piece together how and why David P. Willoughby became the man he did. In our attempt to understand some of the psychological motivations that fired his drive and ambition, we devote more space than is normal to the early lives of his parents, especially that of his mother, Mary Ann Small. We ask for your forbearance in including these details and can only hope that you will be intrigued, as we were, by learning about her surprising and often difficult life and how her past may well have impacted the course of her son's life.⁵

CIRCUS BEGINNINGS

Willoughby's interest in circus performers and the physical abilities of men and women was very likely inspired by his mother, Mary Ann Small, who spent her early adulthood performing in circuses, variety theater, and on riv-

erboats that travelled the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. In her brief handwritten autobiography, Willoughby's mother, who was born in 1864 in Norfolk, Virginia, explained that she ran away from home at age 16 to marry William Flournoy Ashworth, a circus performer.⁶ According to her memoir, they married in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 7 February 1880 and continued to live in Philadelphia “off and on” until the birth of her first child, Harry Ashworth, in May of 1881.⁷ When her baby died four months later, Mary Ann “went on the road” and began training to be a slack-wire walker and trapeze artist. She does not explain what happened to Ashworth after the child's death, writing only that “After learning [to be a wire walker] went with the Miller, Stowe and Freeman Circus until I was proficient enough to go with a big show. Had to lay off when Walter, the second boy, was born in Bellevue Hospital, New York City, July 23, 1884.”⁸ Sadly, Walter lived only six months before dying of “cholera infantum,” as Harry had.⁹

An alternate version of this early stage of Mary Ann's life is found on a single sheet of paper, in David P. Willoughby's distinctive handwriting. The paper is titled

“David P. Willoughby, Born Mar. 17, 1901,” and below that heading is a list of the members of his family with annotation for births, deaths, and marriages. That document does not mention Ashworth and records, instead, that Mary Ann Small married Walter Verona on 28 July 1879 in Richmond, Virginia, listing both Harry and Walter as Verona’s children. There is no mention of a wedding date for Verona in Mary Ann’s memoir.¹⁰

In 1885, after recovering from the loss of her second child, Mary Ann, then 21 years old, returned to circus life and it appears that Verona was with her. “I got in practice,” she reported in her memoir, and “we” joined Adam Forepaugh’s circus. Little information has been found about Verona other than that he worked at different times as a magician, fire eater, manager, and as an “advance man,” who went to the towns before the circus arrived to scout locations, put up posters, and talk to the press.¹¹ After two seasons with the well-respected Forepaugh Circus, the Veronas toured with John Robinson’s Circus in the summer of 1887 and then worked vaudeville that winter, as Mary Ann put it, “to keep in shape.”¹² In either 1887 or 1888, they found themselves in New Orleans where they met Eugene Robinson, nephew of circus impresario John Robinson, who was fitting out three large riverboats as a floating circus to travel the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. The Floating Palaces, as Robinson called his boat-bound circus, contained a side show or “museum of oddities” on one boat, a menagerie of animals on another, and a large theater on the main ship where minstrel shows, melodramas, acrobats, and magicians played.¹³ Robinson invited

the Veronas to be part of the show, and they worked for Robinson for three seasons; Walter performed as a magician and was listed as general manager of “the outfit.”¹⁴

In 1890, Robinson decided to sell the Floating Palaces, and Verona and a partner, Victor Mauberret, bought them at auction.¹⁵ Verona and Mauberret managed to keep the Palaces afloat for the next several years, but they were not making enough money to cover the expenses related to running the show plus the loan they had taken out to buy the boats, menagerie of animals, and other contents. In 1892, the circus was docked near Louisville, Kentucky, on the Ohio River, when police seized the boats to cover their debts. “We disbanded for all time,” Mary Ann wrote, “the outfit was taken . . . and sold. My husband lost every cent he had invested and (we) had to start out trouping again.”¹⁶

Making life even more difficult at this time was the birth on 2 November 1892 of Mary Ann’s first surviving child, a girl they named Mercedes Virginia Verona.¹⁷ After several months of scrambling to find work, the Veronas, Mary Ann reported, “were only too glad of the chance,” to join the Harris Nickle Plate Show, a one-ring, one-elephant circus that brought them to Chicago for much of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition (Chicago World’s Fair).¹⁸ Given the fact that they played Chicago for several months, it is interesting to consider whether Mary Ann might have seen, or perhaps even met, Eugen Sandow, Bernarr Macfadden, or Al Treloar, all of whom were performing at the World’s Fair when she was.¹⁹

After the Nickel Plate Circus ended its run in Chicago, it toured the Midwest, performing in a series of



When the Todds acquired David Willoughby’s Collection in 1984, this large, battered photograph of Eugene Robinson’s riverboat circus was in the materials they brought back to Texas. They had no idea why Willoughby had the picture, however, until Jan Todd began researching the life of Willoughby’s mother and discovered that Mary Ann and her second husband, Walter Verona, bought the Floating Palaces—as the three-boat circus was called—in 1890 and ran it until 1892 when they went bankrupt.



In 1897, after losing her second husband to tuberculosis, Mary Ann met Canadian steam boat engineer David Willoughby and married him in New Orleans, Louisiana. This cabinet card, dated 1897, may commemorate their wedding in December of that year. The girl is Virginia Mercedes Verona, Mary Ann’s daughter from Walter Verona.

mostly one-night stands that eventually brought them to Texas where they all became ill from bad water. The show closed there, and she and Verona headed to Cairo, Illinois, where other circus performers stayed when not performing, before moving on to Cincinnati, where Verona, now struggling with tuberculosis, worked as the manager at “Heck and Avery’s Museum” for a time.²⁰ As his health worsened, and they had no money to pay for medical care, Verona’s “brothers,” in the Knights of Pythias fraternal association, sent him by train to Denver where the Pythians ran a hospital for their members. Mary Ann and Mercedes could not afford to go with him and instead went



The Victorians loved ruffles and frills on both young girls and boys as this 1903 photograph of David P. Willoughby demonstrates. It was taken in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, where the Willoughbys moved shortly after David’s birth.

to Virginia, where they stayed with her brother for a time. Verona, who was then 45, never discovered if Colorado’s clean mountain air would cure him; he contracted pneumonia on the train trip and died 11 days after arriving in Denver.²¹

Following Verona’s death in 1896, Mary Ann returned to Cincinnati and performed with the Ada Gray theatrical troupe in the famous melodramas *East Lynne* and *Camille*.²² When that job ended in April 1897, she found work in a “tent-show” that

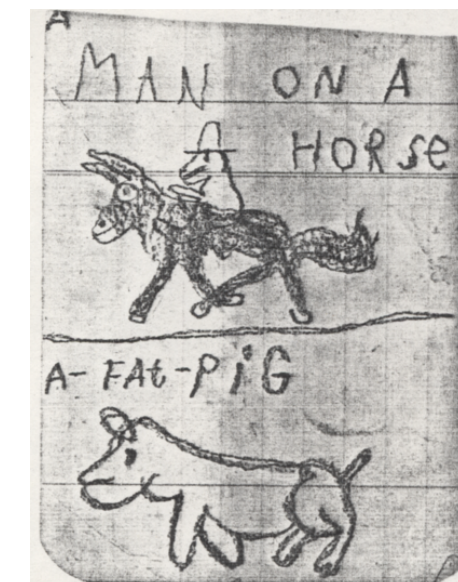
toured the Midwest where she again performed as an actress in the play *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. According to her memoir, she “staid [sic] with [them] till they busted up and then went to visit a very dear friend of my husband who had invited me to make my home with him and his wife as long as I wanted to stay.”²³ She apparently moved in with Captain Frank Oltendorfer and his wife in New Orleans, and then through Oltendorfer—who owned a stern-wheel tow boat—she met David Willoughby, a riverboat engineer, and married him on 27 December 1897.

Mary Ann’s new husband was two years her junior and stood 5’8” and weighed about 200 pounds. Young David later wrote that his father was “strong and robust naturally,” with especially strong hands and forearms from all the manual work he’d done.²⁴ [Editors’ Note: For clarity, David P. Willoughby will be referred to as “Young David,” and his father as “David Sr.” in the paragraphs that follow.]

David Sr. was born near Coburg, in Ontario, Canada, on 26 February 1866, and moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, to apprentice as an engineer while still a teenager. After completing his apprenticeship, he “started steamboating,” and later also learned marine and electrical engineering on the job. He worked on the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes and advanced quickly to the head engineer position on his ships.²⁵ After their marriage, David, Mary Ann and five-year-old Mercedes, lived in a house on Walnut Street facing the Mississippi River.²⁶ Young David

was born in that house on Sunday morning, 17 March 1901, which also happened to be St. Patrick’s Day.²⁷

Although born in New Orleans, Young David didn’t get to stay there long, as the Willoughbys moved to Eden Prairie, Minnesota, the following December where, for the next five years, they lived on a 35-acre farm David Sr. had purchased for his aging parents. Mary Ann described those



Although Willoughby did not begin attending regular schools until he was eight years old, he had learned to write and draw by age four. These two drawings are remarkably detailed and accurate for an artist still so young.

years of living with her in-laws, in the country, as an “awful time.” Her last child, a daughter named Hazel, was born at home there in 1906; Mary Ann was then 42.²⁸ The following year David Sr. moved his family to Minneapolis where he continued working on riverboats for several years. Although Young David was six when they moved to Minneapolis, it does not appear that he began attending public school immediately. A short autobiographical resume found in his papers contains one of the few discussions of his schooling. It reads simply: “Education: Attended public schools in Minneapolis, Minn., and Los Angeles, Calif., 1909-1914; mainly self-educated.”²⁹ Although he may not have begun attending school at a normal age, it appears likely that someone had helped him learn to read and write as a pair of pencil drawings made when he was only four years old are not only surprisingly well drawn but also give testament to how precise and advanced his writing was for someone only four.³⁰

It appears the Willoughbys were doing moderately well in Minneapolis for in 1910 they stopped renting and bought a house that Young David said cost \$3000.³¹ In 1912, David Sr. and his brother, Henry, even decided to go into business together, and opened Willoughby’s Automobile Repair Shop (which also sold gasoline) although David Sr. did not yet know how to drive a car. Sadly, just two weeks after opening their new business, the garage “somehow caught fire” and was totally destroyed.³² Following this loss, David Sr. and Mary Ann decided to head west to California for a new start. “I have often wondered,” Young David mused years later, “what my occupation and career would have been had my family remained in Minneapolis.”³³



In 1912, David’s father opened a garage and automobile repair shop in Minneapolis in a partnership with his brother. Just two weeks later, it burned to the ground and the Willoughbys had to start over. On 13 March 1912 David, his younger sister Hazel, and his parents headed west, moving to California in the hope of having a better life.

LIFE IN THE LAND OF DREAMS

Based on a photograph of the family dressed in their travel clothes, we know that the Willoughbys left for California on 13 March 1912. How they travelled is not recorded but given David Sr.’s lack of driving skills, it is most likely they took the train.³⁴ How and where they planned to live when they arrived in Los Angeles is also not known. Perhaps David Sr. hoped to find work there as a marine engineer given California’s many ports and its busy ship trade. If he did find such work, it isn’t mentioned in Mary Ann’s memoir, or in Willoughby’s 1983 autobiography in *Iron Man*.³⁵ In fact, no records can be found for how either of the adult Willoughbys earned money in California although it seems clear that at least at times they were struggling financially. Young David, for example, began contributing to the family income by working as a newsboy selling papers on street corners at age 13. A photo taken of him in Los Angeles shows him with a trombone, an inscription on the back explaining that he played, “more or less” in a newsboy band.³⁶

In 1915, David Sr. and Mary Ann separated and she and the children moved to San Francisco, for reasons that are also unclear.³⁷ It is possible that she was attracted to the area because of job opportunities made possible by the opening of the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition (1915 World’s Fair) in February of that year.³⁸ It is also possible that she may have reconnected with the circus community for Young David began working for a small circus in San Francisco tending the horses once they arrived there. On the back of his 1975 book, *The Empire of Equus: The Horse, Past, Present, and Future*, Willoughby writes that his interest in horses began as a child and that at age 14 he was working as an “exercise boy” in a



Standing on the front porch of their new home in Minneapolis, Willoughby’s lanky frame is apparent, even at age six and a half.



At age 14, David P. Willoughby left school behind and became a full-time apprentice draftsman at Meese and Gottfried Engineering Company in San Francisco. It was by doing this work that Willoughby learned to draw with precision and developed a set of skills that allowed him to remain employed, if not always happy, for the remainder of his life. In this photo, taken when he was 15, Willoughby’s small stature is even more evident when contrasted with the grown men with whom he worked.

dog and pony circus where “he fed, harnessed, rode, and became familiar with steeds of all kinds from tiny Shetlands and burros to huge Percherons.” He goes on to say that the circus owner wanted him to train and become a bareback rider, but he told him that he was more interested in studying horses than in performing on them, a remarkable statement given his young age.³⁹

While it isn’t clear what work Mary Ann did in San Francisco, Young David left his circus job to take a fulltime apprenticeship at the Meese & Gottfried Company as an “apprentice junior draftsman” at age 14. The company manufactured conveyor belts, elevators and other kinds of heavy machinery.⁴⁰ A photo, taken after he turned 15, shows how small and childlike Willoughby was as a teenager; the contrast between him and the adult men in the room is especially striking.

Willoughby’s job was to hand



After settling in Los Angeles, Willoughby began selling newspapers at age 13 and played trombone “more or less,” according to a note on the back of this photo, in a newsboy band.

copy engineering plans and blueprints so that multiple copies existed. It was exacting work yet it appealed to Young David who liked to draw and appreciated the need for precision in reproducing industrial plans. “By the time I was 15,” he wrote years later, “I could both hand letter or use a ruling pen as well as anyone. This ability to draw with precision has held me in good stead all my life.”⁴¹ He also noted on the back of a photo taken of him at work, that he’d been called “a wizard” by one of his bosses.⁴²

While the job at Meese & Gottfried taught him artistic skills and a trade that would enable to make his living in the years ahead, his formal education stopped when he began working there. Willoughby never attended high school or college, and never had any formal training as an artist.⁴³ For the remainder of his life, in fact, everything that he learned and achieved was through

his own efforts, fueled by his implacable will to succeed, his extraordinary intelligence, and his unstinting curiosity about the world around him. It also helped that he found two important mentors.

BARBELL BEGINNINGS

Willoughby's involvement with weightlifting began in San Francisco. Perhaps he heard about, or even watched, the two-day weightlifting contest Al Treloar organized in conjunction with the San Francisco World's Fair in August of 1915 and this piqued his interest.⁴⁴ Or, perhaps, he discovered Alan Calvert's *Strength* magazine which began publication in 1914.⁴⁵ As a slender, slow to mature, and frequently ill teenager who had no doubt begun to worry about his physique, it's also possible that his mother—who had doubtless met professional strongmen during her years with various circuses—also suggested to Young David that he give weight training a try.⁴⁶ In May of 1917, for example, when he was already 16 years old, Willoughby weighed just 112 pounds, "in street clothes." So, while we don't really know how he fixed on the idea of trying barbell training, Willoughby ordered a 100-pound, plate-loading barbell from the Milo Barbell Company in March of 1918.⁴⁷ He was then 17; it cost \$13.00.⁴⁸

The barbell didn't arrive, however, until he had been rushed to the hospital with a ruptured appendix in May of that year. Because infection spread throughout his abdomen, and penicillin had not yet been invented, Willoughby nearly died.⁴⁹ He was so weak, he recalled at the time of his discharge from the hospital, that he "could not make the step up on the streetcar without help."⁵⁰ He weighed only 128 pounds at 5'9 3/4" after his illness, and the doctors urged Mary Ann to not let him return to work right away.⁵¹

Willoughby spent the summer following his surgery with Marguerite Kratzer who owned a ranch and "resort" in the wine country near Glen Ellen, California.⁵² His barbell went with him, and the combination of good food, country air, and barbell training proved to be exactly what he needed to recover.⁵³ When he returned to work in September, weighing 147 pounds and having grown half an inch in height, he had become a committed barbell trainer. By the following May, at age 18, his weight had risen to 161 pounds, and he stood 5'11 3/4".⁵⁴ He continued to grow for several more years, eventually reaching 6'1 1/2" in



After nearly dying from appendicitis when he was 17, Willoughby was sent to the wine country of California to stay at a health resort in Glen Ellen. Willoughby had been poorly the year before his appendix burst, and arrived weighing only 128 pounds at 5'10" in height and a biceps measurement of only ten inches. When his mother took him there to recuperate, they took his new 100-pound Milo barbell with them. Willoughby used it faithfully all summer and gained 20 pounds before returning to work in San Francisco in the fall.



After four years in San Francisco, 18-year-old David, his mother, and his sister Hazel, moved back to Los Angeles where they were reunited with his father. The plan was for them to run a boarding house called The Bunker Hill, which his father had purchased. Sadly, this plan of his father's also went awry and they sold the property after only a few months.



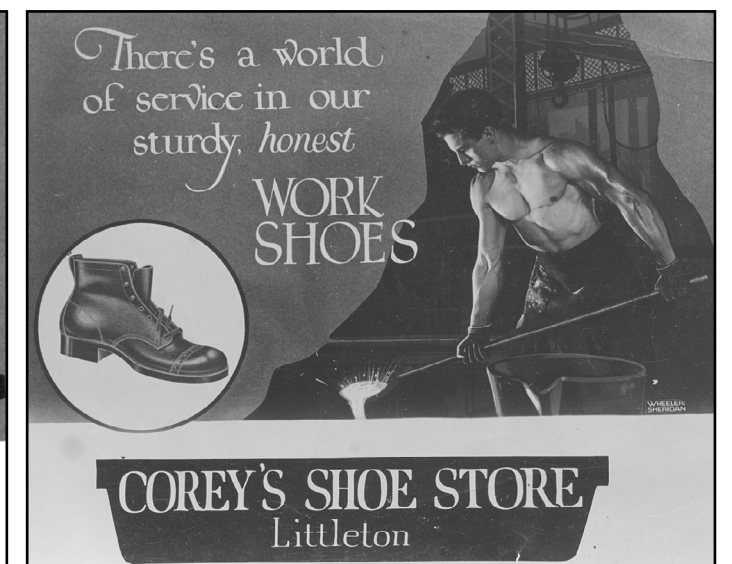
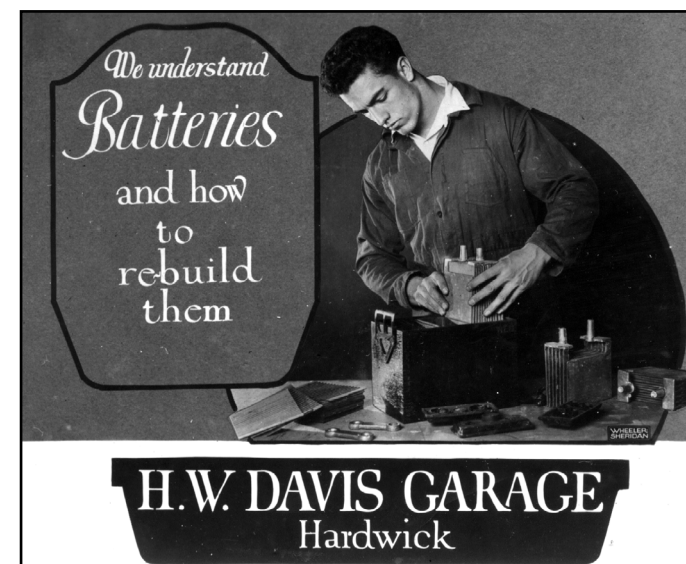
height and weighing between 185-195 pounds during his active years as a lifter.⁵⁵

In September of 1919, Willoughby left his job at Meese and Gottfried, where he was well-liked but earned only a modest \$18.00 per week, to move back to Los Angeles with his mother and younger sister, Hazel.⁵⁶ Young David described this as a "happy move," as he had reportedly not seen his father at all during the four years they lived in San Francisco. In his *Iron Man* autobiography, he spoke warmly of his father's ingenuity with engines and other mechanical tasks, statements that suggest he admired and enjoyed a good relationship with his father. In that same autobiography, interestingly, he does not discuss his mother, her work, or even name her, yet he lived with her until he was well into his thirties out of economic necessity.⁵⁷

Mary Ann returned to Los Angeles to help her husband run a boarding house he purchased called The Bunker Hill.⁵⁸ According to her memoir, their ownership



In Los Angeles Willoughby worked as a gardener, and also did other sorts of outdoor work before beginning at the Wheeler Sheridan Slide Company on 18 April 1921. There, he flexed both his artistic and physical muscles. The company made large-format glass slides containing advertisements that were projected in movie theaters before the main feature began. Willoughby designed and drew slides, and also modelled for them. The photograph above showing him as a blacksmith and the image on the advertisement for Corey Shoes, both taken in 1924, are among the most compelling photos ever taken of him. His thick hair, impressive arms, and the juxtaposition of his sweaty physique against the industrial backgrounds probably sold a lot of product.



only lasted a couple months, before they sold the property to buy an "eight-room house," where the four of them lived for just four months before flipping it for a new house that they then sold a year or so later at a profit. Between 1919 and 1929 the Willoughbys would "move house" eight times in Los Angeles, sometimes renting, often buying and reselling. Although Mary Ann suggests in her memoir that they were generally bettering their position by these real estate deals, she describes houses that became increasingly smaller, not larger, and one can only imagine how stressful such constant moving must have been.⁵⁹ David's second wife, Carol Willoughby, observed in fact that the circumstances of his early life left her, "... amazed. With all the disturbances, continually moving—Dave never stopped learning. *Plus* he schooled *himself*. Supported his family. What a man!" [Italics in the original.]⁶⁰

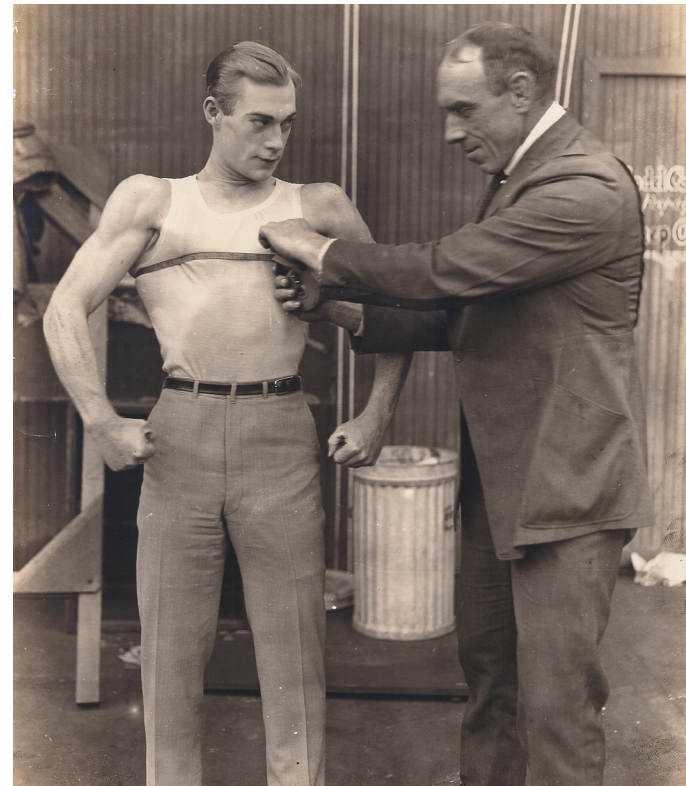
In Los Angeles, David tried a variety of jobs, including gardening and other outdoor work, before beginning at the Wheel-

er-Sheridan Slide Company on 18 April 1921. There, he flexed both his artistic and physical muscles.⁶¹ Wheeler-Sheridan made large-format glass slides containing advertisements and public service announcements that were projected in movie theaters before the main feature began. Willoughby not only drew and designed slides, but as his physique improved, he found himself in front of the camera; his handsome face, thick hair, and impressive physique making him an ideal model.⁶²

WILLOUGHBY'S FIRST MENTOR

In August of 1921 one of his employers, knowing of David's interest in weight lifting, invited Willoughby to go with him to the Los Angeles Athletic Club (LAAC) to see the facilities and meet Al Treloar, former strongman and the club's famous "Physical Director."⁶³ Treloar is probably best remembered now for winning Bernarr Macfadden's first "Perfect Man" contest, and for the short film Thomas Edison made in 1904, showing Treloar doing his winning posing routine.⁶⁴ Treloar's engagement with, and contributions to, the Iron Game are much more important and extensive than the winning of one physique contest however, and, by befriending Willoughby as he did in 1921 and inviting him to come and train at the LAAC, Treloar geometrically increased his own impact on the Iron Game by becoming Willoughby's mentor.

Born in Allegan, Michigan, in 1873, Albert Toof Jennings (who took Treloar as a stage name), grew up in a



Treloar, like most physical educators in the early twentieth century, believed in the taking of physical measurements as a way to judge improvement from training. Treloar became interested in measurements when he was at Harvard and then used his own close-to-ideal measurements to market himself as a strength athlete.

home with a father who owned a barbell, a rarity in the nineteenth century. That same father allowed his son to join a local gymnastics club where Treloar learned to be an acrobat and began performing with a partner. Following high school, he turned professional and began appearing in vaudeville. In 1893 he and his partner were performing at the Chicago World's Fair when his partner left the duo act. The 20-year-old Treloar got lucky, however, as Eugen Sandow had also lost a troupe member and he invited Treloar to join his strength act for the duration of their run at the World's Fair. Willoughby wrote in his obituary of Treloar, "This incident changed and directed Treloar's whole life thereafter." Treloar, he reported, "took full advantage of the opportunity" to learn feats of strength and weightlifting from Sandow himself.⁶⁵ And, of course, much of that knowledge was undoubtedly passed along to Willoughby.

Although Treloar stayed with Sandow's troupe for several months after their run in Chicago ended, pressure from his academically-minded father found Treloar accepted as a freshman at Harvard University, home of famous physical educator Dr. Dudley Allen Sargent, in the fall semester of 1894.⁶⁶ Sargent was one of the most famous physical educators in the world at this time and was known as the leading authority in the new academic field of Physical Anthropometry. At Harvard, Sargent made the study of human measurements his research focus and for years he collected several dozen body measurements on every male student who entered the university. He used this data, and other images of the body from the world of art, to create an anthropometric method to compare living physiques to an "ideal" male body based on his ideas of symmetrical development. Sargent became internationally



Born Albert Toof Jennings, this winner of Bernarr Macfadden's 1904 "Perfect Man" contest was known on stage as strongman Al Treloar. Treloar began directing the gymnasium and athletic events at the Los Angeles Athletic Club in 1907 and became David Willoughby's coach, mentor and lifetime friend after they met in the fall of 1921.



Scanned from a tiny 2" x 2" photo, Willoughby is shown here, in the two-piece suits still traditional for men in 1920 even at Santa Monica Beach. With him is his mother and sister, Hazel. Willoughby never mentions his mother's height, but in this and other photos, she appears to have been tall. Willoughby had not yet begun training with Treloar.

famous for this work and often appeared in the press as he measured and ranked athletes and other celebrities as well as his Harvard students. In June of 1893, for example, he measured Eugen Sandow for the *New York World* newspaper, declaring Sandow's measurements to be close to physically perfect.⁶⁷ Treloar noted years later in a letter to Willoughby, "When I first knew Sandow he cared very little about measurements. Later, however, with his new muscle-posing tricks and all the talk about development and measurements by the publicity writers, he commenced to take himself quite seriously in this regard."⁶⁸

At Harvard in the fall of 1894, Treloar was measured—as all freshmen were—and found to be in excellent physical condition. He weighed 167.11 pounds, stood 5' 9.6" and if using the Greek ideal of symmetrical measurements for the neck, calves, and biceps, Treloar was also close to perfect with a 14.76" neck; 15.03" left calf; 15.34" right calf; and biceps measurements of 14.37" and 14.17" respectively.⁶⁹ One author wrote of these numbers, "Dr. Sargent and his associates were astounded to find that Tre-



After beginning to train at the Los Angeles Athletic Club in the fall of 1921, Willoughby's physical improvement was amazing. In this photo, taken just a year after the Muscle Beach photo above, he shows great muscular gains, especially in his legs. Willoughby and his teammates often trained on the roof of the LAAC, where this photo was taken in 1922.

loar's measurements corresponded exactly throughout with the scientific ideal standard of physical perfection—the first man out of over 40,000 measured there who ever came up to this standard."⁷⁰

Physical perfection and his teammates on the Harvard crew weren't enough to keep Treloar on campus, however. In the fall of his sophomore year, he married Georgia Knowlton, and then left Harvard after completing the spring semester in 1896.⁷¹ When he left, he returned to vaudeville with a new act of posing, acrobatics, strongman stunts and card tearing, advertising himself as a "perfect man" based on his Harvard measurements. Georgia became his partner, adopting the stage name Edna Tempest. In 1904, when he won Macfadden's first physique contest, much was made of the fact that Treloar's neck, biceps and calves were all a symmetrically perfect 16 3/4"—just as ancient Greek sculptors would have wanted them to be.⁷²

Treloar was appearing at the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles in 1907 when he was approached by the Los Angeles Athletic Club (LAAC) about becoming its "Physical Director." Willoughby later wrote that during Treloar's 42-year tenure at the LAAC he "made weightlifting and competition come to life."⁷³ While true, Treloar's engagement with anthropometry, and his ability to build a physique according to a template based on measurements, proved equally inspirational to Willoughby, whose interest in human anthropometry and competitive weightlifting reached new heights after meeting Treloar.

When Treloar and Willoughby first met, the Iron Game was in a liminal space between its more exhibitionist and often exaggerated roots in the sawdust-filled rings of the circus, and what would become a regulated, highly-quantified future. Their time together coincided with, and in some ways precipitated, a paradigm shift for the sport of weightlifting as it began transforming in the late 1910s and 1920s from what sport historian Allen Guttman called "pre-modern" to "modern" sport. Pre-modern sport, Guttman argued is not truly organized, has no of-

ficial records, lacks governing bodies, and the conditions for competition and rules for performance vary from contest to contest. Modern sport, on the other hand, is organized by governing bodies, records are kept, and the standardization of rules for competition make the sport essentially the same in all situations.⁷⁴

In California, Treloar had been running meets under the auspices of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) since at least 1915 when he ran the “National Championships” at the World’s Fair in San Francisco. However, as meet director he determined the rules and chose the lifts which would often be different in the next meet he sponsored. Treloar had also established a weightlifting team at the LAAC before Willoughby began training there. Willoughby had mostly trained at home, with limited equipment and by himself, so joining a community of strongmen in a gym filled with barbells and dumbbells ranging as he put it, “from a few pounds each to immense weights that seem to defy you,” filled Willoughby with enthusiasm to not just make himself strong but to also help build the sport.⁷⁵

Willoughby participated in his first weightlifting competition on 24 February 1922, at a body-weight of 174.5 pounds. It was part of a city gymnastics championships (organized by the Los Angeles Turner Society), and he lost to LAAC teammate Al Bevan in his first outing.⁷⁶ Willoughby kept training, however, and came back to beat Bevans in 1923 in the same tournament.⁷⁷ According to historian John Fair, that contest, run by Willoughby and Treloar at the Los Angeles Athletic Club, “has as much right as any other to be called the first weightlifting contest in the United States held under official conditions.”⁷⁸ It, like the other early California meets organized by Treloar before Willoughby appeared on the scene, was sanctioned by the AAU.

On 19 April 1924, Willoughby and Treloar hosted the AAU National Weightlifting Championships in the gymnasium



In 1924, when the National Championships were held at the LAAC, Willoughby and his teammates had new, matching uniforms to wear for the contest. And, as strongmen, they elected to only have one strap going over the shoulder, just as Sandow and Attila and other strongmen did when they wore singlets made from animal hides.

of the LAAC. This meet truly created a template for future lifting competitions as they had chosen five lifts to perform, they saw to the accuracy of the weights, they created weight classes, and they wrote rules for proper judging.⁷⁹ Although considered by all to be a great success, it was a disappointment for Willoughby on a personal level even though he won first place. Because 1924 was

an Olympic year, his gold medal in the light-heavyweight class meant he qualified to go to the Olympic Games in Paris. However, the AAU decided not to send weightlifters to the Olympics that year and Willoughby, of course, did not have the money to go on his own.

Because of Treloar, Los Angeles was one of the few places in the United States where real weightlifting competitions were being held in the 1910s and early 1920s. A few men outside California—particularly Alan Calvert, Ottley Coulter, and George Jowett—had begun discussing the need for an American organization to promote the sport, but even after it was launched, California continued to dominate American lifting. To form their new American organization, called the American Continental Weightlifting Association, Jowett and Coulter turned to the British Amateur Weightlifting Association (BAWLA) as a model and essentially copied its rules and their list of 49 recognized lifts. As historian John Fair has documented, the doubly-named Bernard Bernard, former head of



On the roof of the LAAC, Willoughby holds the ladder while Howard Rathbone performs a flag. At the height he is on the ladder, and with the ladder being held by a man, even a strong man like Willoughby, this was a dangerous stunt. He must have really trusted Willoughby.

BAWLA, moved to Chicago in 1922 to begin publishing *Health & Life* magazine and then, with help from George Jowett, launched the American Continental Weightlifting Association.⁸⁰ When only ten members signed up by the following January, Bernard stepped away from the organization, turning it over to Jowett and the few state chairmen then enrolled. Among those state chairmen, the most active organizer and promoter, was 22-year-old David P. Willoughby.⁸¹ Fair clearly shows in his essay how the ACWLA had not run an actual contest or made much other progress by 1923, outside of California. What saved weightlifting, Fair contends, “was the independent initiative taken by Dave Willoughby . . . Contrary to the unfulfilled promises of [the ACWLA] . . . Willoughby and his confrères were holding real contests and setting real records.”⁸²

The growth of the ACWLA was complicated, however, by the expense of joining an association and also, it seems, having to pay additional fees to establish records. At this time, the ACWLA was trying to establish a set of American records and

was encouraging its members to submit their best efforts as a way to begin establishing such a list. In a letter to Ottley Coulter written in July of 1923, Willoughby explains he has been so slow in submitting official records for the ACWLA list because of the fifty-cent fee to have the record recorded. “It is very hard to ask a man to pay to make a certain lift, not knowing how long it would stand.” Continuing, Willoughby wrote, “I don’t want to be in opposition to any of your ideas, but personally I believe that these first ‘Temporary Records,’ should be allowed to go on the Record Lists without necessitating the customary 50¢ cents fee. . . Suppose I did have to demand a 50¢ entry fee, then suppose a certain lifter was capable of making 10 good “starting” lifting records. There’s a total demand of \$5.00 which, experience teaches me, would be exceedingly difficult to get.”⁸³

From 1921 through 1926, Willoughby did in fact, compete in, and help run, a variety of weightlifting contests—winning the AAU Championships of Southern California in 1923, 1924, 1925 and 1926 along with the National Championships in 1924. He also founded the first AAU state weightlifting association, called the California Amateur Weight-Lifter’s Association, and formed the Los Angeles Weightlifting Club in 1924 at the LAAC, “to furnish suitable means to keep the average man fit.”⁸⁴ In addition, he regularly reported on the lifting activity in California in *Health and Life* magazine, publishing his first article, “Strong Men of the Far West,” in December of 1922. The



By the time he was 21, and with a year of hard work under Treloar’s tutelage, Willoughby had become exceptionally strong and skilled at acrobatics. Although the supported man is unidentified on the back of the photo, it was taken on 11 November 1922.

article profiled some of his teammates at the LAAC and included more than a few kind words about Treloar and his knowledge of how to train.⁸⁵ Despite all this AAU activity, however, Willoughby did join ACWLA and served as state chairman and later as vice president.⁸⁶ However, most meets held at the LAAC continued to be sanctioned by the AAU because of the club’s policies related to amateurism.

In September of 1924 Willoughby travelled east to meet with Bernard in Chicago, and then went on to Philadelphia to visit George Jowett, who was then editing *Strength* magazine and serving as president of the ACWLA.⁸⁷ During his stay in Philadelphia, Willoughby and Jowett finished writing the official ACWLA rules for lifting, and they discussed employment opportunities. As Fair explains, however, the two men did not hit it off. Willoughby had never met Jowett in person and was shocked to discover that what he’d been doing in California for the love of the sport, his partners on the East Coast were doing to make money. Willoughby disagreed with Jowett’s paying himself a salary from the ACWLA dues, and Jowett

found Willoughby to be “too much of an idealist.”⁸⁸ Jowett clearly felt threatened by Willoughby’s idealism, writing to Ottley Coulter on 26 September 1924:

Willoughby left for Virginia last Tuesday. I really was glad to see him go, for he is one of these fellows that has his head up in the clouds all the time. He cannot see reason, all he sees is himself, everybody else is wrong. For a fellow of his age, on practical subjects, he is terribly dumb, all the time wanting to talk in the abstract, simply will not accept what does exist, otherwise he is a great enthusiast, but you know how sick you get of a fellow like that, talking all the while when you are working at it all day long too. Especially, when you cannot make him realize facts.⁸⁹

Years later, Coulter provided other proof of Jowett’s jealousy as he recounted a story told by Milo Steinborn in a letter to Willoughby. “He stated that you were bending a big spike to demonstrate your great grip and hand strength and that George Jowett ignored your impressive stunt by looking out a window.” Continuing, Coulter wrote, “Personally, I cannot understand such an attitude, especially considering that Geo. always appeared to have special pride in his own grip and hand ability.”



This back biceps pose is made even more dramatic by the interplay of his deep tan with his lighter back muscles. It was taken in 1926 when he was 25.

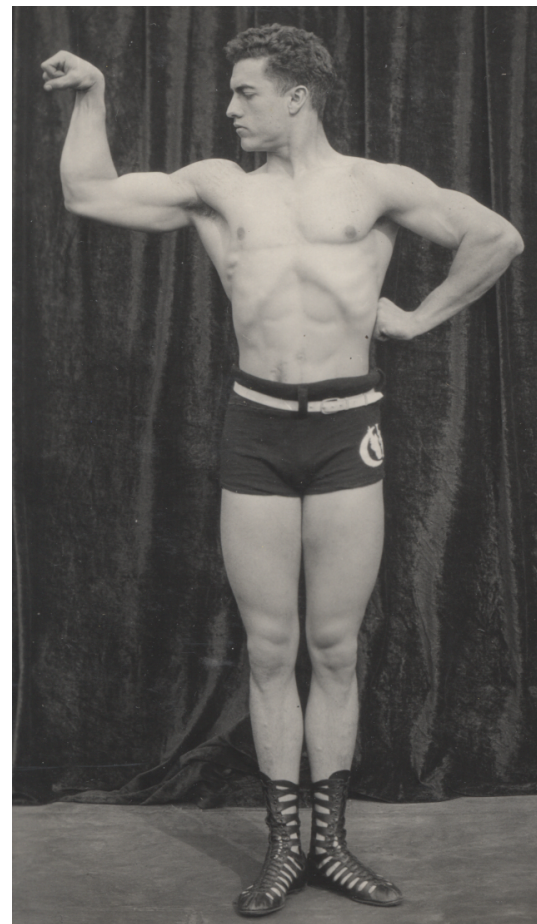
Perhaps, Coulter continued, “George thought only his hand strength was important,” noting that it could be seen as “an attempt to discourage you from any further attempts to better yourself or make any reputation for yourself.”⁹⁰

Willoughby didn’t get a job at *Strength* magazine, but in January of 1925, his story and two accompanying photographs were used in a back cover ad for the Milo Barbell Company that was clearly written by Jowett. No doubt Willoughby and Treloar took offense at the advertisement that gave full credit to Jowett, for having “specially coached” Willoughby to his National Championship win in 1924. Jowett’s willingness to stretch the truth went even further, claiming that “by employing the power which he got from his barbell exercise, and the scientific methods imparted to him by Mr. Jowett, young Willoughby succeeded in outdoing the best efforts of all his competitors, and the Olympic Committee awarded him a medal, as the best amateur lifter.”⁹¹ Willoughby received no medal from “The Olympic Committee” and, of course, he was never coached by Jowett.

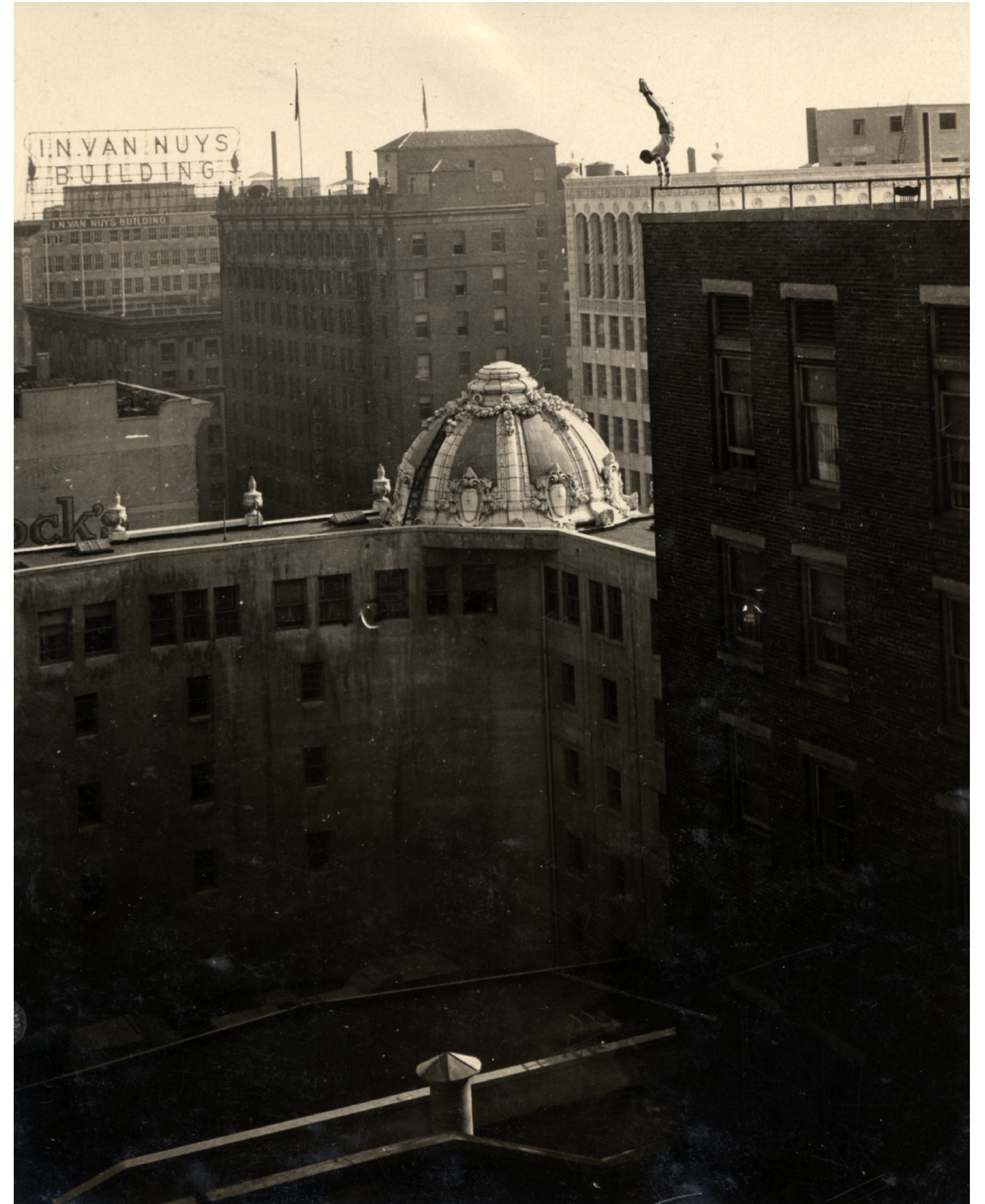
Whether Willoughby was paid for this ad is not known. However, he definitely was looking for ways to make money in the Iron Game at this time and Jowett was wrong in thinking that he was “terribly dumb.” The truth was that Willoughby knew far more than most people writing for the muscle magazines even though he was still in his twenties. It’s unclear how he developed his incredible appetite for learning, but by the mid-1920s he had read nearly everything available in English on lifting and taught himself rudimentary German and French so he could read the works of Theodor Siebert and Edmond Desbonnet in their original languages as well. He had also begun studying art history, was working with statistics and higher mathematics, and had become increasingly interested in the sciences, especially physical anthropology and zoology.

After this trip, Willoughby continued to train at the

LAAC although it appears he competed less frequently. In 1925, he and his fellow teammates at the LAAC decided to test themselves on all 42 ACWLA recognized lifts in a series of club-only competitions.⁹² Since many of these were single-hand lifts, the poundages seem small by modern standards but at their meet on 3 October 1925, the men did five lifts and Willoughby made a 204 ½-pound right-hand bent press and did 165 with his left. He also made 162 and 141 ½ in a right- and left-hand “get up” in which the lifter started flat on the floor with the bar at arm’s length and then rose to a standing position with the bar overhead. He was most happy with his “hip left” on this day. Weighing only 178 pounds, he made a new personal record by raising 2673 pounds from the floor while wearing a belt and chain around his hips.⁹³ Willoughby reported in 1940 that during the 1920s he trained on “sixty different lifts and feats, and—outside of ‘pressing’—made respectable records in all of them.” He was credited in that article with a right-hand snatch of 163 pounds, and a right-hand clean and jerk of 195 ½ pounds. He also did a regular snatch with 214 pounds and a two-hand clean and jerk of 274 pounds.⁹⁴



Willoughby briefly belonged to the YMCA in San Francisco, but began following the Milo courses after his barbell arrived. When he began training with Treloar, he reported that he “made considerable progress from the start.”



This amazing photograph shows David Willoughby, at age 21, performing a handstand on the railing of the roof-side gym on top of the Los Angeles Athletic Club on 12 November 1922. Willoughby did acrobatic work as part of his training and there are a number of photos of him doing stunts. He was also apparently not afraid of heights, as one series of photos in his collection shows him climbing, and then standing, at the very top of a giant sequoia tree.

THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF POLYMATH DAVID P. WILLOUGHBY

PART II: THE MEASURE OF A MAN

By Jan Todd and Ryan Murtha
The University of Texas at Austin

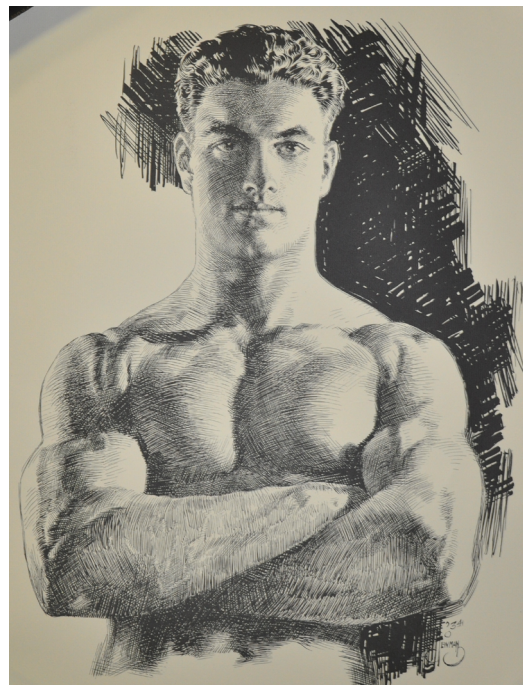
“The true measure of a man is not how he behaves in moments of comfort and convenience but how he stands at times of controversy and challenges.”

—Martin Luther King Jr.

In the second half of the 1920s, Willoughby’s attention began to shift away from competitive lifting. No doubt he had hoped that by promoting weightlifting he might one day be able to make a living in the Iron Game, but when neither Jowett nor Bernard offered him a job in 1924 and the AAU seemed unwilling to endorse weightlifting as worthy of being an Olympic sport, Willoughby began thinking of new ways to support himself.⁹⁵ While competitive weightlifting was in the doldrums in the late 1920s, weight training to improve one’s physique seemed to find plenty of wind to fill its sails. The mainstream appeal of *Physical Culture* magazine, the muscular bodies of silent film stars like Douglas Fairbanks, the growth of YMCAs where barbells could be found, and the proliferation of mail order training courses allowing one to train at home with advice from an expert, opened up all sorts of possibilities for new ways to make money in physical culture.⁹⁶ In order to pursue these possibilities, Willoughby declared himself a professional in 1926.⁹⁷ He did so initially to assist Treloar with some of his work at the LAAC, but Willoughby had also been working as an instructor for Leo Moir, who ran the Health and Strength Gymnasium at 227 West 12th Street in downtown Los Angeles. He took over the running of the gym on 17 December 1926 and began calling it The Willoughby Gym.⁹⁸ [Editors’ Note: See page 58

Correspondence to: Dr. Jan Todd, NEZ 5.700, Dept. of Kinesiology & Health Education, Stark Center, University of Texas at Austin, 78712. Email: jan@starkcenter.org.

in this issue for Willoughby’s article on J. Paul Getty that discusses this gym.] Willoughby later wrote that “the business was far from lucrative,” even though he had Getty, a number of pro wrestlers (including Milo Steinborn who was then living in California), and professional acrobats and entertainers as members.⁹⁹ In addition to helping the members train, Willoughby also used the gym as a quasi-lab and measured the professional athletes who trained there as their physiques were more impressive than those



Clyde J. Newman did many drawings for *Strength* magazine and later became friends with Willoughby through correspondence. When Willoughby decided to begin selling *The Willoughby Method* as a training course, Newman gifted him with several drawings to use in his promotional materials including this remarkable portrait of the would-be entrepreneur.

of average men, and he even measured some of his women members. These measurements proved important in his later work on ideal proportions.¹⁰⁰

In addition to serving as Willoughby’s weightlifting coach, Treloar proved to be an important sounding board as Willoughby began formulating his ideas about perfecting, and judging, the human form. It needs to be kept in mind that there were no true bodybuilding contests yet in America. The contest Treloar won in 1904 did not become an annual affair, although magazines like *Physical Culture* did, off and on, sponsor physique competitions, such as the 1922 contest in which Angelo Siciliano (Charles Atlas), won the title “Americas Most Perfectly Developed Man.”¹⁰¹ However, there was no governing body sanctioning such contests and there were no real judging standards. In 1904, for example, when Treloar won Macfadden’s contest, the instructions included in the brochure for the contest stated, “Remember that this competition is not to decide who is the most wonderfully-developed man, as we do not desire to select abnormal representatives or freaks from the standpoint of development; we wish the prize to be rewarded to the most perfect specimen of physical manhood.”¹⁰²

It is understandable that being trained by “The



This grainy physique shot was taken in September 1921. On the back, in very uncharacteristic enthusiasm, Willoughby has written, “My first studio muscle-photo!” There would be many more in the years ahead.

Perfect Man,” would cause Willoughby to begin thinking about his own body. He had his first physique shots taken by a professional photographer in 1921, and had another series taken in 1925 after returning from seeing Jowett. Some of the photographs he had taken of himself after 1926 displayed the same classical elegance found in Tony Sansone’s 1932 photo collection *Modern Classics*.¹⁰³

The widespread interest in and importance of measurements in the early twentieth century had many antecedents. Historian Daniel Boorstin argued in *The Amer-*

icans, his classic history of nineteenth-century America, that people in all walks of life increasingly turned to statistics after the Civil War, creating what he called “statistical communities” that included and excluded people based on numerical rankings. Boorstin was looking particularly at the rise of insurance companies that began estimating life span and health expectations as a way to protect their business interests. The Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company released the first set of tables of ideal height and weight in 1895, and following that, most other insurance companies—using different sets of criteria—released similar models until, by the 1930s many Americans saw these tables as guides to an ideal body. Other Americans were looking at body measurements too. The greater availability of ready-to-wear clothing in the late nineteenth century and the sale of patterns for home sewing led to the introduction of standardized sizes. Physical educators in both England and America were also inspired by the late nineteenth-century’s love of Greek Revivalism and used the ancients as physical standards in creating new forms of physical training. Citing William Blaikie, who opened his 1879 book *How to Get Strong and How to Stay So* with: “Do We Inherit Shapely Bodies?” historian Roberta Park describes how the emerging men’s physical education community began to adopt “programmes of systematic exercises (i.e., gymnastics and calisthenics) such as Sargent (then director of the gymnasium at Yale University) and Archibald MacLaren (director of the Oxford gymnasium) had devised,” and used measurements as their standard of success. Outside the realm of academia, the rise of physical culture magazines and the use of measurements in advertising performers such as Sandow and Treloar, helped foster a mail-order-course industry that also relied heavily on human measurements as the determinant of success.¹⁰⁴ As Ben Pollack and Jan Todd explained in an article on Earle Liederman and Charles Atlas:

Mail-order muscle authors capitalized on the confluence of a growing interest in exercise, a lack of readily available information on the subject, the power of the Postal Service, and photography to deliver inspiration and visual instruction. . . . As printing and photography technologies matured, the business environment for mail-order muscle grew increasingly lucrative. Most of the more successful mail-order businesses, therefore, began later: Lionel Strongfort’s in 1911; Liederman’s in 1917; and Atlas’s not until 1922. By 1925, over a dozen mail-order muscle courses were advertising in *Physical Culture* or *Strength*. This pattern of growth mirrored both the overall correspondence course industry and the physical culture advertising industry, which grew rapidly between 1910 and 1930. . . . Scholar Mark Whalan explains that “the physical culture craze was to a large degree dependent on



Like Tony Sansone, Willoughby's body was especially elegant in certain poses. This nude study was made by photographer Fred Hartsook, in 1926. Hartsook lived in Burbank and photographed many Hollywood celebrities; he died in 1930.

representations of idealized physiques, which were becoming more important to social ideals about race and gender.' Unlike popular eugenics theories, however, media about physical culture typically focused not on the proliferation of "good" genes but rather on the possibility of self-definition and redefinition through diet and exercise.¹⁰⁵

How much of this Willoughby knew in 1926, of course, can only be a matter of conjecture. However, Willoughby began to devote his intellectual energies more fully to the idea of building an ideal physique after returning from his meeting with Jowett. No doubt inspired by Treloar's association with Sargent, he began by looking at Sargent's ideas about physical perfection and then decided to fact-check Sargent by gathering his own measurements on humans (especially athletic humans from his gym), and classical statuary, and then used statistics to help understand what was pleasing to the eye.

In September of 1929, Willoughby published the first article of a series exploring his ideas on the ideal physique in *Physical Culture* magazine. "What is the Perfect Physique?" was described by the magazine's editors as "one of the most interesting surveys of the proportions of the ideal masculine physique that we have had the pleasure of publishing in the history of this magazine."¹⁰⁶ As proof

of the importance in which they held his article, Willoughby was given seven full pages to lay out his theory, and in those pages he presented a new vision. He rejected the methods of Sargent and other academic anthropometrists, arguing that using antique statuary as the basis for their systems was inaccurate because sculptors invariably tried to "improve on nature—by accentuating the development of certain parts of the body and attenuating that of other parts." What that meant, Willoughby explained, was that the ideal bodies of old did not represent what was possible from "intensive and intelligent culture of the body," or, to put it simply, physical training. The ancient statues represented an aesthetic, but not one that portrayed a realistic human vision.¹⁰⁷

Willoughby used several classical statues frequently cited by anthropometrists to make his case for his new method of calculating human perfection. He began by explaining what the statues would weigh if each was a real human of 5'10" in height, and then compared the ratio of various proportions of each body to one another. The Apollo Belvedere, for instance would weigh only 167 pounds, Polycleitus' Doryphoros or spear carrier, would weigh in at 179 pounds. The hyper-muscular Farnese Hercules, idol of many modern bodybuilders, was surprisingly, not Willoughby's favorite.¹⁰⁸ He described it as a "monstrosity of proportion" and calculated Hercules would weigh 228 pounds if marble could become flesh.¹⁰⁹ Years later, in an art magazine, Willoughby told how he

had reached some of his conclusions, explaining that he measured numerous statues, and then wrote to museums across Europe and America for the measurements of those he could not see himself. In this way he discovered that most classic statues had unnaturally small heads given their other body proportions. It was this, he said, combined with their "relatively short trunks and long legs" that gives the statues "the impression of great (god-like) stature."¹¹⁰ It was, he claimed, "a confusion of technical artistry with anthropomorphic perfection." Like an illusion, he noted, "A beautifully-sculpted human figure in marble or bronze always is impressive, whether the proportions be true to life or not."¹¹¹

Having rejected the ancient Greeks, Sargent, and his academic cronies, Willoughby turned to Leonardo Da Vinci for inspiration, writing in *Physical Culture*, that Da Vinci

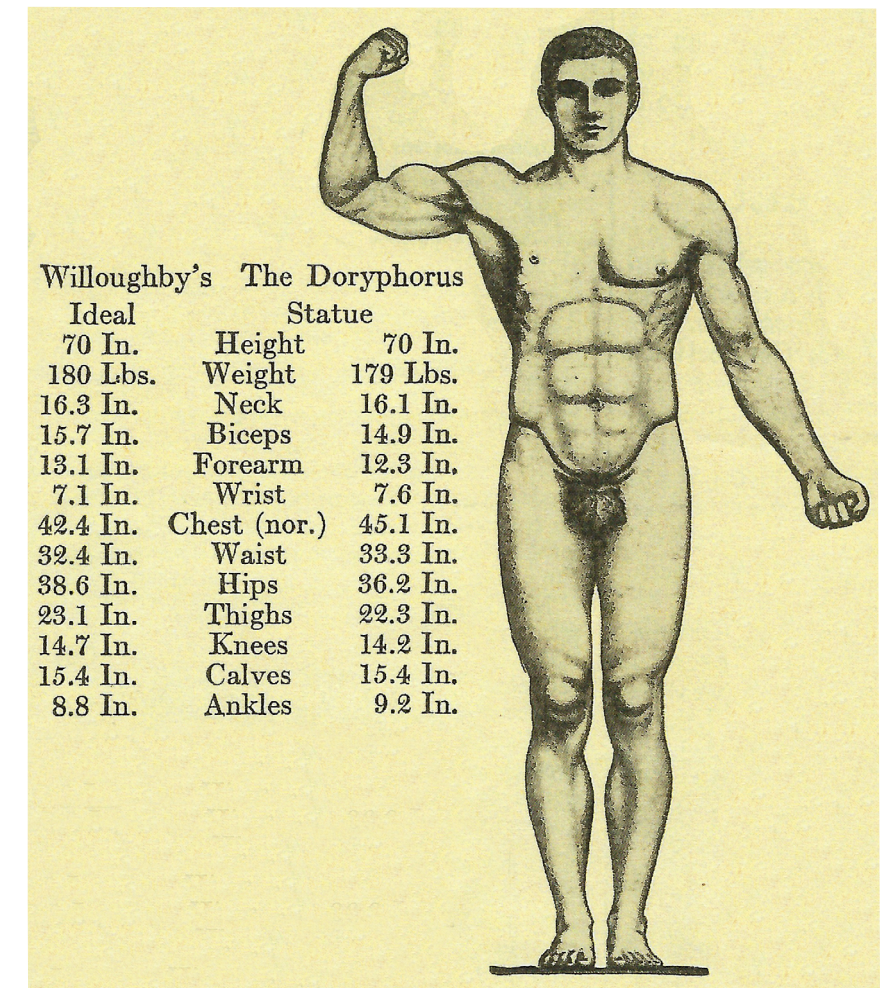
hit the nail on the head when he said, 'The true proportion is solely the proportion of an individual in regard to himself, which according to true imitation, should be different in all the individuals of a species, as is the case in nature. Thus all the parts of any animal should correspond with the whole; that which is short and thick should have every member short and thick; that which is long and thin, every member long and thin, and that which is between the two, members of a proportionate size. And, since the muscles bear a relation to the size of the joint, it follows that the measurements of a given muscular part should be in ratio to the joint most directly influencing it.'¹¹²

Using these principles, Willoughby then went on to argue that Sandow, despite his fame as a perfect man, was far from ideal as his legs were too short for his torso and his muscular girths too large for his frame.¹¹³ Willoughby's ideal, shown in a drawing he made for the article, was the man who had every muscle developed in proper ratio to his own skeletal frame. The fact that it looked a lot like Willoughby's own physique at this time should not go unmentioned.

Over the next year Willoughby contributed ten more articles to *Physical Culture* on training to improve different body parts.¹¹⁴ The 1930 series was essentially a training course on how to be a bodybuilder. Two-time Mr. America, John Grimek, wrote that Willoughby's *Physical Culture* articles inspired and directed his

own interest in bodybuilding. They were, he claimed, "the most complete bodybuilding series that was ever written . . . it was the first of its kind ever presented . . . a masterpiece that covered every phase of building muscles." Expanding on the importance of the series, Grimek explained that before Willoughby, "No one at that time who knew anything about muscle building was willing to share his knowledge." It was as if training information was a "guarded secret," Grimek continued, "but Dave's body developing articles 'exposed' it all, and was so explicitly written that it was impossible for anyone to 'go wrong.'"¹¹⁵

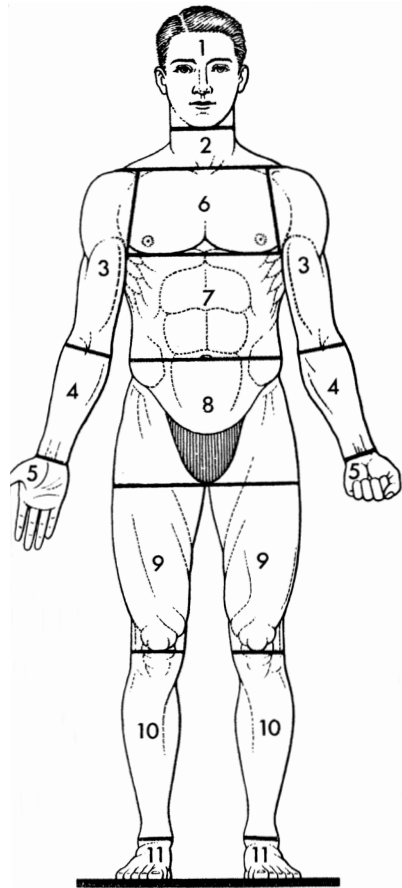
Another avid reader of that series was Willoughby's mentor, Al Treloar. On 15 September 1930, Treloar wrote to Willoughby in Santa Barbara, where he had moved in October 1929. Treloar told him he had been following his articles in *Physical Culture* "with great interest," and complimented him on his improved writing style.¹¹⁶ Two weeks later, on 30 September 1930, Treloar sent Willoughby a longer and highly detailed analysis of his "formula for computing the approximate weight of the body from the 18 common girth measurements." Treloar's



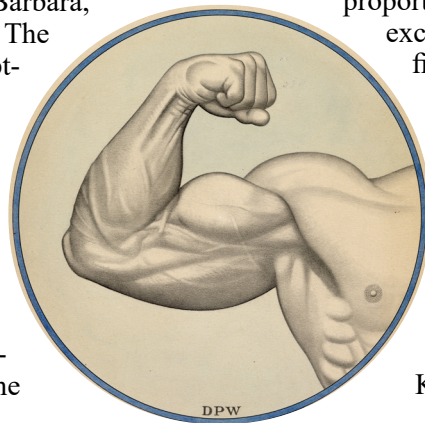
In *Physical Culture* magazine in September 1929, Willoughby included this drawing to show both how a person should stand to take the measurements described in the article, and, more importantly, what the ideal man should look like. His ideal was based on the famous statue from Ancient Greece called The Doryphoros, or Spear Carrier, although Willoughby's ideal does not match the Doryphoros for all measurements.

role as sounding board and mentor for Willoughby's ideas on measurements is clearly revealed in this letter, for like a good teacher, Treloar first praised Willoughby, calling his proposed formula "ingenious," before taking issue with some of the assumptions and mathematical calculations. "It is not always safe to make a formula from observed results," cautioned Treloar. "Your method of obtaining the constant divisor by dividing by the known weight in a number of cases, from a mathematical standpoint, is beginning from the wrong end." He suggested Willoughby think of the various sections of the body as cylinders, explaining that "the volume of a cylinder varies directly as the square of the circumference." The letter then goes into a highly technical discussion about using the cylinder approach for estimating weight, at the end of which Treloar wrote, "With only 18 ordinates, it now seems necessary to do a little guess work, and it is probable that about 2.32 is nearer the correct factor than 2.5. So our final divisor would consist of the following: 18, 12.5664, 31.25 and .431 (reciprocal of 2.32) all multiplied together." The letter concludes with Treloar asking Willoughby to respond, "I would really like to hear from you after you have gone over the above figures."¹¹⁷

David's mother and sister, Hazel, had moved with him to Santa Barbara, once again leaving his father behind. The move was driven by Willoughby's accepting a job to do medical illustrations for a book on endocrinology that was being written by William Engelbach, the first doctor to experiment with administering Human Growth Hormone exogenously.¹¹⁸ Willoughby had helped Engelbach with illustrations in Los Angeles, and happily accepted when Engelbach asked him to do the illustrations for his *magnum opus*, a four-volume scientific treatise titled *Endocrine Medicine*, that a team of people were helping him to write in Santa Barbara. Engelbach was one of the most eminent endocrinologists in America at this time, and one of his partners on the project was a Los Angeles physician, Eberle Kost Shelton. In Willoughby's personal archives, there is a research proposal titled "Outline



To use The Willoughby Method properly, you took measurements of 11 different parts of the body and then analyzed those measurements against formulas created by Willoughby. In correspondence with Treloar, it's clear that he was an important sounding board for Willoughby in creating this system.



Among the valuable assets of the Willoughby Collection are his original drawings. They include fossil drawings, sketches of historic figures from the world of strength, pictures of animals, and drawings like this flexed biceps representing "how a muscular 19-inch arm would look on a man 5 feet 8 inches in height. The proportionate bodyweight would be about 215 lbs."

of Proposed Study to Determine the Proportions and Characteristics of the Optimal Human Figure," that outlines his plan to weigh and measure both men and women in order to determine anthropometric standards. Although it is not dated, does not suggest where such research would be done, and does not identify who would fund such an experiment, its existence strongly suggests that part of his time in Santa Barbara was connected to anthropometric research, as he also began working with Dr. Shelton shortly after the move.¹¹⁹

These early years in Santa Barbara must have been exciting, and deeply satisfying for Willoughby. After the pride he found in seeing his ideas on measurements in print in *Physical Culture*, Willoughby aimed yet higher and in 1932, published "An Anthropometric Method for Arriving at the Optimal Proportions of the Body in any Adult Individual," in *Research Quarterly*, the most important physical education journal of that era. For a man with no academic position, and less than a full year of high school to be published in a peer-reviewed journal such as this was extraordinary.¹²⁰ What made the publication even more surprising is that it was an experimental research report.¹²¹ Willoughby's subjects were 52 adult males and 20 females who possessed "excellent

proportions" and were judged to have "good or excellent" physiques.¹²² Willoughby's use of fit, well-muscled subjects as the basis of determining a method to advise people on weight loss and exercise made his approach unique, he explained in a later article, because "Other, mass studies have been made on thousands of 'average' (mostly non-athletic) men and women, by life insurance companies and public health organizations."¹²³

In May of 1932, physician E. Kost Shelton presented a paper titled "The Method of Willoughby" to the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Internal Secretions, in New Orleans, Louisiana. In September, Shelton's paper appeared in the distinguished medical journal *Endocrinology*, where he laid out three aims for the paper: 1) to introduce the Willoughby Method of Anthropometry; 2) to discuss how the computations



In 1929, Willoughby moved to Santa Barbara, California where he became involved in a number of different activities related to research on human anthropometry and also opened a commercial gym. This photograph shows Willoughby in October of 1934, holding an unidentified man overhead, while training on the rooftop of the gym.

and measurements should be made when employing the method; and 3) to share the results of two years of experimentation with the method in his medical practice.¹²⁴ Shelton was careful to give Willoughby full credit as the sole originator of the method, praising him as a man who, "Without benefit of training in the medical sciences . . . has, through constant study, familiarized himself with the bony framework and musculature of the body far more than the average physician."¹²⁵

The article in *Endocrinology* pushed Willoughby into the national spotlight in the early 1930s. Journalist Jane Stafford reported on The Willoughby Method in a



This photograph shows Dr. William Engelbach (second from the right) and the enormous staff that helped him publish his foundational, four-volume text, titled *Endocrine Medicine*. Willoughby did illustrations for the books and also contributed heavily to the chapter on human anthropometry. Willoughby, sporting a light colored suit and a new mustache, is the fifth man from the left in the back row.

full-page newspaper article titled "Why Your Ankles Tell What You Should Weigh," that appeared in dozens of iterations in American newspapers. Written for News Week Magazine and Science Service, a news syndicate that sold content to American newspapers, Stafford's article appeared as early as 2 September 1932 in Ames, Iowa, and Columbus, Indiana, and was still turning up in newspapers more than a year later.¹²⁶ A similar story written for the American Weekly News Service, ran under the title "A New Way to Discover How Good Your Figure Is," and appeared simultaneously in numerous papers on 2 April 1933 and then, like Stafford's article, continued to circulate in small town papers for several more months.¹²⁷

The Willoughby Method resurfaced in the national press in 1936 when an exposé about improprieties in the judging of beauty contests made the rounds, and it appeared again when the first Mr. America contest was sanctioned by the AAU in 1940.¹²⁸ New York columnist John Chapman, questioned what the standards for the Mr. America contest might be, citing Willoughby's work on proportion and measurements in his speculations. Chapman's hope, he told readers, was that the winner would look more like the Greek statue called the Doryphoros, or Spear Carrier, than the Farnese Hercules. That hope was not granted, however, as the most heavily muscled man in the contest—John Grimek—emerged victorious. Grimek's statements about the impact of Willoughby's *Physical Culture* articles on his career, mentioned earlier, seem to suggest, however, that Willoughby helped the right man win the Mr. America after all.

Willoughby's work with Dr. Engelbach ended on 31 January 1931 when the book was submitted to the printers. It was heralded as the most important work on endocrinology in the first half of the twentieth century, upon its release. Willoughby contributed most of the hand-drawn illustrations and the vast majority of the text and data found in Chapter 7, titled "Anthropometry," based on

The Willoughby Method.¹²⁹

In a letter written in 1937, Willoughby explains that he spent the middle years of the 1930s “engaged in various lines of commercial work through the sheer necessity of making a living.”¹³⁰ In a record book he noted that he designed tables for life insurance companies, drew pictures of shells for a professor at UCLA, worked on a handbook of anthropometric diagnosis, worked at a physical therapy clinic, and even attempted to sell life insurance for New England Mutual Insurance during the early Depression. He tried to make a go of the new gym he opened after arriving in Santa Barbara and several photographs in his archives were taken at his new studio. One even has a note on the back claiming that Jean Paul Getty also trained there at times.¹³¹ In the 1936 *Santa Barbara City Directory* a “physical culture studio” is listed at 114 East Carrillo Street in downtown Santa Barbara for Willoughby, but photographs in his collection suggest it began as early as 1934.¹³²

Willoughby also worked on adapting his articles from *Physical Culture* into his first mail-order course, *Arm Development*, released in 1932, and followed it with *The Willoughby Method of Home Physical Training* in 1933.¹³³ Like other training courses on the market, Willoughby promised that The Willoughby Method would produce “big muscles and a fine,



This photograph of Willoughby, taken on the roof of his gym in Santa Barbara, shows him carrying more muscle on his frame than any other photo in our archive. The large scar on his abdomen is from his botched appendectomy.

athletic figure,” and described it as a “simple, practical method” to be performed individually in the home, developed from his own experience and research.

Choosing to call it “The Willoughby Method,” even though it was not the same as his measurement schema in the *Research Quarterly*, also made sense, given the publicity he received. The course contained more exercises than others on the market at that time and he promised buyers that he would respond to all correspondence and help them along the way.

In its advertising, however, he made the same kind of broad claims as others, telling readers that The Willoughby Method would allow one to “tone up your vital organs, build up your muscles, and gain a body of superb strength and shapeliness. Whether overweight or underweight, you are shown how to attain your ideal weight and muscular proportions.”¹³⁴ Over the next several years Willoughby garnered much praise for the course. Al Treloar, not surprisingly wrote the introduction, and dozens of known physical culturists on both sides of the Atlantic (Ray Van Cleef, John Valentine, Laurence Woodford, Leo Gaudreau, Ernst Weber, and

even Bert Goodrich, winner of the unofficial Mr. America contest in 1939) allowed Willoughby to include their photographs and written endorsements in the 1935 booklet he

sent to prospective students titled *Building a Muscular Body*.¹³⁵ Goodrich even claimed that he had trained “under your supervision, and therefore knowing of your vast fund of knowledge on all phases of physical culture, I always recommend ‘The Willoughby Method.’”¹³⁶ A letter from famed weightlifter Adolph Nordquest also praised the course saying, “Honesty, sincerity and high capability are expressed in your work; it is genuine

in every respect. I know that your course will be the means of reaching and influencing mankind in a big way . . . may your splendid message meet with an ever increasing range of success.”¹³⁷

Willoughby’s path to economic stability was stymied by the economic realities of the Great Depression, however. In his personal archives are a variety of publicity materials used in marketing the course. He began by selling it in 1933 for \$20.00 (or \$25.00 if one used the installment plan) and then lowered the price in November of 1935 to \$15.00 or \$18.75 if paid out over time. Although that sounds inexpensive to our modern ears, \$15.00 in 1935 had the buying power of \$291.00 in 2021, making the course a difficult purchase for most people at that time.¹³⁸ On 12 December 1935, however, Willoughby lowered his price again, offering the course for just \$5.00 as a Christmas special.¹³⁹

After several years of trying to make ends meet in Santa Barbara, Willoughby (and several thousand other artists) applied to be part of the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Art Project, a government program to support out-of-work artists and illustrators during the Depression. In 1936, he began working on “The Index of American Design,” a pictorial record of arts and crafts pieces made before 1890, funded by the government.¹⁴⁰ Samples of the art he produced for the project are now housed in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. as part of The Index of American Design archives.¹⁴¹ The Federal Art Project also brought him back to Los Angeles, as he reported to an office located within The Los Angeles Museum (now known as the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County). At the museum he became acquainted with a number of the museum’s staff, including Dr. Chester Stock, the museum’s Director of Paleontology, who was working with the removal of fossilized bones from the La Brea Tar Pits and other paleontological projects.¹⁴²

In 1937, Willoughby made two important decisions. The first was to marry Jeannette Norine Murray, whom he had met in 1929 at Dr. Engelbach’s house. Jeannette also moved to Santa Barbara to work as a secre-



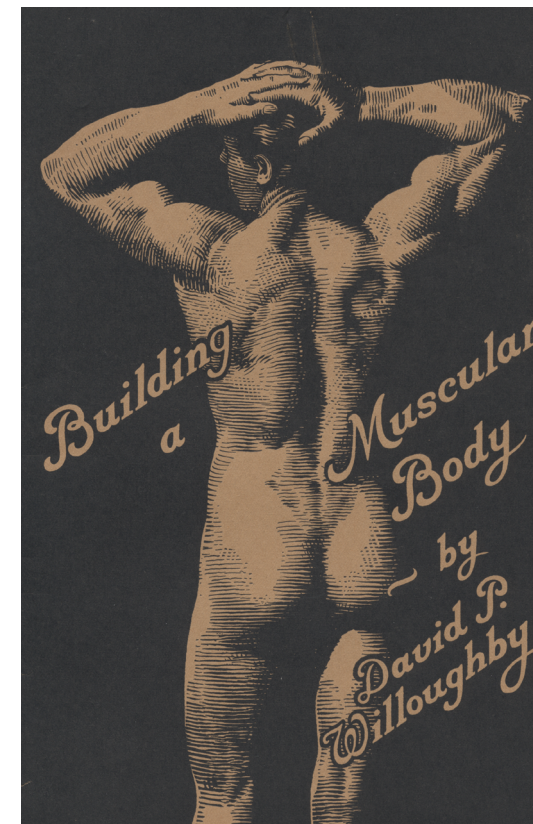
Willoughby drew this seal as the logo for The Willoughby Method Training Course launched in 1933.

in 1936, Willoughby was immediately curious about the paleontological discoveries coming out of the La Brea Tar Pits and he even drew images of several fossils for the museum. This led to a friendship with Dr. Stock and other paleontologists, and Willoughby was invited to go on a dig to search for fossils with Stock and other museum personnel that year. Finding himself in the midst of a new scientific community inspired Willoughby to think again about trying to have a future as a scientist. In July of 1937, no doubt with support from Dr. Stock, he wrote a two-page letter to Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, the Curator of Physical Anthropology at

the Smithsonian, and attached to it a research proposal asking for funding to complete his research on human anthropometry. Willoughby’s first letter to Hrdlicka is primarily filled with his plan for the study and explained how The Willoughby Method was different than other anthropometric systems. However, he also hinted at the idea of a job being created for him, writing, “Needless to say, Dr. Hrdlicka, I am keenly interested in this kind of work and would like to engage in it professionally . . . I understand that there are no institutional physical anthropologists in Southern California,” leaving unsaid the idea that he should be hired as one.¹⁴⁵ Hrdlicka’s terse, almost rude reply was not supportive. He wrote that he feared Willoughby was attempting, “too much,” cautioning Willoughby that, “anthropometric work and especially the treatment and rational analysis of the results demand a great deal—

are you sure that you have and can give it all that? Have you the

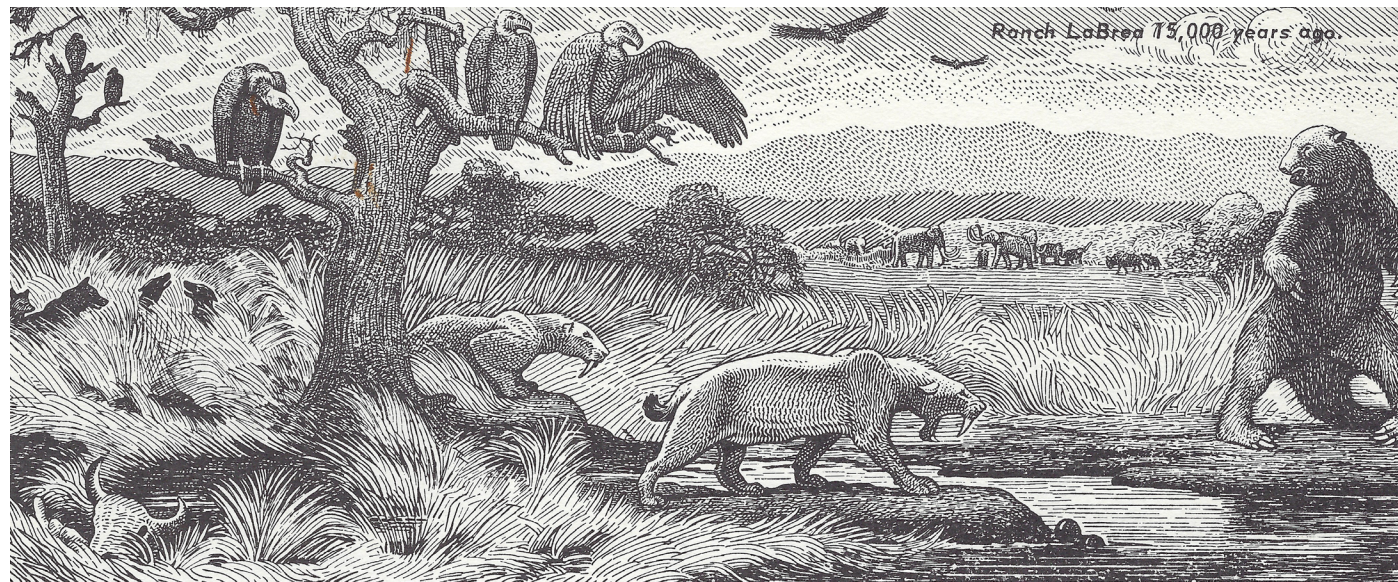
are you sure that you have and can give it all that? Have you the



Clyde Newman drew the cover for Willoughby’s 1935 advertising booklet to promote The Willoughby Method Training Course.



Taken on his birthday, 17 March 1930, Willoughby had finally purchased his first car, a Ford Model A, and could look toward steady employment for the next year as part of Dr. Engelbach’s team.



In 1936, after struggling to make it financially in Santa Barbara, Willoughby returned to Los Angeles and met through happenstance several of the paleontologists connected to the Los Angeles Museum who were excavating fossils from the La Brea Tarpits. This led to a new career for Willoughby working as an illustrator for California State University where he drew fossils and images such as this of what the area surrounding the La Brea Tarpits might have looked like more than 15,000 years ago.

necessary medical grounding?”¹⁴⁶ Willoughby’s five-page, single-spaced reply reveals both his fascination with human anthropometry as a subject and the pain he felt at his lack of formal education:

To sum up my inclinations and qualifications, I can say that ever since early childhood I have been interested in animals; but that only since engaging in the study and practice of physical training has this interest crystallized to the study of the human body. . . . If I were only in surroundings where these subjects could be properly studied and recorded, and had the inspiration conferred by employment in this work, I have not the slightest doubt that in short time I would be familiar with all the departments of physical anthropology and skilled in all its applications. But, up until now I have had to pursue the subject purely as an avocation and without any stimulus whatever except my own desire for knowledge. . . . Yes, Doctor Hrdlicka, I am certain I’ve got ‘what it takes’ . . . the particular patience, endurance and persistency necessary in searching for the truth, which, in the final analysis, is the goal of all scientific inquiry.”¹⁴⁷

Hrdlicka was not convinced Willoughby had “what it takes,” howev-

er, as he wrote back within a week “to give you more direct advice.” Hrdlicka then told Willoughby (whom he’d never met) that he was not ready to do such work. His only hope, he explained, was to set aside ten years in which to prepare and go to a good medical school. By getting his medical degree he could then support himself, Hrdlicka told him, while working as a research assistant after graduation at an anthropometric lab like the one at Harvard. And after that, he continued, Willoughby should spend six-months or so in Europe, visiting the best anthropological establishments



In 1938, Willoughby began working as a researcher and illustrator for the Department of Geology at Cal Tech University. He worked directly under the supervision of famed paleontologist Dr. Chester Stock who became Willoughby’s second intellectual mentor. In this photo of the Geology Department’s Mudd Laboratory staff from 1948, Willoughby is the third man from the left in the second row; Dr. Stock is second from the right in the first row.

there. Only then would he be ready, Hrdlicka wrote, “You are still young enough for all this, and there would remain to you probably twenty or more years for fruitful work of the right quality.”¹⁴⁸

Although young by some standards, Willoughby was already 36 years old when he read these lines and he had to know that his economic circumstances and lack of high school and college made medical school virtually impossible. However, Hrdlicka’s last sentence was the real death knell for Willoughby’s dream, as Hrdlicka closed the letter by telling Willoughby that if he did not go to medical school, “you will remain discouraged and overworked, half-competent; and in another ten years it will be too late for everything.”¹⁴⁹

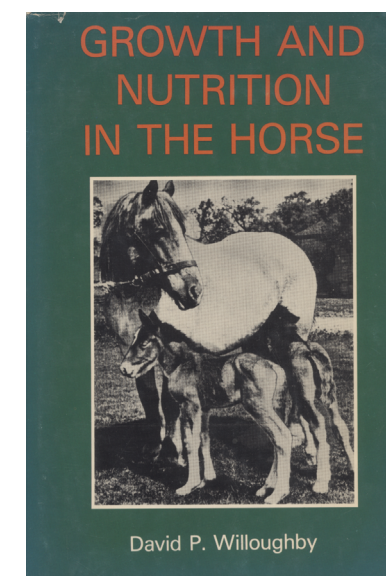
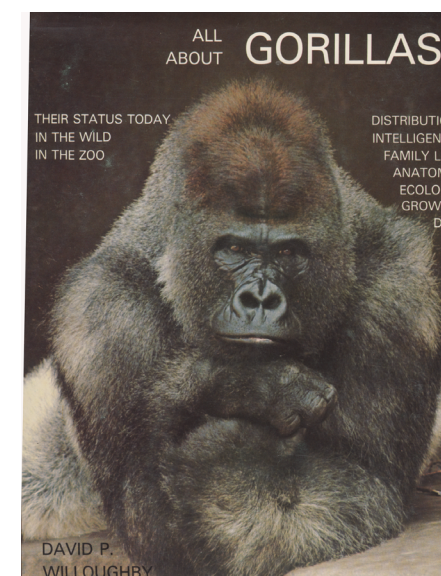
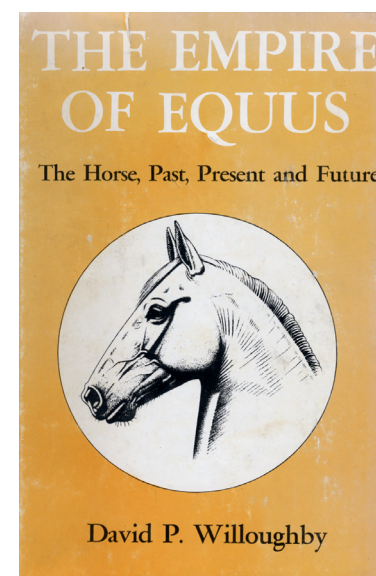
NOT TOO LATE FOR EVERYTHING

We can only speculate at how Willoughby felt after receiving Hrdlicka’s second letter, but it seems to have been an important moment in Willoughby’s life as it marked a turning away from his dream of being an anthropometrist of living humans and refocusing his enormous energy and love of measurements on animals, especially those long dead. To make this paradigm shift, Willoughby was again assisted by a mentor, the paleontologist and geologist Dr. Chester Stock, who hired Willoughby to assist him with his various research projects related to natural history at The California Institute of Technology (Cal Tech).

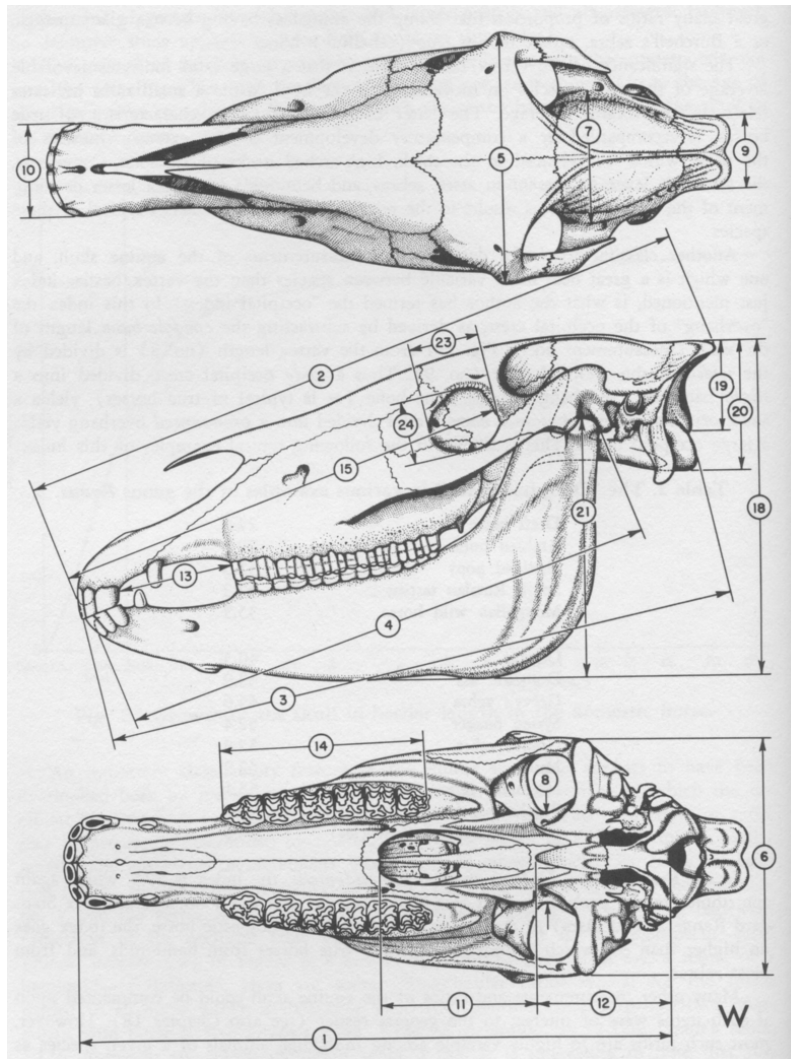
Willoughby began working under Dr. Stock’s supervision as a member of the Department of Geology, in the fall of 1938. His job title was Scientific Illustrator and Research Assistant in Vertebrate Paleontology, but in later years he also taught a class at Cal Tech in Geologic Illustration.¹⁵⁰ Stock and Willoughby worked together almost every day on routine matters, but Stock also taught Willoughby and encouraged him to become proficient in

osteology (the study of the structure of bones); vertebrate paleontology, particularly of the larger mammals removed from the La Brea Tar Pits; and modern statistical measures so he could assist with zoological and paleontological data. Because of Shelton’s guidance and support, Willoughby later described these years as a time of “rapid, almost continuous, gain in knowledge.”¹⁵¹ His first love remained measurements, of course, but he began working more like a paleontologist or anthropologist and using bones to learn about the evolution of horses and zebras, the great apes, and elephants. He worked on his personal research projects after normal working hours and on weekends, even during World War II when he was reassigned from Stock’s lab to Cal Tech’s Experimental Radiation Lab where he worked on secret projects for the Navy.¹⁵²

As Willoughby turned his enormous intellectual energies toward paleontology he began building a reputation for himself in this new field. One of Willoughby’s first research forays was to look at the limits of human obesity, publishing an article in *Human Biology* that was then picked up by *Time* magazine and national newspapers in 1942.¹⁵³ Willoughby next appeared in national publications in 1950 when he published his research findings on the height of gorillas in *Scientific Monthly*. That research, based on hundreds of measurements of gorilla bones that he had made since arriving at Cal Tech, was again picked up by newspaper wire services.¹⁵⁴ Over the next several decades Willoughby published many articles in scientific publications on a variety of topics.¹⁵⁵ He even wrote a six-hundred-page monograph on the fossil bones of horses and zebras taken from the La Brea Tar Pits (a document that is now housed at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History) that demonstrated how previous scientists looking at early horse and zebra fossils had misinterpreted what they were seeing and thus changed the paradigm for how scientists thought about the evolution of



After his retirement from Cal Tech in 1969, Willoughby did not “go gentle into that good night,” and instead followed Dylan Thomas’ advice, ignored old age and continued working at a frenzied pace. Three books on natural history appeared in that decade: *The Empire of Equus* in 1974, *Growth and Nutrition in the Horse* in 1975, and *All About Gorillas* in 1978. All three books were filled with art, charts, statistics, and incredibly detailed text written by Willoughby.



Drawing by Willoughby of a "tar-pit horse" skull from the Rancho La Brea Tar Pits in Los Angeles. This image appeared in his book, *The Empire of Equus*.

these animals.¹⁵⁶ Willoughby also published a number of articles in peer-reviewed zoology and paleontology journals and wrote three highly-regarded books: *The Empire of Equus*, 1974; *Growth and Nutrition in the Horse*, 1975; and *All About Gorillas*, 1978.¹⁵⁷

Willoughby and Dr. Stock were collaborating on a book about the evolution of the horse when Stock died unexpectedly in 1950. After Stock's death, the Paleontology Department, as Willoughby put it, "gradually faded away" over the next couple of years. The fossils, bones and other specimens were transferred to the Los Angeles County Museum, and Willoughby was, once again, forced to look for other work.¹⁵⁸

Willoughby had continued to write for the muscle magazines during these years at Cal Tech, and he had produced other training booklets, several of which he co-authored with fellow measurement/statistics enthusiast George Russell Weaver in the 1940s.¹⁵⁹ By then, there was also a new muscle magazine on newsstands called *Your Physique* that was selling well, and Willoughby began writing for the Weider publication in 1943. His articles in *Your Physique* in the 1940s covered training methods,

measurements, nutrition, longevity, and the history of the Iron Game.¹⁶⁰ In the early 1950s, Weider, who openly admired the publishing empire Bernarr Macfadden had built, decided to begin several new magazines and diversify his offerings to appeal to more mainstream tastes as Macfadden had.¹⁶¹ In June of 1953, Weider offered Willoughby the chance to start a men's magazine about animals and adventure called *Animal Life*. The offer was well-timed given the closing of the paleontology lab at Cal Tech and so Willoughby moved to New Jersey to oversee the magazine's production from Weider's new offices in Jersey City.¹⁶²

The first issue of *Animal Life* appeared in December of 1953, and Willoughby was listed as editor-in-chief of the bi-monthly publication. It continued to come out every other month with Willoughby as editor, but sales were not overwhelming. In the April 1955 issue he was demoted to "Western Editor," and his address inside the magazine indicated he had moved back to Pasadena, California, where he lived while working with Dr. Stock.¹⁶³ Willoughby's archives provide no definitive evidence as to why he left New Jersey, or why he felt so bitterly toward Joe Weider for the remainder of his life. The problem clearly related to money, however, as Ottley Coulter asked Willoughby in 1964 if Weider had finally paid him the money he was owed.¹⁶⁴ In several letters in later years, Willoughby criticized Weider, calling him "duplicitous" in a letter in 1976, and writing in a 1979 letter to "avoid Weider as you would the plague!"¹⁶⁵ Also worth noting is that Willoughby took no pride in having served as editor of the magazine. It is not mentioned by name in any of his biographical profiles and, on most such documents he failed to mention editing a magazine at all.¹⁶⁶

When Willoughby returned to California, he did not return directly to Cal Tech but worked as a draftsman and illustrator before finally landing a job in 1958 as "Engineering Draftsman and Technical Illustrator," for NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory located on the campus.¹⁶⁷ He spent the next ten years working there, putting in more than 50 hours a week helping America win what was then called "the space race." He worked as the technical artist on the Mariner, Ranger, Surveyor, and Voyager spacecraft projects, and copies of many of these drawings are in his archives.¹⁶⁸

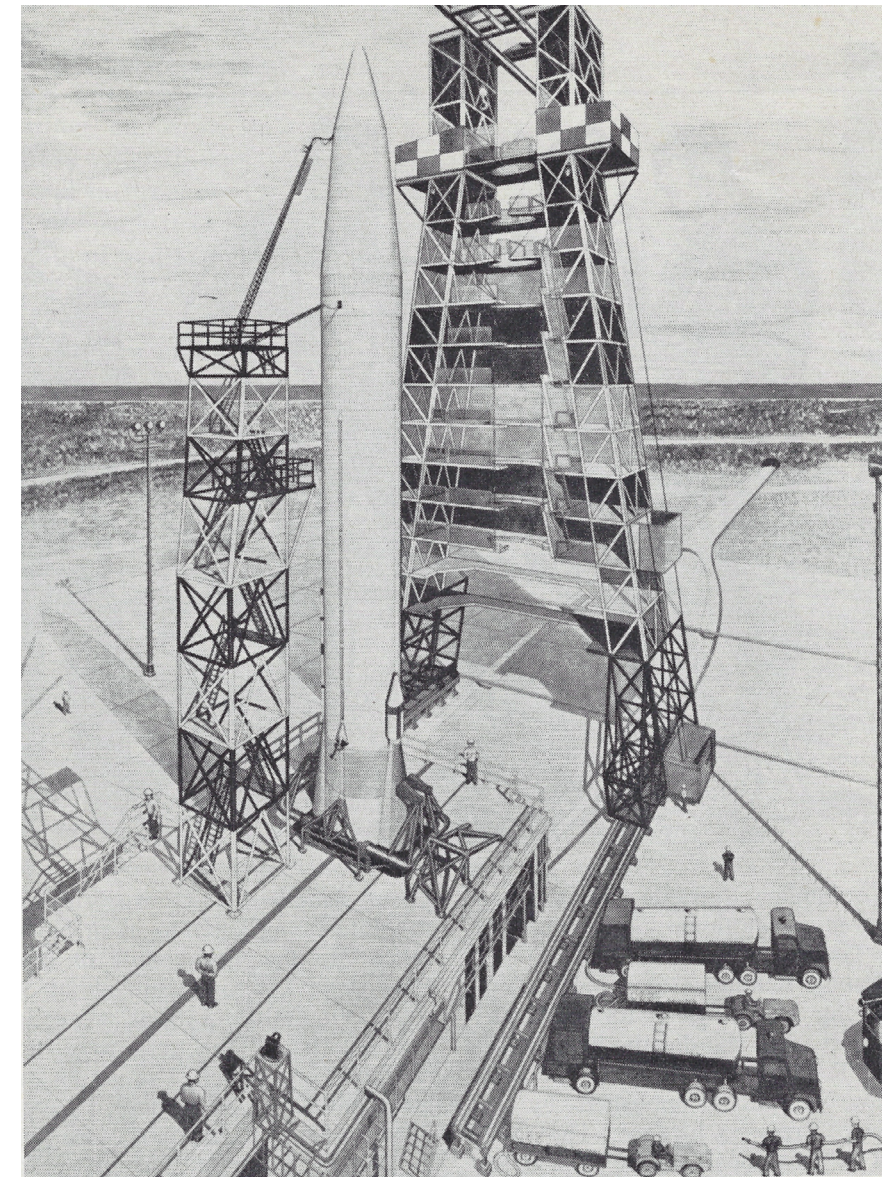
On 31 March 1969, Willoughby retired from Cal Tech after working more than 25 years at the university. With his second wife, Carol Harwood Kelley, whom he had married in 1946, the Willoughbys then bought a house in Laguna Beach, California, where David took over the garage as his office and art studio, and Carol worked on her own art in the main house.¹⁶⁹ The house was well sited, on a hillside suburban street with a distant view of the Pacific Ocean. Willoughby spent far more time in his garage than

he did enjoying the view, as his drive and enthusiasm for work was undiminished by retirement.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, the volume of his publications in the last decade or so of his life was truly extraordinary. He claimed in an interview that it came from "contemplating the thought that if I don't get this out, it will go down the drain."¹⁷¹ We like to think he may also have been motivated by showing Dr. Hrdlicka it actually "wasn't too late for everything."

ARCHAEOLOGIST OF THE IRON GAME

Just as Willoughby had saved all the notes and charts he and Dr. Stock had been working on related to the evolution of the horse, he had also been systematically gathering information about the lives, lifting records, and measurements of strongmen and strongwomen since the 1920s. In many ways, his approach to history was rather like that of an archaeologist. Because he was among the first to try and write the history of strength, he had to dig to find the facts, records, and statistics that enabled him to make sense of the vast landscape that the Iron Game covered over the course of the twentieth century. And like an archaeologist, he catalogued those facts on detailed data sheets containing records, measurements, and comparisons to other lifters at different times in history. Willoughby began to be regarded as the most important historian of the Iron Game in the late 1930s with the publication of a series of articles in the British magazine *Superman*. As a leadup to the series, Willoughby appeared on the cover in October of 1938 where he was described as the "recognized professor of physical culturists."¹⁷² Two months later, the series of historical articles "by a brilliant writer," began in the magazine. Willoughby called the series "Famous Strong-Men and Their Records," explaining that he believed that many lifters, as had happened with him, wanted to learn more about the history of strength after they began training. His hope, he explained, was that these articles would inspire and encourage such lifters. It was in this spirit, he concluded, that "I present this series, the result of more than twenty years of study of strong-men, physical development and kindred subjects."¹⁷³

The *Superman* series began with the rise of weight lifting in nineteenth-century America and covered such early figures as George Barker Windship, William Buckingham Curtis, Richard Pennell, Robert J. Roberts, Charles G. Jefferson, and the man known as "Ajax" (Johnson Whitman), the muscular policeman who pushed a 27,400-pound freight car up a slight grade for about 25



In 1958 Willoughby was again hired by Cal Tech to work in NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory where he contributed to the Mariner, Ranger, Surveyor and Voyager space missions. This large watercolor painting was made by Willoughby for the launch of the Mars Missile in 1959.

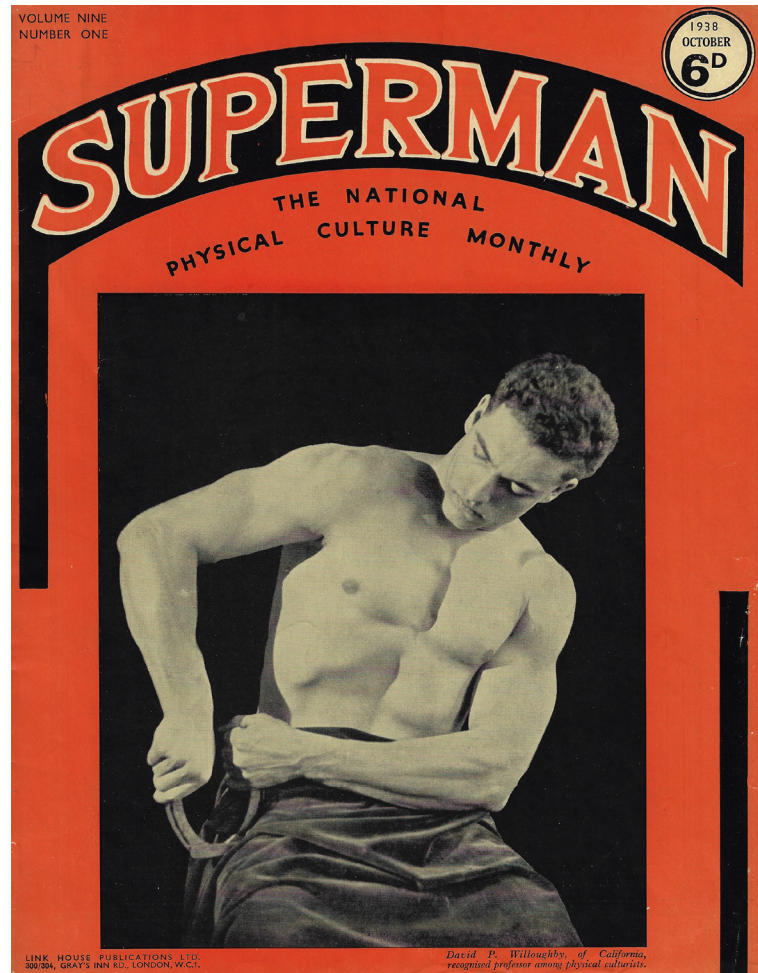
feet.¹⁷⁴ In the months that followed, he profiled Sandow, Louis Cyr, and Warren Lincoln Travis in standalone articles and then returned to covering multiple professional strength athletes in the same article. The final article appeared in September 1939.¹⁷⁵

Although Willoughby also contributed historical articles to *Your Physique* and *Strength & Health*, Willoughby's most important historical work appeared in *Iron Man* magazine beginning in 1956.¹⁷⁶ He called this series, "The Kings of Strength: A History of Strongmen from Earliest Times to the Present Day."¹⁷⁷ Willoughby reveals how difficult it was for him to accumulate the historical information he pulled together for the series in his introductory article. His sources he explained, came from Edmond Desbonnet's 1911 book, *The Kings of Strength*, and the even rarer German book, *Der Kraftsport*, written in 1907 by Theodor Siebert.¹⁷⁸ He then discussed the rise

of English-language literature on strength and strongmen, citing Otley Coulter, Mark Berry, Ray Van Cleef, and Leo Gaudreau for their occasional articles dealing with the history of strength. Willoughby's short literature review is a useful guide to the evolution of the Iron Game's historical knowledge, but it fails to tell the full story of his research methods. That tale is best revealed by examining his surviving correspondence with men like Al Treloar, Otley Coulter, George Russell Weaver, and Sig Klein. Those letters are filled with eye-witness accounts of strongmen and strongwomen they saw and what the weights and lifts were in those performances.¹⁷⁹

Willoughby planned to expand the articles in the "Kings of Strength" at a later date and publish them as a book. However, somewhere in the 1960s, that book became sidelined by a much more ambitious project that resulted in his *magnum opus*, the 665-page *The Super Athletes: A Record of the Limits of Human Strength, Speed and Stamina*. This book is the ultimate expression of Willoughby's intellectual passions, combining history, measurements, strength, physical performance, and statistics. It is an analytical treasure-trove of information on human athletic performance. It is also filled with numerous drawings, graphs, and statistics all created by Willoughby without access to computers. The fact that this book was published in 1970, just a year after he retired from Cal Tech, makes its achievement even more extraordinary. It is his true *tour de force*.¹⁸⁰

Willoughby's aim in *The Super Athletes* was to honor athletes displaying extraordinary "muscular and organic strength rather than skill and patience," by analyzing their achievements based on body size, conditions and equipment used, and the historical moment in which a record was set. His aim was to judge the merits of say, a curl done in 1925 by a 175-pound man, with a 400-pound bench press made in 1965 by a 240-pound man. To make such comparisons, Willoughby again came up with elaborate mathematical formulas as he had done when creating



Willoughby appeared on the October 1938 cover of *Superman* as a way to introduce him to their mostly British readers. His series, "Famous Strong-Men and Their Records," began in December.

The Willoughby Method. The end result was a book, more encyclopedia than narrative history, containing more than 1800 individual entries. It is a book that continues to be regarded—fifty years later—as the most important volume ever written on the history of strength. Willoughby included the records of amateurs and professionals, men and women.¹⁸¹ He also included records for things that didn't happen in contests, like pinch-gripping barbell plates, and one-finger chinning. His goal, he wrote on the back cover, was to survey, dissect, and illuminate human achievement in a manner unique in sports literature.¹⁸² He succeeded, in spades.

In the years after its publication *The Super Athletes* was frequently discussed on newspaper sports pages, in book reviews, in muscle magazines, and it has even been used as a source for academic articles. Carl Janowitz, sports editor of the *Desert Sun* in Palm Springs, for example, wrote a glowing review of the book, describing it as "one of the most intriguing books" he had ever seen, and calling it "thoroughly enjoyable and educational."¹⁸³ Famed journalist Heywood Hale Broun, who wrote for the *Chicago Tribune*, first gave his readers some examples from *The Super Athletes*, and then described it in elegiac terms. Reading the book had clearly moved Broun. He found it "something more than a record book. It is that most mysterious of scholarly exercises, a work of love."¹⁸⁴ Historian John Lucas at Penn State University used Willoughby's book as a major source for his 1977 paper on "Anomalies of Human Physical Achievement," describing *The Super Athletes* as "fascinating," "reliable," and "a gold mine," and then cribbing heavily from it for his own paper on the limits of human performance.¹⁸⁵

Like other aging scholars, Willoughby fretted over whether *The Super Athletes* would continue to be read after the initial fanfare of its release. He wrote to an old friend in 1982 that he wondered if any younger lifters would have an interest in reading about the history of weightlifting. It is no real matter to me, Willoughby ex-

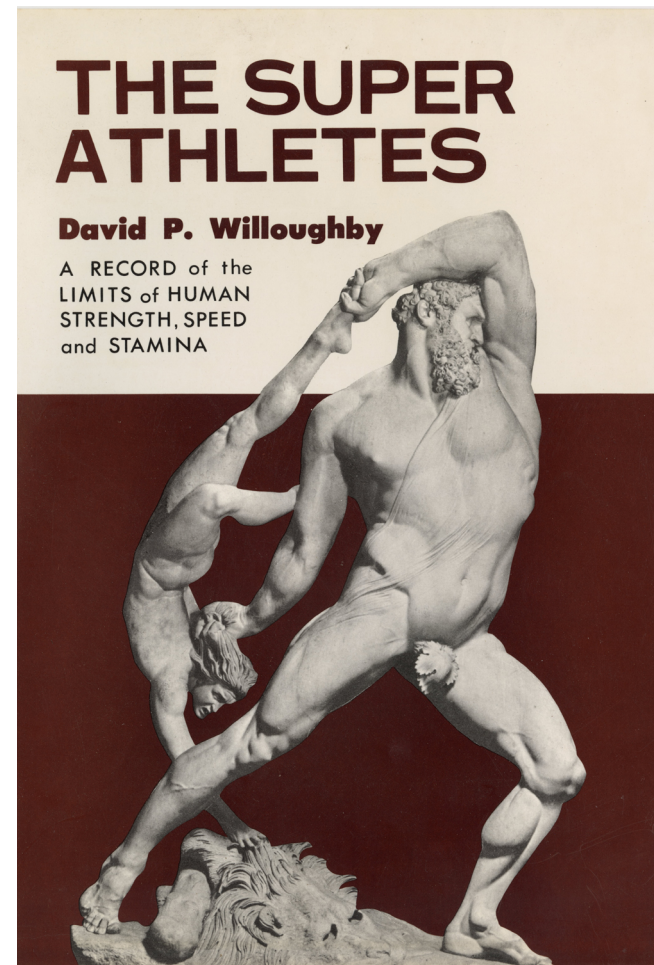
plained, if the younger lifters don't read this book, "for you and I will read it and so will many others of our generation."¹⁸⁶ Willoughby then went on to explain why he felt so compelled to write *The Super Athletes*: "if I do not tell about the feats of the great old-timers, who else will?" At age 75, he made a similar statement to a local reporter who asked why he continued working so many hours each day. Willoughby admitted he was driven by the belief "that if I don't get this out, it will go down the drain, and I hate to think of accumulating something for 40 or 50 years just to see it go."¹⁸⁷

English professor Al Thomas, champion of women's lifting, sent one of the last letters Willoughby ever received from a weightlifting friend. The letter was enclosed in a Christmas card in December 1982 and Thomas sent it to tell Willoughby how much his published works and the exactitude he employed in creating them had meant to him. "Your writings," Thomas wrote, "bring me much pleasure . . . (and) they are surely the standard metre against which all other scribblings are measured . . . They have been and are, and will remain, simply, the best." Thomas then told Willoughby about an epiphany he experienced the previous summer. He was filling out paperwork for Kutztown State College where he taught, and he was surprised to be asked to name "his hero" on the form. He thought of Lincoln first, he said, and then thought of several writers, but "they ain't heroes by a long shot. To make a long and maudlin story less oppressive," he wrote, "I kept returning to your name and finally wrote it onto the proper dotted line." Thomas realized the officials reading his form, would probably not know Willoughby's name—but guessed that many of them would not know novelist William Faulkner either. But thinking about his decision to name Willoughby had made Thomas "firmer in the correctness of my choice," he explained.¹⁸⁸ "I planned to sit down and say this many times," he continued, "but the occasion never presented itself." But now, he continued, as he was writing Christmas cards celebrating the birth of a man others would consider a hero, he wanted to let Willoughby know that he

had chosen him—and why. It was because of their shared love of strength and physical beauty, ideals he believed transcended mere weightlifting and bodybuilding. In closing, Thomas wrote, "All best wishes to you Dave, and to those whom you love. May your health remain vigorous. And I hope that you begin to receive the plaudits that your magnificent work has long deserved, plaudits which, even when received . . . have been too few and somewhat off target. May this new year bring you much happiness."¹⁸⁹

Sadly, Willoughby did not get to enjoy vigorous health in the new year. On 17 January 1983, he passed away in his sleep from pneumonia. He was 82 years old.¹⁹⁰ Well-known physical culturist Vic Boff, writing one of many tributes that appeared in the muscle magazines following Willoughby's death, helped capture Willoughby's seminal role in the evolution of the Iron Game. "Greatness may be measured by the survival value of a man's efforts," Boff wrote. Willoughby, he continued, "was the world's foremost historian of The Iron Game."¹⁹¹ David P. Webster, who shared the same initials, as well as Willoughby's love for the history of strength, also clearly viewed Willoughby as a role model, closing his obituary by writing, "I am happy and proud to have Dave

as a friend and journalistic colleague and the best way I can mark our friendship is to ensure that the perpetuation of authentic strength history is continued. This I intend to do and although in future such works may be by another David P.W. I will always, when appropriate, credit the old master, David P. Willoughby."¹⁹²



Willoughby's *magnum opus*, *The Super Athletes: A Record of the Limits of Human Strength, Speed and Stamina*, was the ultimate expression of his intellectual passions, combining history, measurements, strength, physical performance, and statistics. It is a 665-page, analytical treasure-trove of information on human athletic performance compiled without the use of computers.

In the Iron Game, David's life was devoted to questions such as what constitutes an ideal physique, how we should conduct weightlifting contests, what are the limits of human strength and endurance, and what should we remember about the past? His love of accuracy and meticulous detail has provided not just a model, but the very foundation, for all scholars and amateur historians who continue to unpack the history of the Iron Game. We, and many other historians of physical culture, are deeply indebted to Willoughby for

setting us on the right path and opening our eyes to the rich history surrounding strength training and bodily symmetry. The ideas that inspired him and made him dig for the archaeological shards of the early Iron Game continue to be important and even inspiring to modern scholars.

As the authors of this much longer than normal biographical profile, we have tried to do our own excavation, examining Willoughby's life to understand the factors that drove him to create more scholarly work in his lifetime—on a vast array of subjects—than most full professors at major universities. Our excavations revealed more than we expected to find and so, to paraphrase the man himself, we too, felt compelled to put it all down, for if we don't write his history now, who else will?

We close therefore, as we began, marveling at Willoughby's intellectual rigor, his wide-ranging impact, and how he overcame his lack of formal education to accomplish so much. As a man who loved measurements, it is fitting he be regarded as one of the true giants of the Iron Game. And, what a shame that those who turned him away because of his lack of formal education could not have understood the full measure of this man. Willoughby was not too late for anything. He actually led the way, so lifters, bodybuilders, and even historians could follow.¹⁹³



As he aged, Willoughby was seen less and less within physical culture circles. He told Terry Todd in the late 1970s that people didn't want to see the old-man-versions of earlier, younger "ideal man" specimens. However, Willoughby actually aged well, as can be seen in this photo from the back cover of *The Empire of Equus* taken when he was 73 years old.



Willoughby's archives are filled with hundreds of pages of handwritten notes and charts recording the measurements and record lifts of strongmen and strongwomen. A close look at just the pages in this photo shows how big Sig Kein's biceps were, Milo Steinborn's height and weight, Lionel Strongfort's neck size, and dozen of other interesting facts. That Willoughby gathered, and so accurately recorded these kinds of data, make his collection of enormous value to scholars.

NOTES

- David P. Willoughby, "History of American Weightlifting: Alan Calvert and the Milo Bar-bell Company," *Your Physique* 11 (August 1949): 8. See also: Kim Beckwith and Jan Todd, "Strength: America's First Muscle Magazine, 1914-1935," *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture*, 9, no. 1 (August 2005): 11-13. The best source on Bob Hoffman is: John Fair, *Muscleman USA: Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell* (Pennsylvania State Press, 1999).
- Vic Boff, "The Iron Grapevine," *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 4, no. 2 (October 1995): 20.
- Scholarship on Willoughby's life is remarkably scarce. See: Ryan Murtha, Conor Heffernan and Thomas Hunt, "Definition Diets and Deteriorating Masculinity? Bodybuilding Diets in Mid-Century America," *Global Food History* 7, no. 1 (2020): 71-91; John Fair, "George Jowett, Ottley Coulter, David Willoughby and the Organization of American Weightlifting, 1911-1924" *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 2, no. 6 (May 1993): 3-15; and Grover L. Porter, "The Superior Physique," *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 4, no. 4 (September 1996): 12-13.
- David P. Willoughby, "An Autobiography," *Iron Man* 42 (January 1983): 36-37; 105-106.
- Much of the information in this paper is derived from David Willoughby's personal archives at the H.J. Lutzer Stark Center. Not all parts of the Willoughby Collection are fully archived, however, and so in the notes that follow we have provided as much information as we can. Please understand that this means some files have bibliographic numbers assigned to them and some do not. Also, to save space, instead of writing out "David P. Willoughby Collection, H.J. Lutzer Stark Center at The University of Texas at Austin," the abbreviation "WC" will be used to indicate that this material is included in the Willoughby Collection.
- Tracking the life of Mary Ann Small through public records has proved complicated as is often the case with circus and vaudeville performers. Small was known at different times as Mary Ann Small, Mary Cherry (her mother's maiden name), Mary Ashworth, Mary Verona, and as Mary Ann Willoughby.
- Despite searches in three different genealogical online databases, (Ancestry.com; Genealogy.com and FamilySearch.com) no records can be found of Mr. Ashworth, this marriage, or the birth of their son, Harry.
- "Mother," handwritten narrative of the life of Mary Ann Small (Ashworth-Verona-Cherry) Willoughby. File: DPW B-1, F-002; "Personal Papers, Bibliographic/Autobiographic," WC. In subsequent footnotes this will be referred to simply as "Mother," handwritten narrative, WC.
- Cholera infantum or "summer diarrhea" was a leading cause of infant mortality in the nineteenth century. It was caused by poor hygiene, lack of breast feeding, feeding babies adult food, and heat. See: "Cholera Infantum or Summer Diarrhea of Infants," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 57, no 1 (1911): 25-27. Willoughby described their cause of death as "summer colic." Unpublished document titled, "David P. Willoughby, Born Mar. 17, 1901," in Willoughby File: DPW B-1, F-002, WC.
- "Mother," handwritten narrative, WC.
- Again, no records of a divorce from Ashworth, marriage to Verona, or a death certificate for baby Walter was found in our genealogical searches. Verona worked as a circus manager and "advance man," after he and Mary Ann joined forces. See for example: "Walter Verona," *Cape Girardeau (Missouri) Democrat*, 23 Apr 1892, 12; "Mr. Walter Verona," *Quincy (Illinois) Daily Whig*, 30 July 1893, 8; "Signor Walter Verona," *Mt. Vernon (Indiana) Democrat*, 16 March 1893, 8.
- In 1885 the Forepaugh Circus season ran from April to October. "Adam Forepaugh Circus Routes, 1878-1888" Circus Historical Society, at <https://classic.circushistory.org/Routes/4P1878.htm>. "Mother," handwritten narrative," WC.
- See: "Showboat," *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* at: <https://www.britannica.com/art/showboat-theatre>; and Advertisement "Wait, Look For Our Coming . . . Three Floating Palaces," Burlington (Iowa) *Hawk Eye*, 21 September 1890, 7.
- "Outfit" was Mary Ann's term for a touring company of performers of any sort. "Mother," handwritten narrative, WC. See also: "New and

- Novel: Eugene Robinson's Mammoth Three Floating Palaces," *Henry (Illinois) Republican*, 8 August 1889, 2. In this newspaper account Verona is described as "The Fire King."
- Mauberrret owned the Pelican Printing company in New Orleans.
 - "Mother," handwritten narrative, WC.
 - Names were apparently fluid in Mary Ann's family circle, which is not unusual for circus performers and entertainers. Although this child is called Mercedes Virginia Verona in Mary Ann's memoir, the New Orleans, Louisiana, Birth Records Index, states that the child born in 1892 was named Mercedes Veronica Willoughby. The mother is listed as Mary Cherry; Cherry being the maiden name of Mary Ann's mother. David Willoughby is listed as the father. Why Verona is not listed as her last name is not clear, but since she was born on the Floating Palace it is highly likely that Mercedes' birth was not recorded until sometime later, by which time, Mary Ann had already married Willoughby. Virginia Verona is the name used by David's step sister in later years. See: "92 and Independent: Fighting for Her and Our Rights," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 January 1975. Newspaper clipping in Willoughby Personal Papers/Correspondence File, WC. Carol Willoughby has written on the top of this clipping: "David's Step Sister." Other confusion comes from the fact that in a note about her husband's life, Mary Ann writes that David Sr. married Mary Ann Verona, not Small or Cherry. Later, when David's sister Hazel Willoughby is born in Minnesota in 1906, Mary Ann also lists her name as Cherry on that birth record. See: "Father," handwritten narrative of the life of David Willoughby, Sr. by Mary Ann Small," in file DPW B-1, F-002. WC.
 - The Harris Circus also had horses and the usual assortment of acrobats, clowns, and sideshow oddities. "Mother," handwritten narrative, WC. See also: "Nickel Plate Show," *Decatur (Texas) Wise County Messenger*, 9 September 1893, 4; and, Charlie Dubie, "The W.H. Harris World-Famous Nickel Plate Show A Circus Day of Forty-Seven Years Ago," *Hobby Bandwagon* 3, no. 8 (September 1948): 9-10.
 - The World Columbian Exhibition (Chicago World's Fair) ran from 1 May 1893 to 31 October 1893.
 - Heck and Avery's Museum was actually known as "The Vine Street Dime Museum," and was one of a group of dime museums modelled after P.T. Barnum's exhibition hall in New York City. Dime museums allowed the public to see circus and sideshow acts, view giants and other human oddities, see taxidermy examples of animals born with deformities, and so on. John Avery managed the Cincinnati franchise with Will S. Heck, who managed the Cincinnati Zoo. "Cincinnati Curiosities," Viewed at: <https://handeaux.tumblr.com/post/103283738542/cincinnati-family-freak-show-the-vine-street>.
 - Verona's date of death is not known. The *Cincinnati City Directory* for 1896 lists Walter Verona as a "lecturer" at Heck and Avery's Rooms, at No. 3, East 7th Street on page 1509. See also: "Mother," handwritten narrative, WC.
 - Ada Gray was a well-known actress who toured for several decades in the United States in *East Lynne* and other melodramatic plays. The Cincinnati newspapers show her performing in both *East Lynne* and *Camille* at Robinson's Theater between January and April 1897. See, for example the advertisement for the Robinson Theater on page 8 of *The Commercial Tribune*, 23 April 1897; and, "Robinson's Opera House," *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, 18 April 1897. "Mother," handwritten narrative, WC.
 - "Mother," handwritten narrative, WC.
 - Willoughby, "David P. Willoughby: An Autobiography," 36. No birth certificate for David Sr. can be found to confirm whether he had a middle name. All other official records list him only as David Willoughby. Young David was never known as David P. Willoughby, Jr.
 - "Father," handwritten narrative, WC.
 - David Sr. was then working for a tugboat company. It is not known if Mary Ann continued performing after this marriage.
 - The house was at the corner of Walnut and Levee Streets according to Mary Ann's memoir.
 - Hazel was born on 17 September 1906 in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. "David P. Willoughby, Born Mar 17, 1901." Handwritten page in Willoughby Biographical File, DPW B-1, F-002. WC.
 - "Willoughby, David P(atrick) 1901," printed scrap in Willoughby biography file. This was clearly printed after 1974 because of its list

of published books. On another typed page, entitled “Biographical Summary of the Investigator,” Willoughby writes, “Formal education terminated when in grade B-9 (1915).” Willoughby Biographical File, DPW B-1, F-002, WC.

30. Pencil sketch by David P. Willoughby. Carol Willoughby’s note on it identifies it as having been done when he was four years old. WC.

31. Inscription on the rear of photograph in the David P. Willoughby Collection: “This is our house showing part of Edith’s . . . Bought for \$3000!” There are three different addresses for the Willoughby’s in Minneapolis according to the *Minneapolis City Directories* for the years 1907-1912. See Hennepin County Library online copies at: <https://box2.nmtvault.com/Hennepin2/jsp/RcWebBrowse.jsp>.

32. Willoughby, “An Autobiography,” 36.

33. Ibid.

34. Nineteen-year-old Mercedes Virginia Verona did not make the trip to California with the family in 1912.

35. Willoughby, “An Autobiography,” 36-37.

36. Handwritten note on rear of photograph of David P. Willoughby with his trombone taken at age 13. It is not clear that the band was a money-making venture.

37. In 1916 Mary is living at 2045 Howard Street in San Francisco according to the *Crocker-Langley San Francisco Directory For 1916*, page 1932. She is not listed in the city directories for 1917 or 1918. Viewed at: <https://archive.org/details/crockerlangleysa1916sanfrich/page/1991/mode/1up?q=Willoughby>. Whether David Sr. stayed in California over the next several years is not known.

38. The Panama Pacific International Exhibition ran from 20 February 1915 to 4 December 1915. In addition to the main exhibits on the official fairgrounds, other forms of entertainment (circuses, vaudeville, carnivals, sports) also came to San Francisco that year. See: Panama-Pacific International Exhibition at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama%E2%80%93Pacific_International_Exposition.

39. “About the Author,” back cover biographical sketch of David P. Willoughby, on dust jacket for: *The Empire of Equus: The Horse, Past, Present, and Future* (New York: AS Barnes & Co; 1975).

40. Letter from H. Hesselmeier to Mary Ann Willoughby, 15 June 1918. The letterhead describes their company as manufacturers of conveying, elevating, screening, and mechanical power transmitting machinery. Willoughby Biographical File, DPW B-1, F-002. WC.

41. Willoughby, “An Autobiography,” 36.

42. Note on the back of the photograph of Willoughby at Meese and Gottfried Co., Willoughby Photography Collection, WC.

43. Willoughby’s decision to become an apprentice was not unusual in this era. According to Claudia Goldin, only 18% of American 15-18 year olds were enrolled in high school in 1910, and only 9% of Americans graduated. Claudia Goldin, *The Race between Education and Technology*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 195. See also: David Willoughby, “Biographical Summary of the Investigator,” typescript on two half sheets of paper, David Willoughby Biographical File, DPW B-1, F-002, WC.

44. The contest was held outdoors on the “Zone” at the World’s Fair. The Zone, outside the main fairgrounds, was a street filled with oddities, funhouses, risqué dance halls, and other carnival-like establishments. See: “Athletes to Contest for World Trophies at Panama-Pacific,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 16 June 1915, 76; and “Weightlifters Meet Tonight on the Zone,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 August 1915, 9. The contest was won by Noah Young, who would go on to a career in silent films. David P. Willoughby, “A Great Bodybuilder Passes On,” *Iron Man* 20 (June 1960): 50. See also: (Alan Calvert) “The Lifting Contest at the Panama-Pacific Fair,” *Strength*, 2 (September 1915): 17-21.

45. Beckwith and Todd, “*Strength*: America’s First Muscle Magazine,” 7-8.

46. “Autobiography,” handwritten, in yellow notebook, WC. Willoughby also went to Mrs. Kratzer’s resort in Glen Ellen in 1917 to recover from an illness. H. Hesselberger of the Meese and Gottfried Company wrote to Mary Willoughby about David’s poor health, “I have noticed for some little time that he has not been well,” he wrote, before going on to say he would hold David’s job for him if she wanted to send him to the country to get better. Letter from H. Hesselberger to Mary Willoughby 21 May 1917, Willoughby Biography File, WC.

47. Ernest Edwin Coffin, “David P. Willoughby: A Biographical Sketch,” *Iron Man* 4 (October-November 1941): 4.

48. David P. Willoughby, “Introduction,” Unpublished manuscript, in File #4, Publications and Courses, WC.

49. Penicillin, the first antibiotic, was not invented until 1928.

50. Annotation on rear of photograph of Willoughby in Glen Ellen, California. Willoughby Photography Collection, WC.

51. Willoughby: “An Autobiography,” and “Mother,” handwritten narrative, WC.

52. Marguerite Kratzer, who later became Marguerite Sutherland, had worked as a nurse in San Francisco. How she knew the Willoughbys is not recorded. Photos in Willoughby’s archives show him back at the Kratzer “resort” in 1927. See: Willoughby, “An Autobiography”; “Mother,” handwritten narrative; and Coffin, “David P. Willoughby: A Biographical Sketch,” 4. See also letter from Carol Willoughby to Jan and Terry Todd, 10 July 1984, Jan and Terry Todd Personal Archives.

53. Willoughby’s wife, Carol, claimed it was Mary Ann who “was the instigator of his sending for barbells to try and do something to help him regain his health.” Letter from Carol Willoughby to Jan and Terry Todd, 10 July 1984.

54. Willoughby, “An Autobiography,” 36.

55. “Anthropometric Record and Diagnosis” sheets filled in by Willoughby at age 17, age 26, age 28, and other anthropometric records kept on miscellaneous sheets in the Willoughby Biography File, WC.

56. Letter from H. Hesselmeier to Mary Ann Willoughby, 15 June 1918, Willoughby Biography File, WC. At \$18.00 a week, Willoughby was making less than \$900 a year, or about \$1000 a month in 2021 dollars according to www.dollartimes.com. See also: “Mother,” handwritten narrative, WC.

57. Willoughby only says that he lived with “his mother,” in San Francisco. Willoughby, “An Autobiography,” 36. Willoughby does dedicate his book, *All About Gorillas*, to “the memory of my parents, David and Mary Willoughby, who introduced me to the wonder-world of Natural History.” (New York: AS Barnes and Company, 1977), front piece.

58. Willoughby claims they returned in September of 1919, but Mary Ann, in her memoir, states it was July. Willoughby, “An Autobiography,” 36; and “Mother,” handwritten narrative.

59. Mary Ann and David Sr. remained married until his death on 25 May 1934. See: “Mother,” handwritten narrative and “Father,” handwritten narrative, WC.

60. Note to Jan and Terry Todd included in materials sent by Carol Willoughby in 1984, signed “CHW.”

61. “Autobiography” handwritten in yellow notebook, WC.

62. Willoughby worked at Wheeler-Sheridan until at least 1925. Work dates based on photos of slides in the Willoughby photo archive.

63. Willoughby officially joined the LAAC on 19 August 1921. “Autobiography” handwritten yellow notebook, WC.

64. The Edison film titled *Al Treloar and Miss Marshall Pos-ing*, can be seen on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQ89EREzoH0>. Miss Marshall was a competitor in the women’s contest. Treloar was also filmed in 1905 by William Dickson’s American Mutoscope and Biograph Company. See John D. Fair and David L. Chapman, *Muscles in the Movies: Perfecting The Art of Illusion* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2020), 105. For information on Macfadden’s contest see: Jan Todd, “Bernarr Macfadden: Reformer of Feminine Form,” *Journal of Sport History*, 14 (1) (Spring, 1987): 61-62. Macfadden’s Physical Culture Exhibition ran from 28 December 1903 to 4 January 1904; Treloar was named the men’s champion on the final day of the exhibition.

65. Willoughby claimed Treloar became “a good all-round lifter, with exceptional ability in the bent press and at tearing playing cards.” David P. Willoughby, “Al Treloar—A Great Bodybuilder Passes On,” *Iron Man* 19 (June 1960): 22.

66. Records in the Harvard University Archive suggest Treloar’s father, Albert Jennings, who had been a principal and then the superintendent of schools in Manistee, Michigan, played a major role in getting Treloar to attend Harvard. See file titled “Jennings, Albert T. – s. 1894-1896,” UAIII 15.88.10 1890-1968, Box 2453, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

67. Dudley A. Sargent, “The Strongest Man in the World,” *New York*

World, 16 June 1893. For more information on Sargent see: Carolyn de la Pena, “Dudley Allen Sargent: Health Machines and the Energized Male Body,” *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 8, no. 2 (October 2003): 3-19.

68. Letter from Al Treloar to Dave Willoughby, 22 December 1938, Treloar Correspondence File, WC.

69. Treloar’s freshman measurements were not recorded by Sargent himself, but by an assistant named Cutler. “Anthropometry Card No. 5684, Albert Toof Jennings,” Box 2453, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

70. “Al Treloar, Physical Director L.A.A.C.” undated, printed clipping from the Treloar file, WC.

71. The marriage is reported in “Albert Toof Jennings Alumni Record,” in file “Jennings, Albert Toof,” HUG300, Box 526, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

72. He stood 5’10 1/2” tall and weighed 186 pounds in 1903. Card showing Treloar’s measurement in 1903 in WC. See also the file titled “Jennings, Albert T., 1894-1896,” UAIII 15.88.10 1890-1968, Box 2453, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

73. David Willoughby, “Al Treloar,” undated typescript, written as obituary or memorial piece. Treloar File, WC; see also: Measurement chart titled, “Al Treloar December 1903,” with annotations in Willoughby’s hand. Treloar File, WC.

74. Allen Guttman, “From Ritual to Record,” (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 28-31.

75. David P. Willoughby, “Strongmen of The Far West,” *Health & Life* 1 (December 1922): 188-189. See also, Alan Calvert, “A Coterie of the Strongest Men in the United States: Athletics of the Los Angeles Athletics Club,” *Strength* 5 (July 1920): 18-19, 32.

76. Willoughby, “An Autobiography.”

77. David P. Willoughby, “With the Men of Iron: Plenty of Weightlifting Action in California,” *Health & Life* 2 (May 1923): 159, 178.

78. The contest was held in conjunction with the City of Los Angeles Gymnastics Championships in April 1924 at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. See also Fair, “George Jowett, Ottley Coulter, David Willoughby,” 13-15. Willoughby, “An Autobiography,” 37; and Willoughby, “With the Men of Iron,” 159, 178.

79. The lifts were the left-hand snatch, the right hand clean and jerk, two hands snatch (split style), two hands military press, and two hands clean and jerk. Willoughby made respectively, (in pounds and in order) 145, 185.5, 172, 156, and 240 for an 898.5-pound total. Willoughby, “An Autobiography,” 37.

80. Fair, “George Jowett, Ottley Coulter, David Willoughby,” 3-9.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid., 6.

83. Letter, David Willoughby to “Dear friend (Ottley) Coulter,” 26 July 1923, Box 1, Coulter Correspondence File, WC. According to an online inflation estimator, five 1923 dollars would have comparable buying power to \$77.00 in 2021. Viewed at: <https://www.dollartimes.com/inflation/inflation.php?amount=5&year=1923>.

84. “Interesting Personalities—No. 1 (David P. Willoughby),” *Physical Fitness* 1 (January-March 1940): 3.

85. Willoughby, “Strongmen of The Far West,” 188.

86. See: Coffin, “David P. Willoughby: A Biographical Sketch,” 4. See also: “Six ‘Strong Men’ Organize Club,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, 2 August 1924, 2.

87. Willoughby also went on to New York after Philadelphia and met Sig Klein. Fair, “George Jowett, Ottley Coulter, David Willoughby,” 13-14. For Willoughby’s articles in this era see: David Willoughby, “Strong Men of the Far West,” *Health & Life* 1 (December 1922): 188-189; David Willoughby, “Strong Men of the Far West,” *Health & Life* 2 (January 1923): 17, 30; David Willoughby, “With the Men of Iron: Plenty of Weightlifting Action in California,” *Health & Life* 3 (May 1923): 159; David Willoughby, “Report of the National Weight Lifting Championships,” *Health & Life* 3 (June 1924): 236; David Willoughby, “Southern California Weightlifting Championships is Held at San Diego,” *Health & Life* 3 (August 1924): 305; David Willoughby, “Muscular Iron Men of the Far West,” *Health & Life* 3 (September 1924): 341; and David Willoughby, “With the Men of Iron,” *Health & Life* 3 (October 1924): 381.

88. Fair, “George Jowett, Ottley Coulter, David Willoughby,” 13-14.

89. Letter from George Jowett to Ottley Coulter, 26 September 1924. Jowett-Coulter Correspondence Files, Stark Center.

90. Letter from Ottley Coulter to David Willoughby, 11 December 1966, Box 1, Coulter Correspondence File, WC.

91. Advertisement, “The Marvelous Effects of Bar-Bell Exercise,” *Physical Culture* 54, no. 1 (January 1925): back cover.

92. This was also done to help establish ACWLA records.

93. John Bradford, “American Continental Weight Lifter’s Association Notes,” *Strength* 10 (January 1926): 70-71.

94. “Interesting Personalities,” *Physical Fitness*, 3.

95. The AAU did not send weightlifters to the Olympics in 1928 either. Fair and Chapman, *Muscles in the Movies*, 106. To understand how the ACWLA failed (it stopped selling memberships in 1927) see: John Fair, “Father Figure or Phony: George Jowett, the ACWLA and the Milo Barbell Company, 1924-1927,” *Iron Game History* 3, no. 5 (December 1994): 20-22.

96. Fair, *Muscles in the Movies*, 123-130; and Benjamin Pollack and Janice Todd, “Before Charles Atlas: Earle Liederman, the 1920s King of Mail Order Muscle,” *Journal of Sport History* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 339-420.

97. Willoughby, “An Autobiography.”

98. “Autobiography,” handwritten yellow notebook, WC. See also: Letter to Sig Klein, Willoughby claimed that he opened the “Willoughby Gym,” in December 1926, and ran it until June of 1929 when he moved to Santa Barbara. Letter from David Willoughby to Sig Klein, 8 December 1980, Sig Klein Correspondence file, WC.

99. “Interesting Personalities,” 3. See also: Letter from David P. Willoughby to Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, 17 September 1937, Willoughby Correspondence File, WC. The *1929 City Directory for Los Angeles* lists Willoughby’s gym on page 2448 in their business listings. No real name is given for the gym in that book. The “Health and Strength Gym” is used on an undated manuscript in the Willoughby Collection called “Outline Preliminary Course of Instructions in Exercises With Weights.” It can be found in “Willoughby Publications and Training Course #4,” WC. In the *Los Angeles City Directories* Willoughby is listed as a draftsman in 1926, and lived with his parents at 733 S. Burlington (page 2102). In 1927 he is described as a “tracer,” and is living at 366 South Bonnie Brae. (page 2068). In 1929 (page 2267) he is listed as living with his parents but his work is described as “gymnasium.” His father is described as an engineer in all three entries. All three city directories may be found at: <https://calisphere.org/collections/26096/>.

100. Letter from David P. Willoughby to Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, 17 September 1937, WC.

101. The 1922 contest was held at Madison Square Gardens. Randy Roach, *Muscle, Smoke and Mirrors: Volume 1* (Authorhouse Publishing, 2008): 78-81.

102. Quoted in Roach, *Muscle Smoke and Mirrors*, 78.

103. Tony Sansone, *Modern Classics* (New York: self-published, 1932); and Willoughby photo archive, WC.

104. Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York: Random House, 1973), 165-187; Amanda Czerniawsk, “A 200-Year Weight Debate,” *Context* (American Sociological Society) 16, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 58-59; Roberta Park, “Muscles, Symmetry and Action: Do You Measure Up? Defining Masculinity in Britain and America from the 1860s to the early 1900s,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no. 3 (May 2005): 365-395; William Blaikie, *How to Get Strong and How to Stay So* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1879); Pollack and Todd, “Before Charles Atlas,” 399-420. For Sargent’s system, see Kate Mazza, “The Biological Engineers: Health Creation and Promotion in the United States, 1880-1920,” (Ph.D. diss. The City University of New York, 2013).

105. Pollack and Todd, “Before Atlas,” 403.

106. David P. Willoughby, “What is the Perfect Physique?” *Physical Culture* 62, no. 3 (September 1929): 50-55, 100-101.

107. Willoughby, “What is the Perfect Physique?” 50.

108. Jan Todd, “The History of Cardinal Farnese’s ‘Weary Hercules,’” *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 9 (August 2005): 29-34.

109. Willoughby, “What is the Perfect Physique?” 53.

110. David P. Willoughby. “The Human Figure Ideal and Real,” *The Illustrator* 48, no. 1 (1962): 21.

111. Ibid.

112. Willoughby, “What is the Perfect Physique?” 55.

113. Ibid., 52.

114. Willoughby published ten articles in *Physical Culture* in 1930: “Powerful Arms for You,” 63, no. 1 (January 1930): 58-61; “Broad and Powerful Shoulders,” 63, no. 2 (February 1930): 70-73; “First of All a Good Strong Neck,” 63, no. 3 (March 1930): 68-71; “Build Up Your Chest—and Vitality,” 63, no. 4 (April 1930): 41-43; “You Are as Strong as Your Back,” 63, no. 5 (May 1930): 41-44; “The Short Road Back to Good Digestion—Waist-line Strength,” 63, no. 6 (June 1930): 41-43; “Your Waist Line Is Your Life Line,” 64 no. 1 (July 1930): 42-45; “And Now for Perfect Legs,” 64 no. 2 (August 1930): 54-57; “Do You Want Better Calves,” 64 no. 3 (September 1930): 41-43; and “Build a Body With No Weak Links,” 64, no. 5 (October 1930): 54-60.

115. John Grimek, “As I Remember Dave Willoughby,” *Muscular Development* (June 1983): 59.

116. Treloar also discussed being measured by Sargent, adding that he still had the chart Sargent had given him at Harvard. Letter from Al Treloar to David Willoughby, 15 September 1930, Treloar File, WC.

117. Letter from Al Treloar to David Willoughby, 15 September 1930, Treloar Correspondence File, WC.

118. “Dr. Engelbach Dies; Expert On Glands: His Four-Volume *Endocrine Medicine*, Issued This Year, Is a Standard on Subject,” *New York Times*, 21 November 1932.

119. David P. Willoughby, Typescript, “Outline of Proposed Study to Determine the Proportions and Characteristics of the Optimal Human Figure.” WC. The fact that Willoughby uses his Los Angeles address suggests this was written before the move to Santa Barbara. Eberle Kost Shelton, MD, (1888 – 1955) met Dr. William Engelbach in 1927 and assisted him with the publication of his four-volume *Endocrine Medicine* in 1932. He also had a private medical practice in Santa Barbara and later in Los Angeles. Viewed at: <https://www.endocrine.org/our-community/advancing-endocrinology-and-public-health/history/past-presidents>.

120. Willoughby also published “How Much Faster Can Sprinters Travel?” in the *Journal of Health and Physical Education* 2, no. 9 (November 1931): 34-47.

121. David P. Willoughby, “An Anthropometric Method for Arriving at the Optimal Proportions of the Body in Any Adult Individual,” *Research Quarterly* 3 (March 1932): 48-77.

122. Willoughby, “An Anthropometric Method,” 51.

123. David P. Willoughby, “About The Author,” in *What you Should Weigh and Measure: Your Personal Guide to a Normal Figure*, no date. Original manuscript, WC.

124. E. Kost Shelton, “Optimal Weight Estimation: The Method of Willoughby,” *Endocrinology* 16, no. 5 (September-October 1932): 492-505.

125. Shelton, “Optimal Weight Estimation: The Method of Willoughby,” 492.

126. Jane Stafford, “Why Your Ankles Tell What You Should Weigh,” *Ames Daily Tribune/Times*, 2 September 1932, 8; Jane Stafford, “Why Your Ankles Tell What You Should Weigh,” (Columbus, Indiana) *The Republic*, 2 September 1932, 7; (No author) “Your Ankles Tell What You Should Weigh,” (Olean, NY) *Times Herald*, 18 October 1932, 10; (No author) “Your Ankles Tell What You Should Weigh,” (Washington, DC) *Star*, 18 October 1932, 8.

127. “A New Way to Discover How Good Your Figure Is,” *San Antonio Light*, 2 April 1933, 7; “A New Way to Discover How Good Your Figure Is,” *San Francisco Examiner*, 2 April 1933, 73; “A New Way to Discover How Good Your Figure Is,” *Omaha Sunday Bee News*, 2 April 1933, 31.

128. “Now Comes a Beauty War to the Last Curve,” *El Paso Times*, 8 March 1936, 44; and John Chapman, “Mainly About Manhattan,” *New York Daily News*, 17 May 1940, B50.

129. William Engelbach, *Endocrine Medicine* (Baltimore, MD: C.C. Thomas Publishing, 1932), xi and 261 are pages that mention Willoughby. The book contains more than 900 illustrations.

130. Letter from David Willoughby to Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, 17 September 1937. Willoughby Correspondence File, WC. See also, “Autobiography,” handwritten yellow notebook, WC.

131. Photos taken at the Santa Barbara gym are generally outdoor

shots, as some training was done on the roof. They are dated from 1934-1936. Willoughby photography file, WC. Carol Willoughby claimed that Getty also took Dave out on his yacht which he docked in Santa Barbara. Handwritten note on envelope to Jan Todd, Willoughby Collection.

132. *Santa Barbara City Directory for 1936*, 390. Viewed at: <https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-10705-436886618/david-p-willoughby-in-us-city-directories>. According to Carol Willoughby, David even approached Getty about helping him start a magazine at this time, but Getty declined to provide the startup funds.

133. David P. Willoughby, *Arm Development*, (Santa Barbara, by the author, 1932); and *The Willoughby Method of Home Physical Training* (Santa Barbara, by the author, 1933).

134. Willoughby, *The Willoughby Method*, 3.

135. David P. Willoughby, *Building a Muscular Body* (Santa Barbara: by the author, 1935).

136. Willoughby, *Building a Muscular Body*, 26.

137. Letter from Adolph E. Nordquest to David P. Willoughby, 20 March 1934. Willoughby Correspondence File, WC.

138. Adjusting for inflation, \$15.00 is equal to \$291.58 in 2021 according to <https://www.dollartimes.com/inflation/inflation.php?amount=15&year=1935>. See: “Dear Friend,” promotional flyer dated November 1935 in “Publications and Training Course #4,” WC.

139. “Dear Friend,” 12 December 1935, flyer in folder B-4, F-024, WC.

140. The Index consisted of approximately 18,000 watercolor paintings depicting traditional American arts and crafts made before about 1890. The project began in 1935 and ended in 1939. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal/fap.html>. For additional information see: Erwin Christensen, *The Index of American Design* (New York: Mac-Millan Company, 1950).

141. “Index of American Design,” National Gallery of Art, viewed at: https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/1944/american_design.html. To see Willoughby’s paintings on-line, go to: <https://www.nga.gov/collection/artist-info.8213.html>.

142. Chester Stock <https://tarpits.org/early-excavations>.

143. Jeannette was a widow, and is listed in the 1930 census as the sister-in-law of Dr. Eberle Kost Shelton. Willoughby recorded meeting her at Dr. Engelbbach’s on 31 July 1929. in “Autobiography,” handwritten yellow notebook, WC. See: Jeannette Norine Murray at familysearch.org/tree/person/sources/271R-QB5. See also: *California, U.S., County Birth, Marriage, and Death Records, 1849-1980*, page 439; and *Santa Monica City Directory* for 1954, page 531. Jeannette died in February of 1966. Viewed at: ancestry.com/collections/3693/records/67906799.

144. 1940 US Federal Census Record for Jeannette N. Willoughby. Viewed at [Ancestry.com/discovery/ui-content/view/69099429:2442](https://ancestry.com/discovery/ui-content/view/69099429:2442). *Willoughby, David P(atrix) 1901*, Undated typescript in Willoughby biography file contains no mention of this marriage, or Jeannette, although his second wife, Carol, is listed.

145. Letter from Willoughby to Hrdlicka, 18 July 1937.

146. Letter from Hrdlicka to Willoughby, 8 September 1937.

147. Letter from Willoughby to Hrdlicka, 17 September 1937.

148. Letter from Hrdlicka to Willoughby, 21 September 1937.

149. Ibid.

150. David P. Willoughby, “Biographical Summary of the Investigator,” undated typescript (circa 1960), WC. See also: *Bulletin of the California Institute of Technology for 1950-1951*, 223.

151. Willoughby, “Biographical Summary.”

152. Ibid. See also “Certificate from US Government Office of Scientific Research and Development,” August 1945, Willoughby Biography File, WC.

153. David P. Willoughby, “An Extraordinary Case of Obesity and a Review of Some Lesser Cases,” *Human Biology* 14, no. 2 (May 1942): 166-177. See also: “Medicine: Fat Lady,” *Time* (2 November 1942): 21. See also, “Scientist Finds Tampa Fat Lady Was Fattest in Medical Records,” *Tampa Tribune*, 1 November 1942, 17.

154. David P. Willoughby, “The Gorilla—Largest Living Primate,” *Scientific Monthly* 70, no. 1 (January 1950): 48-57. William S. Barton, “Scientist Debunks Giant Gorilla Belief,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 2 January 1950, 25.

155. See, for example, David P. Willoughby, “Earthworm: At Home

Underground,” *Science Digest* 64 (November 1968): 71-74; David P. Willoughby, “Running and Jumping,” *Natural History* 83 (March 1974): 2-7; David P. Willoughby, “Animal Ages,” *Natural History* 78 (December 1969): 56-59; David P. Willoughby, “Science Reports: Quaggas,” *Natural History* 75 (February 1966): 60-63.

156. Willoughby received a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation to help support his work on the evolution of horses and zebras. “David Willoughby,” *The Illustrator* 46 (Summer 1960): 22.

157. David P. Willoughby, *The Empire of Equus* (New York: AS Barnes and Company, 1974); David P. Willoughby, *Growth and Nutrition in the Horse* (New York: AS Barnes and Company, 1975); David P. Willoughby, *All About Gorillas* (New York: AS Barnes and Company, 1977.) A manuscript on the evolution of mammoths and elephants was completed at the time of his death, but was never published.

158. “Cal Tech March 31, 1969,” typescript in Willoughby biography file with heavy handwritten annotation by Carol Willoughby. The co-authorship with Stock is mentioned in Willoughby, *Empire of Equus*, 17.

159. David P. Willoughby, *How to Take Your Measurements* (Montreal: Your Physique Publishing Company, 1944); David P. Willoughby and George R. Weaver, *The Complete Guide to Muscular Measurements* (Montreal: Your Physique Publishing Company, 1947); David P. Willoughby and George R. Weaver, *The Kings of Arm Strength*, no date; George R. Weaver and David P. Willoughby, *Developing a Mighty Chest* (Montreal: Your Physique Publishing Company, 1944); and David P. Willoughby and George R. Weaver, *Powerful Chest for You* (Montreal: Your Physique Publishing Company, 1944).

160. Willoughby’s first article was titled, “What They Measured,” *Your Physique*, (November/December 1943): 27-28. His “History of American Weightlifting” series began in March of 1949, and ran sequentially through December 1949. His articles on training different body parts appeared primarily between 1947 and 1950. See “Building a Powerful Forearm and Grip,” *Your Physique*, (November/December 1947): 8-9; and “The Abdominal and Side Muscles,” *Your Physique*, (November/December 1949): 16-17, as examples.

161. Weider talks about Macfadden as a role model in Joe and Ben Weider, *Brothers of Iron: Building the Weider Empire* (Los Angeles, Sports Publishing, 2006), 89-90.

162. Willoughby, “Biographical Summary of the Investigator.”

163. Editorial information is on page 3 of all issues of the magazine. The magazine ran as *Animal Life* on December 1953, May 1954, July 1954, October 1954, December 1954, February 1955, April 1955, June 1955 and August 1955. In October 1955 the magazine was renamed *Safari Combined With Animal Life*. In November of 1955, it became only *Safari* and Willoughby was no longer listed as part of the editorial team.

164. Letter from Ottley Coulter to David P. Willoughby, 1 September 1964.

165. Letter from Willoughby to Dave Simpson, 7 February 1976. Box 1, Folder 029, WC. Letter from David Willoughby to Terry Todd, 16 January 1979, Todd Correspondence Files, Collection of Jan and Terry Todd.

166. On the “Biographical Summary of the Investigator,” Willoughby claimed he was offered a position as “editor of a natural history magazine” that was financially unsuccessful.

167. “David Willoughby,” *Illustrator*, 22.

168. In a Letter to Ricardo Vicar Kelly, 25 Feb 1959, Willoughby claimed he generally put in about 56 hours a week during his time in the Jet Propulsion Lab; Box 1, Folder 016, WC.

169. Born Carol Harwood in Oakland, CA, David’s second wife had also been married previously, and had a son, David Kelley, who lived with David and Carol until he came of age. Carol’s father was involved with newspaper publishing in San Francisco. They married on 6 September 1946 in Pasadena. “D.P. Willoughby Takes Bride at Morning Rites,” *Metropolitan Pasadena Star-News*, 6 September 1946, 7.

170. The house was located at 820 Wilson Street in Laguna Beach.

171. Jack Chappell, “No Limits to His Knowledge,” *Daily Pilot*, 1976 newspaper clipping, Box 1.1, Folder 002, WC.

172. Cover, *Superman* (October 1938). Willoughby is shown bending a horse shoe on the cover.

173. David P. Willoughby, “Famous Strong-Men and Their Records,”

Superman (December 1938): 68.

174. Willoughby, “Famous Strong-Men” (December 1938): 68; and David P. Willoughby, “Famous Strong-Men and Their Records,” *Superman* (January 1939): 97.

175. David P. Willoughby, “Famous Strong-Men and Their Records: Sandow—The Nonpareil,” *Superman* (February, 1939): 120-122; David P. Willoughby, “Famous Strong-Men and Their Records: Louis Cyr: Mightiest of All Strongmen,” *Superman* (March, 1939): 150-152; David P. Willoughby, “Famous Strong-Men and Their Records,” *Superman* (May 1939): 208-210; David P. Willoughby, “Famous Strong-Men and Their Records,” *Superman* (June 1939): 226-228; David P. Willoughby, “Famous Strong-Men and Their Records: Warren Lincoln Travis—The Diamond Belt Champion,” *Superman* (July 1939): 264-266; David P. Willoughby, “Famous Strong-Men and Their Records: World Back Lift Champion,” *Superman* (August 1939): 293-294; David P. Willoughby, “Famous Strong-Men and Their Records,” *Superman* (September 1939): 320-322.

176. Willoughby’s “Strength Through the Ages” series appeared for the first time in *Strength & Health* on February 1961, on page 42. It ran through the February 1964 issue. His historical series in *Your Physique* consisted of six articles titled “History of American Weightlifting,” which ran from March to December 1949.

177. David P. Willoughby, “The Kings of Strength: A History of Strongmen from Earliest Times to the Present Day,” *Iron Man* 15, no. 4 (April-May 1956): 24-32. The last article in the series was David P. Willoughby, “The Kings of Strength: Early European Professional Strongmen,” *Iron Man* 22, no. 5 (May-June 1963): 32-34.

178. Willoughby, “The Kings of Strength,” (April-May 1956): 26. Edmond Desbonnet, *Les Rois de la Force* (Paris: Librairie Berger-Levrault 1911); Theodor Siebert, *Der Kraftsport* (Leipzig: Kade, 1911).

179. Ibid., 26-27. Willoughby also cited Al Treloar, Tromp Van Diggelen and George R. Weaver for their “helpful suggestions and encouragement through the years.”

180. David P. Willoughby, *The Super Athletes* (New York: AS Barnes, 1970).

181. Willoughby’s chapter on women’s sports is only 30 pages long, but given the fact that the book was published before the passage of Title IX in 1972, it is a remarkably rich source of information on early women weightlifters and other female athletes in sports such as roller skating, badminton, archery, gymnastics and track and field. Willoughby, *The Super Athletes*, 551-585.

182. Willoughby, *The Super Athletes*, back cover.

183. Braven Dyer, “Desert Dyer-Y,” *The (Palm Springs) Desert Sun*, 24 April 1971.

184. Heywood Hale Broun, “Record Collecting,” *Chicago Tribune*, 14 March 1971.

185. John Lucas, “Anomalies of Human Physical Achievement,” *Canadian Journal of the History of Sport and Physical Education* 8, no. 2 (December 1977): 1-9.

186. Letter from David P. Willoughby to Collister Wheeler, 9 June 1982. Box 1, Folder 037, WC.

187. Chappell, “No Limits to His Knowledge.”

188. Letter from Al Thomas to David P. Willoughby, December 1982. Willoughby Correspondence File, WC.

189. Ibid.

190. “Science Artist Dead at 82,” *Tides and Times*, newspaper clipping. Willoughby Biography File, WC. Willoughby was survived by his wife Carol, his step-son David Kelly and his daughter-in-law Ruth, three grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

191. Vic Boff, “In Tribute . . . David Willoughby: Weightlifter, Historian, and Anthropologist,” *Muscular Development* 20, no. 3 (June 1983): 30.

192. Typescript by David Webster, “David P. Willoughby. Obituary, 1st Draft,” Willoughby Biography File, WC. This was sent to Carol Willoughby by David Webster, WC.

193. Jan Todd presented a short paper on Willoughby’s life at the annual meeting of the North American Society for Sport History in 2006. Ryan Murtha presented “Dave Willoughby, Renaissance Man” at the 2019 annual meeting of the North American Society for Sport History, Boise, ID.

MY REMEMBRANCE OF JEAN PAUL GETTY

by David P. Willoughby
Edited by Jan Todd



This memorial of David Willoughby's friendship with J. Paul Getty was found in his personal archives, but it does not appear to have ever run in a physical culture magazine. However because it contains some fascinating details about the life of Willoughby, Getty, and Milo Steinborn, we thought we would share it here.

After perusing the autobiography of J. Paul Getty, which was published posthumously (Getty died on 6 June 1976, at the age of 83) under the title of *As I See It*, I was somewhat disappointed, although not surprised, to note that at a whole group of men he once had good times with was not even mentioned in the book.¹ After all, that is quite understandable of a man whose special interests in another field—the petroleum industry—involved so many personalities that it would have been impossible to refer to them all in any book short of an encyclopedia. In view of this, a few words here to fill in some of the omitted points of interest may not be out of place.

Although Getty, who was addressed by his friends as Paul, mentioned in his book that in his younger days he was interested in boxing, and that he had once sparred with his friend Jack Dempsey, he was also interested—either actively or potentially—in other forms of athletics as well. One of these came to be the sport of weightlifting. Paul and I first met on the beach at Malibu, California, when a group of athletes from the Los Angeles Athletic Club had been invited to the Beach Club there, of which Paul was a member. I, at the time, was amateur weightlifting champion of Southern California, and the year was 1923. Seeing me on the beach hoisting one of the other athletes overhead, Paul came over and introduced himself.

Although Paul had no aspirations of becoming a competitive amateur weightlifter—which would have taken up an excessive amount of his exceedingly valuable

time—he clearly was interested in simple tests of strength, especially feats requiring gripping strength. In such tests he became quite strong, at least strong enough to keep up with me until the final degree of power was required. Once he brought to the L.A.A.C. a 300-pound oilfield worker to see what the fellow could do with a barbell. But probably from lack of familiarity with such apparatus, the man didn't do very well, even though he was regarded as being the strongest man in his particular oilfield. On another occasion, Paul took me out to a different oilfield, to see how I might compare with the strongest man there. Being young, determined, and familiar with all types of lifting,

I had no trouble outlifting my opponent in every test. But I did not leave the field without finally straining my back trying to lift one end of a huge casting that my opponent had had enough sense not to even attempt. "Come on, Dave, it's moving," exhorted Paul, as I fruitlessly tried to raise one end of what was found later to be a 1600-pound casting. Even at that, my back would probably have remained unstrained had it not been that the casting was setting on some springy planks, which subjected my lower back to alternate stretchings as well as contractions, as my feet bent the planks under the pressure of my lifting on the casting.

In the latter part of 1923, Paul invited me to dinner at

his new home, on South Tremaine Avenue in the Wilshire district of Los Angeles. There he introduced me to his first wife, whom he had married only a year or so earlier. [Getty's first wife was Jeannette DeMont Getty.] After Paul and I had talked on various subjects for perhaps a couple of hours, I cautiously brought up a matter in which I hoped he would be cooperative. So, I asked him if he would be interested in sponsoring a magazine on physical culture which I was prepared to edit and do all the work on. To this day I can remember the exact words which he responded: "You get your magazine going, Dave, and I'll

be glad to subscribe to a couple of copies." Perhaps I had erred in tackling a hoped-for backer while he was still only a millionaire!

During January 1924, Getty built a gymnasium in the rear of his property on Tremaine Avenue. As I recall, he did this by using the building that had previously been his two-car garage. After the gym was completed, and was equipped with a good supply of weights, along with chinning and dipping bars, etc., Getty kindly offered the free use of the gym to me and to several of my associates who were also on the weightlifting team of the Los Angeles Athletic Club. At this time we were all training for the National Olympic weightlifting competitions, which were to be held on 19 April 1924 at the L.A.A.C. In this competition no heavy-weight contestants made an appearance. In the lightweight (181¾-lb.) division I won first place with the following lifts: Left hand Snatch, 145 pounds; Right hand Clean and Jerk, 185½ pounds; Two Hands Military (NOT Olympic) Press, 156 pounds; Two Hands Snatch, 172 pounds; Two Hands Clean and Jerk, 240 pounds; five-lift total, 898½ pounds. When I think of my having been awarded a gold medal for such a puny performance, I am obliged to smile; however, weightlifting in the United States in 1924 was a far cry from the well-organized and highly competitive event that it is today.

A red-letter day for weightlifters in Los Angeles occurred on 25 August 1925 when the celebrated German world record holder, Henry "Milo" Steinborn, arrived from the east coast, where he had been living for several years. I met him at my home the following day and in time became well acquainted with him and his capabilities. Steinborn's connection with the present narrative is that I introduced him to J. Paul Getty. And since Steinborn was out of work and in need of employment, Getty gave him a laboring job in one of his oilfields. Naturally after a day of such heavy work Steinborn was more in need of rest than of additional exercise, and he was understandably resentful when Getty insisted on him devoting his evenings to training him (Getty) in Getty's gym.

To add to Steinborn's woes, as he was giving a

Rome, Italy.

January 7, 1966.

Mr. David P. Willoughby,
820 Wilson Street,
LAGUNA BEACH, California 92651,
U.S.A.


Dear Dave,

I have just finished reading your letter. You apparently know a great deal about ancient statuary since you recognized the Landsdowne Hercules. Incidentally, when you and I used to go around together you would have been a very good model yourself for a statue of Hercules. I hope you still have your figure, even though I know you don't get in as many hours in the gymnasium as you did when you and I used to work out together.

Your present job sounds very interesting. I hope that this year we can have a visit and talk over old times.

With all best wishes to you and your wife,

Sincerely,


J. Paul Getty



Twenty-something Jean Paul Getty appeared to have an athletic build. An unknown photographer snapped this image at Santa Monica Beach circa 1916 to 1919. Courtesy of The Getty Research Institute, Institutional Archives.

Willoughby met Jean Paul Getty in 1923 while he and members of the Los Angeles Athletic Club performed lifting stunts on the beach in Malibu, California. This 1966 letter from Getty to Willoughby demonstrates that they remained friends despite the passage of time. The job that Getty refers to was Willoughby's career as an illustrator for Cal Tech University.

public exhibition of strength where he allowed a car to be driven over a trestle that he supported on his uplifted feet, something went wrong and one of his legs was broken. Actually, as a photograph taken at the time revealed, Henry did not have his legs straightened sufficiently to support the heavy bridge and car. Apparently this, along with the driver craning his head out of the car window instead of watching where he was going, caused too much weight to come over one of Henry's legs (whether the right or left, I do not recall), with the result that both the tibia and the fibula were fractured. Despite this setback, Steinborn soon resumed his work in Getty's oilfield. But the leg never regained the strength that it had possessed before the injury, and no longer could Henry squat with over 500 lbs.

Late in the year 1926 I turned professional by opening a bodybuilding gymnasium in downtown Los Angeles. As the gym was on the second floor of the building, with several small businesses on the ground floor below, it can be imagined how the people below felt every time a ponderous weight was dropped above! Steinborn was very

helpful to me by bringing numerous professional wrestlers to the gym with him to work out. In fact, Steinborn and I introduced a considerable number of these wrestlers to the benefits of training with weights. Pete Sauer, a light-heavy-weight wrestler who had gotten nowhere, after training for a few months with weights developed into a rugged heavyweight, took the name Ray Steele, and became one of the topnotch wrestlers of that era. Other outstanding wrestlers with whom I became acquainted in my gym were Jim Londos, Ed “Strangler” Lewis, George Kotsonaros, Jim Browning, Nick Lutze, Dick Daviscourt, and a number of others, including even Bull Montana! I also became acquainted (outside my gym) with Hans Steinke, a friend of Steinborn’s and one of the biggest and strongest of all the wrestlers of those days. Gradually, Steinborn was able to secure enough wrestling matches to discontinue his work for Paul Getty. But professional wrestling in Los Angeles was in a deplorable condition at that time, and only those in the top-most class could dictate their terms, while lesser wrestlers had to accept what they were offered, which in some cases did not

even cover the costs of medical attention. Steinborn, for one, did much better by returning to the east, where in time he became a successful promoter rather than a performer.

To get back to J. Paul Getty, in addition to interesting him in weightlifting, I got him to share to a certain extent also my interest in the comparative strength of “animals,” in particular, anthropoid apes. Thus it was that on a Thursday—4 December 1924—Paul Getty, his wife Jeannette Dumont, and I went to Selig’s Zoo in Los Angeles, which zoo was located in what was then known as Eastlake Park. There photos of a trained female chimpanzee named “Mary” were taken. We tried to get her to exhibit her muscular strength, but did not accomplish much. I did, however, manage to secure the ape’s bodily measurements (from the waist up), which were as follows: Height, about 3 feet 6 inches; weight 123 pounds; neck 17, chest 40, upper arm (flexed) 13½, forearm 11½, wrist 7¾. It may be noted that these upper-body girths are well within the range of proportions present in men of average size. However, though the neck is in human proportion to the wrist, it is overly large for the chest and arms. But the biceps and forearm are in good proportion to the chest. If a man standing, say 5 feet 8 inches had these chest and arm

girths he would weigh about 143 pounds. Thus he would weigh about 20 pounds more than the chimpanzee, and this would be because of his longer and thicker legs. A weight-trained human athlete would be approximately as strong muscularly as a chimpanzee of the same arm and chest girths, although the man would weigh more on account of his heavier legs. Thus it would be unreasonable to expect a man to be as strong in the arms and chest as a chimpanzee of the same *bodyweight*, since at a given weight the ape would have *larger* arm and chest muscles.

As is related in the conventional biographical accounts of J. Paul Getty, he ultimately had five marriages and five children, all sons, although his second wife was childless. Since 1956, when he was 64, Getty lived alone at Sutton Place, Guilford, England, some 30 miles west-southwest from London. He became a friend of W. A. Pullum, the famous 9-stone lifting champion, who in the Camberwell District of London ran a school or club for weightlifters. There, with Pullum officiating, Getty was present when Herman Goerner made a Righthand Dead Lift record of 602½ lbs., on August

22, 1927. Although this lift was far below the 727½ pounds that Gorner had lifted in 1920 in Leipzig, Getty presented him with \$100 for having performed the feat (which was made on one of Pullum’s “cambered” bars, with which Goerner was unfamiliar). In more recent years Getty attended some of the annual “Mr. Universe” competitions held in London.

Getty also owned a villa near Rome, Italy, where he would go when the weather became too inclement in England. And he built a magnificent Art Museum in Malibu, California, which structure he never saw! I have at least one reminiscent personal letter that was received from Getty after he had moved to England. From there also I used to receive a Christmas card each year. However, since Getty’s secretary evidently intercepted or prevented any of my letters from reaching him personally, I finally was obliged to give up trying to correspond with him!

NOTES

1. Jean Paul Getty, *As I See It: The Autobiography of J. Paul Getty* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1976). This book was in press when Getty died.



The 1963 BBC documentary, *The Solitary Billionaire: J. Paul Getty*, showed a young Getty lifting weights at the beach, as well as Getty at 70 years of age performing overhead presses. Getty told interviewer Alan Whicker that he believed in exercising every day.

22, 1927. Although this lift was far below the 727½ pounds that Gorner had lifted in 1920 in Leipzig, Getty presented him with \$100 for having performed the feat (which was made on one of Pullum’s “cambered” bars, with which Goerner was unfamiliar). In more recent years Getty attended some of the annual “Mr. Universe” competitions held in London.

Getty also owned a villa near Rome, Italy, where he would go when the weather became too inclement in England. And he built a magnificent Art Museum in Malibu, California, which structure he never saw! I have at least one reminiscent personal letter that was received from Getty after he had moved to England. From there also I used to receive a Christmas card each year. However, since Getty’s secretary evidently intercepted or prevented any of my letters from reaching him personally, I finally was obliged to give up trying to correspond with him!

NOTES

1. Jean Paul Getty, *As I See It: The Autobiography of J. Paul Getty* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1976). This book was in press when Getty died.

BOB HOFFMAN’S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

by John Fair

University of Texas at Austin

The only way you can get along with Bob Hoffman is to steal everything you can from him! —Hooley Schell

On 18 July 1985, Bob Hoffman, founder and president of the York Barbell Company and widely recognized as the “Father of American Weightlifting,” died after a decade of deteriorating physical and mental health.² Much controversy, however, swirled around the terms of his last will and testament, dated 21 March 1978, and how it was

formulated. By far the greatest interest focused on its limited distribution of assets to a select few employees whose entitlements were questioned by others in Bob’s organization, often called “the York gang,” and the Iron Game at large. It created rancor and resentment by designating Treasurer Mike Dietz, General Manager John Terpak, and Alda Ketterman, Hoffman’s common-law wife, as executors of the will, corporate heads of York Barbell, and almost sole beneficiaries of Bob’s \$5,758,075 estate. Overlooked were numerous other employees who had contributed much to the realization of Hoffman’s dreams of personal and financial success despite his repeated statements that he would remember them. “When I leave this world,” he asserted in a 1968 *Strength & Health* editorial, “51 percent of the company, according to present plans, will belong to the men who have worked so hard with me to make it what it is. John Grimek, Steve Stanko, Dick Bachtell, John Terpak, Mike Dietz, and others of the old-timers and the newer men who form such an important part of our organization, will all have a share in the York Barbell Co.”³ What aroused suspicions of chicanery was

the codicil, dated 6 April 1978, which set up a \$500,000 trust for allocation to five other beneficiaries: Helen Gemmil, 10 percent; Helene Lukens, 35 percent, Rosetta Morris, 12 percent; Harry Utterback; and Ruth Snellbaker, 10 percent. All were former girlfriends of Hoffman except Utterback, the company’s traffic manager. The inclusion of Utterback, one of the few employees who got on well with Dietz, fueled suspicions that Mike had exercised a heavy hand over the codicil. Advertising Manager Phil Redman jokingly called him “York’s only male prostitute.”⁴ Noticeably excluded from the will were Bachtell, Stanko, and Grimek, whose classic physique had brought visibility and financial success to York in the early decades. To physical culturist Vic Boff, “Grimek was Hoffman’s trade mark.”⁵

Only Grimek, however, had the resources and courage to protest the will. He filed his initial complaint in December 1985 to the York County Court of Common Pleas. It received widespread endorsement from the weightlifting community. In an attempt to solicit support for Grimek, Robert Kennedy’s *Musclemag International* issued “A Plea to Help the Monarch of Muscledom” in 1986, hoping more witnesses would confirm the testimony in Bob’s 1968 editorial. The article contended that “Bob and John remained good friends to the very end, and Bob would never ‘disown’ him regardless of circumstances. . . . One only has to refer to Bob’s many books

and magazine articles . . . to see how he felt about Grimek. . . . There are some who feel it was Bob who left JCG [John C. Grimek] out of his will. Grimek, however, doesn’t feel this way but feels others, behind the scenes, made the change.”⁶ Only former Art Director Ray Degenhardt and former *Strength & Health* Editor Jim Murray testified at the May 1989 trial. They verified Hoffman’s remark that “Grimek and the boys were going to be rich men when he



Bob Hoffman is in his eighties in this picture taken at the softball park he donated to the city of York in the early 1980s. Hoffman loved medals and had dozens of them on every blazer he owned.

and magazine articles . . . to see how he felt about Grimek. . . . There are some who feel it was Bob who left JCG [John C. Grimek] out of his will. Grimek, however, doesn’t feel this way but feels others, behind the scenes, made the change.”⁶ Only former Art Director Ray Degenhardt and former *Strength & Health* Editor Jim Murray testified at the May 1989 trial. They verified Hoffman’s remark that “Grimek and the boys were going to be rich men when he

Correspondence to: Dr. John Fair, NEZ 5.700, Dept. of Kinesiology & Health Education, Stark Center, University of Texas at Austin, 78712. Email: john.fair@austin.utexas.edu.

died” and other such statements, but they were unable to assert how much the claimant was to receive. Nor were they able to legally document Hoffman’s original intentions from any previous wills. Grimek concluded in November 1989 that

those left in charge, supposedly ‘my friends,’ screwed me out of my share of my promised inheritance which was mentioned to me for nearly fifty years but somehow the appropriate wills etc. could not be found but others more favorable for those in charge were. The case is still in court but I think things have gone too far to be favorable to me. Suffice to say, however, one cannot count on friends when there is money up for grabs because the mind is voracious and eager to get as much for one’s self without regard for others. Yes, just days before his passing, as I visited with him [Hoffman], he in a more rational state of mind said, if anything should happen to him, I will be well taken care of . . . yes, I was . . . out in the cold.⁷

Lack of specificity ultimately doomed Grimek’s challenge. He appealed, but Pennsylvania’s Superior Court concurred with the judgment, and the state Supreme Court denied the case a hearing. After five years of litigation, the Grimek case ended in October 1990, but the tragedy of his failed protest went far beyond monetary loss.⁸ It was the duplicity of York executives. Grimek declared that he stayed with organization so long because he liked it. It was “not the money, but the thoughtlessness” that rankled.⁹

How such an injustice was perpetrated on loyal adherents to the York tradition can best be understood in retrospect as both sins of commission and omission. No doubt concern about possible reprisals from lawsuits kept contemporaries from naming names to accompany their accusations. Even Kennedy stops short of identifying the scoundrel who deprived York of its honor by judiciously asserting that it was “someone who did not contribute anything to the sales equipment or other merchandise.”¹⁰ While virtually no one was willing to make any accusations in print, many members of the York community were willing to state their views in an unpublished interview format about the critical role played by Mike Dietz and others. From 1987 to 1995, 29 individuals responded to questions relating to Hoffman’s declining health and vulnerability, the conditions that allowed fraud to occur, and the extent to which Dietz was culpable of wrongdoing. Responses revealed a 100% consensus in all three categories.

Long-time York employee John Terlazzo, younger brother of America’s first Olympic gold medalist in weightlifting, “noticed some changes in Bob in the late 1960s. He began slipping, and around 1975 Bob was really showing signs of decline, but he hung on for another ten

years.”¹¹ When Jan Dellinger joined the company in 1976 as Associate Editor of *Muscular Development*, Bob was “starting to lose it. He was getting forgetful and denying that he was failing. Efforts were being made to put him in the closet.” Dellinger recalls that “Mike would place papers in front of him, and Bob would ask, ‘what am I signing?’”¹² To former *Strength & Health* Editor Bill Starr, “it was easy to pull things off” at York. “It was like stealing from a blind man.”¹³ Underlying Hoffman’s vulnerability to deceit was his seeming unconcern about managing his company or appreciating money for its own sake. It was obvious to his brother Jack that Bob was “not a good manager.”¹⁴ Winston Day, who manufactured Bob’s food products in Philadelphia, observed that Mike Dietz “controlled his wealth completely. Bob never cared about money. He cared about ego. His whole life revolved around ego.”¹⁵ It was the power to make money rather than money itself that mattered. Phil Redman recalls that there was “always a tendency, particularly with Mike, to do what Bob wanted. Mike never disagreed with Bob.” He allowed Dietz “to do too much in running things. Bob never took enough of a hand.”¹⁶ When CPA Stanley Merves audited the company’s books in the 1950s, he told Bob that Mike was making more money than anyone else in the organization. A close friend and neighbor of York salesman Dave Mayor in Philadelphia, he verified that “Mike was stealing from the company.”¹⁷ Treasurer and later York Barbell President Vic Standish confirms that when a recession hit the industry in the early 1980s, “Bob let Mike oversee the company. Dietz totally controlled the company’s finances.” By the time Vic took over after Dietz’s death, an inventory revealed that York holdings were “understated by \$1,000,000.”¹⁸ After decades of corruption and mismanagement, neither Mike nor John Terpak, concluded Terry Todd, were “suited to manage a million-dollar corporation.”¹⁹

Suspicious that Mike was misappropriating funds, widespread for many decades, were fueled by his persistent nixing of audits, rejecting repeated attempts to offer public shares where the books would be subject to scrutiny, and blocking new employees who might interfere with his direction of the company.²⁰ Don Hess, who managed the company store, remembers that “Mike Dietz stuck out like a sore thumb.” “I have no proof Mike was stealing from the company, but I would bet the ranch on it. He had to have in order to acquire what he had. Mike made too much money and bragged about it. Where there’s smoke, there’s fire, and the smoke always went back to Mike.”²¹ Terpak confirms that Mike never got caught red-handed and never left a trail. He kept a close hand on things and this kept any new blood from outside.”²² Grimek regarded Dietz as “a crook from way back” who shamelessly “used the same contractor to build his houses as we used to build company buildings.”²³ Richard Pruger, who served as marketing manager for York in the 1970s, saw how Bob was manipulated by Dietz at a board meeting where he was feeding Hoffman fallacious financial figures. Pruger was also struck by his arrogance. “We could take five pounds of shit and package it, and they would buy it. Dietz was not conservative. He was just a crook—just plain dishon-

est.”²⁴ Dick Smith, who served York Barbell in many capacities, observes that “Mike was in the position to steal and he did—millions. He was simply a crook and stole money from the company for years.”²⁵ Vern Weaver, 1963 Mr. America, described Dietz as a “rich hick, crude and lewd,” whose “life dream was to grab all the money he could.”²⁶ According to York weightlifter Donnie Warner, “Dietz screwed up York Barbell more than anyone else. He almost destroyed the company. Mike began to take more and more with the years.”²⁷ To Vic Standish, Dietz was “the worst person he had ever known.”²⁸

Juxtaposed to this litany of incriminating testimonies is a series of pre-1978 wills indicating Hoffman’s evolving preferences at successive stages of his career. The earliest, dated 10 October 1938, was discovered in the will vault of Hamilton Bank in York by its Vice President, David H. Spangler, shortly after Hoffman’s death.²⁹ Though it had no legal authentication, it revealed that Bob, still married to Rosetta (Snell) Hoffman since 1928, was smitten by a local model/dancer named Gracie Gerlitzki whose stage name was Gracie Bard.

In the event of my death, it is my desire that the property in Dover Township, of approximately 57 acres, which is registered in my name at the county court house, said property having three bungalows and other improvements upon it, shall go to Gracie Bard, as a testimonial of the many services she has rendered me.

She is to have everything upon said premises, furnishings, livestock, poultry, pets etc. and my estate is to be so arranged that an insurance annuity be purchased for her which will assure that she will receive ten dollars weekly for her life after the age of fifty.

Until the annuity goes into effect she is to have ten dollars weekly from my estate until she is fifty years of age. Also the farm near Jacobus of 177 acres 3 houses, 18 buildings all.

Witnessed by Merle Balck and Nelson F. Gerlitzki, the will made no mention of members of the York gang that was firmly in place by this time or any of the properties, most notably the Strength & Health Center on Lightner’s Hill in north York, that were still owned jointly with Rosetta.³⁰

By the time Hoffman made out his second will on 22 October 1944, Gracie had departed to California with one of his lifters, Orville Grabeel, in 1941, and in 1944 Bob and Rosetta were granted a divorce. It featured a significant increase of (mainly property) assets. First and

foremost, Hoffman desired a continuation of his business enterprises, including *Strength & Health* magazine, his various books and courses, the York Barbell Company, York Athletic Supply Co., and the company foundry and machine shop.

I would like to see the Strength and Health center improved and continued as originally planned. As the Strength and Health center of the world. With the back building maintained as a club to which visitors can come and train and visit a while. The home will then be a show place, with the lower floor in particular being kept as a museum and library. All the old pieces of training equipment and rare books should be put there. . . . I desire that a stone monument, of the stone used in the house, be built on the lot between Peragos home and the big house. On this will be an inscription mentioning the fact that this center and monument is in memory of Bob Hoffman to commemorate and advance the work to which he devoted the major portion of his life.

With Gracie gone, Bob identified others, mostly women, who had granted him favors, to be amply rewarded from his extensive private properties.

To Alda Ketterman, the home in which she is living this date, with all furnishings, the [neighboring] home in which I am living, the home in which [bodybuilder] Jules Bacon is living, the small farm and property where Mr and Mrs Beam have been living, and Brookside Park as it stands. The furnishings and personal belongings in my home may be divided among my sister Eleanor and Alda and Dorcas [Lehman], with Mike Dietz doing what they can to satisfy the parties in the division.

I feel at this writing that the men and women who have done so much to help our work and build the business should share equally in the various enterprises in which I have been engaged, Mike Dietz, Johnny Terpak, Gord Venables, Tony Terlazzo, Dick Bachtell, Steve Stanko, John Grimek, and if he has been working for us for five years from this date, Jules Bacon, also my sister Eleanor, Alda Ketterman and Dorcas Lehman. Again forgot to mention that in the event that my sister owes not more than a few thousand dollars on her property at Chalfont [PA] that this be paid so that it will be free and clear. Also want Dorcas Lehman to

have the Dunkard Valley farm where Lou Schell lives, the Jacobus farm, with three farms joined together, the plot in Violet Hill where Hooley Schell's family live at present, and to clear the mortgage on her house if it has not already been paid.

As for conduct of his business, Bob designated the twelve persons cited earlier in the will as "partners" or close associates.

Should anyone of them wish to withdraw from the business upon my death, each of them or any of them are entitled to one-tenth an equal share of the liquid assets which are listed in my name at present. This will mean my insurance policies, bonds, cash on hand, in banks, safe deposit vaults, safe at the office, Brookside etc. But in no event is this division to include more than three fourths of the cash and negotiable value of my assets, the other one fourth to be used to guarantee the future of our business, and to serve as a reserve. . . . Although it is apparent at this writing that my wife, Rosetta, will have received her share, it is my desire that she be given 25 dollars per week for life, 100 dollars of this at the beginning of each month, one hundred dollars before Xmas. If a settlement has not been made she is entitled to \$30,000 as agreed.

I appreciate very much the efforts of those who have spent much of their lives advancing this business, who have been responsible for its growth. I want them to receive a fair remuneration for their efforts. . . . It is my hope that our work will continue even for centuries, and that the partners, when they reach a stage of life that they feel retirement will be best, will appoint someone person to serve for them.

What is most notable about these projected distributions is how they form a foundation for the 1978 will, with Mike Dietz playing a central role and John Terpak and Alda Ketterman figuring prominently in it. It is also obvious that Bob felt a sense of obligation and appreciation, beyond any psychic or sexual satisfaction, to those who contributed to his larger goal of perpetuating "our present ideas and ideals."³¹

When Hoffman signed his third will and testament on 30 April 1960, it no longer included Jules Bacon, Gord Venables, or Tony Terlazzo, who left the company, or Dorcas Lehman, who allegedly absconded with \$3,000 from Bob's safe and moved to Florida. They were replaced by Harry Utterback and other girlfriends of Hoffman to

whom he bequeathed tax free the following percentages of York Barbell voting stock.

Alda M. Ketterman, R.D. 3, Dover, PA	17%
John Terpak, York, PA	17%
Michael Dietz, York, PA	17%
Steve Stanko, York, PA	5%
Dick Bachtell, York, PA	5%
John Grimek, York, PA	5%
Helen Gemmil, York, PA	2½%
Helene J. Lukens, Harrisburg, PA	2½%
Harry Utterback, York, PA	2%
Ruth Snellbaker, Weigelstown, PA	2%

By now, however, Alda Ketterman was more a common-law wife than a girlfriend with whom Hoffman had constructed a beautiful home in Dover, just north of York. Not surprisingly, she received the largest share of his personal properties, including Brookside Park and two houses and two farms in the vicinity, as well as two businesses known as "Better Nutrition Aids" and "Dover Advertising Agency" and a building at 701 East Market Street in downtown York, all tax free. She was also the recipient of corporate stock, along with Terpak and Dietz, in Hoffman Laboratories, Ridge Corporation, York Precision Co., and Swiss Automatic Inc., again tax free. For Rosetta (now Morris), for whom Bob bought a house in Fruitland, Maryland, he authorized continuation of a stipend of \$200 per month she was receiving. Finally, and most critical to the ultimate outcome of his bequests, Hoffman named Mike Dietz as executor of his last will and testament with "full power to do any and all things necessary to the proper settlement of my estate."³²

During the next decade Bob acquired numerous other Pennsylvania enterprises, the most important of which was Better Foods Foundation in Greencastle and Costas Candies in Pottsville. He had also created the Hoffman Foundation for educational benefits and tax relief. That Bob was having second thoughts about the distributions in his 1960 will is evident in a letter to Detroit accountant Clarence Johnson, a boon companion who accompanied Hoffman on many overseas trips. Distributing his assets so widely did little to memorialize his name. Although Alda's farms would remain intact, they would be combined with others they jointly owned and Brookside Park to form a Hoffman Park and eventually be joined to the Hoffman Foundation grounds "for the benefit of the people." Unlike the Richard M. Nixon Park that he donated to York County in 1969, it would be made part of the Foundation. He also questioned the wisdom of bequeathing his company's stock shares "absolutely" to so many legatees. Rather he suggested to Johnson that "the shares to each individual being his or hers during his or her life time, then be purchased by the Foundation . . . so that it will be perpetuated." Furthermore, he was "not at all satisfied with the way I have handled the other corporations giving them to Johnny, Mike and Alda. After all there is not too far from a half million dollars in cash in these corporations," which did not include his properties in Green-

castle, Pottsville, and Philadelphia.

Concerning the estate of Lightners or Hoffman's Hill. That I have been telling the world for so long, will be my monument someday. I want it to operate like the home of Jack London, the man who wrote Rip Van Winkle etc. [sic] There we have the first typewriter I used when Strength and Health was founded. Strength and Health and the York Barbell club originated there, and I want it to be perpetuated. Have an attendant there as at Jack London's Estate, and have people come there to see where we started, where we trained, where I lived and worked so long. This will have to be better covered.

Obviously, Bob cared as much about his future legacy as he did about his current assets or past accomplishments. Indeed, he believed that his current corporate wealth, estimated at least a half million dollars, "should be used to pay taxes rather than deeded outright to my three closest associates as I have done in the 1960 will."³³

During the 1960s and 1970s, despite occasional economic downturns, the company was thriving, and Hoffman's assets continued to grow. At the 8 June 1965 Board of Directors meeting, Mike Dietz reported that the net profit for the first quarter of 1965 was \$161,992.70 after taxes and that sales were "steadily on the increase and that facilities of the capacity were used to the peak of their capacity." To absorb this production, the board authorized construction of additional facilities, mainly for food supplements, on the properties it had purchased on Board Road along I-83 north of York.³⁴ Hoffman happily reported that "we have a machine which will package 90 one pound cannisters a minute. We have a machine which will mix five thousand pounds at a time. And this will flow by gravity into the packaging machines. Things are humming."³⁵

In 1969 Bob boasted that "our business is moving right along in the face of loads and loads of competition. One day recently we received a seventy five thousand dollar order for Hoffman products from Health Food Jobbers in Chicago. That size order will require at least four tractor trailer loads (40 thousand pounds each) plus, the surplus will go by regular carrier." It was significant to Bob that "this company orders frequently from us, and this year in the first five months, we delivered three times as much of our products as we did in the first five months of last year."³⁶ Claudia Keister, who came on board in 1972, observed that "business was really good in the seventies, especially in protein products. Big distributors would haul three tractor trailer truck loads away. 1978-79 was absolutely the best year."³⁷

It is not surprising in the midst of these flush times that Bob decided to take stock of his assets and reconsider the will he had created a decade earlier. He called it an interim will because of ongoing discussions of "going public," whether the company should pass from the al-

most sole proprietorship of Hoffman to the general public. The new multicorporate structure would consist of York Barbell as the parent along with Ridge Corporation, Hoffman Laboratory, York Precision, Swiss Automatic, Costas-York, Better Foods Foundation, Strength and Health Publishing Co., York Athletic Supply, Blue Rock Mountain Spring Water Co., and the Boiling Springs Mountain Water Co. Disposition of Bob's personal estate was unclear. Most of the properties were still destined to Alda, but some bonds, a house in York, and a farm at Brookside were partly owned by Mike Dietz. Income from the sale of six additional buildings in the city, including 51 N. Broad Street where York Barbell originated, would be used mainly to pay estate taxes. Ownership of the Marietta foundry was uncertain, but it was still valuable and "growing." How the Lightner's Hill property would eventually become a Bob Hoffman Memorial was not specified, but it seemed likely that it would become part of the Foundation which Hoffman hoped would "go on forever." Although it might "never be as big as the Ford or Rockefeller [sic] Foundations it has an opportunity for good growth and to be a considerable and important part of the business for those who remain to operate it. The foundation has done much good and is in a position to do much more good. It must be an important part of the future of this organization. It will be one of the chief owners of our business." In this will, it would own 25% of York assets, more than any other holder. Before going public it needed to be "the ultimate owner of everything."³⁸

Again, as in all previous wills, the "interim will" placed great weight on Bob's sense of responsibility to the women in his life. Feelings still loomed large for his former wife Rosetta. "She played an important part in the formation and early growth of this business, and although we could not get along I am appreciative of what she did and want to take care of her." Hoffman would not only continue sending her \$200 monthly but owing to inflation was willing to send more, if needed. Others were rewarded for their loyalty and sustenance for his manly ego.

The several females who are a part of my will, aside from Alda Hoffman, have been faithful workers for our business for many years, running back to 1942. They have had much to do with the growth of our business and I am eternally grateful. . . . I wish to state strongly that they are entitled to their weekly stipend without a miss, just as any other worker. This is one hundred dollars weekly for Helen Gemmil, \$50.00 weekly for Ruth Snellbaker plus her usual salary, and \$140.00 weekly for Helene Lukens. For her work entails considerable driving as she continues her work with this company. She, more than any other was responsible for the early popularity of Hoffman products, as since 1948, she has gone to contests and conventions where she with her good looks

and sales ability did a great deal to promote the sale of Hoffman products and of our overall business.

It is significant that neither John Grimek, Dick Bachtell, Steve Stanko, or any other individuals who helped make York Barbell successful over the years is mentioned in this draft.³⁹

Meanwhile, contingency plans for transforming it into a public corporation were being formulated by Murray Levin, a New York stockbroker who would soon become president of the United States Weightlifting Federation. In a 1992 interview, he sought to set the record straight on the circumstances surrounding the negotiations over public offerings of York stock and their impact on Hoffman's final will.

I was working in 1972 for a company called Newburgh and Loeb down on Wall Street, an old-line investment firm. The president of the company was a man by the name of Paul Richter who was really crazy about York Barbell Company. He worked out with weights, and he said, 'I know you're involved.' I was the regional chairman then, not the national chairman. I was one step below that, and he said if you could ever convince John Terpak and Bob Hoffman to go public, we could actually do a hundred-million-dollar issue. So, I flew to York, and I spoke to Hoffman, and I spoke to Terpak, and they agreed, but Dietz was very much against it. Anyway, they put out a preliminary prospectus, and they were going to raise ten million dollars, and they were only going to give away twenty percent of the company to the public. So, everything was all set. But if you remember then there were big floods in Harrisburg and Maryland. We flew in in very bad conditions and met at the Yorktowne Hotel. Everything was ready to go. Bachtell and all the others that had been with the company for many years, they were all going to get stock. And Grimek was going to get a ton of stock. I know because I was involved. I was close to the underwriting syndicate who put out the prospectus, and at the last minute it was Dietz that convinced Hoffman not to do it. Now one of the reasons is that they had never been audited, and John Terpak was bitter about that because he complained that they should have had auditing every year, and Dietz wouldn't do that because he was playing with the books.

That alone told Levin that it was Dietz who "convinced Hoffman to change the will and to cut out John Grimek."⁴⁰



John Grimek appeared on the cover of *Strength & Health* magazine 27 times between 1935 and 1965. As the most recognizable person connected with York, other than Hoffman himself, it is not surprising that so many people were shocked to discover that Grimek was not included in Bob's will.

Any examination of company records would have also revealed that Mike and his sons had established an alternative manufacturing operation called York Enterprises, which extracted supplies from York Barbell and was in direct competition with it. As York customer service manager Ernie Petersen observed, "York Enterprises was living as a parasite off York Barbell. Mike was simply stealing from York."⁴¹

These considerations also hampered any further progress on finalizing the terms Hoffman set forth in his interim will with any outside party. In the spring of 1973 at the national weightlifting championships in Williamsburg, Virginia, Bob authorized Los Angeles Attorney David Matlin, who headed the Southern California chapter of the AAU, to prepare a final will. Matlin duly drafted a document in accordance with the provisions Hoffman requested. But even after three further meetings in Seattle, Pasadena, and Philadelphia over the next three years Bob was still undecided over the "few changes" he desired.⁴² These interminable delays stemmed from the continuing decline of Bob's mental condition, the immensity of his wealth and properties, and his confusion over who owned or was entitled to what portions of it.

It was overwhelming. "When we count all of

the things that we have here and there and everywhere, it amounts to a considerable sum. And requires a lot of thought to take care of those we should take care of." Bob seemed most perplexed over the state of his retirement fund, the Foundation's state of affairs, and the continued operation of the company's foundries, all of which related to Dietz's handling of monies. With regard to the former, Bob "talked to Mike at considerable length and did not arrive at much. He tells me that I had 270,000 in the retirement fund and since I did not retire and take this money annually," presumably after age 65, "considerable of it is gone already." Admittedly "it is my money and I can take it out, but since I did not take it out the money what I can get is reduced. It is hard indeed to know what I can do about it." Bob also wanted to know who would operate the foundation when he was not around.

What can I do to keep it going so that it will continue to grow and also be in a position to do the things I desire to do and want to do. . . . Mike and I are the only trustees of the money in the foundation and if I pass along and he does not do what I would like to have done, the foundation after all of these years can be given up. I did not find out just what is done with the quarter million dollars that is in the foundation at the present time. At 6% interest this means that we have only fifteen thousand dollars to use after a worthy purpose, which is not much. . . . To do this for some years I have been putting 30% of my salary in the foundation, and five percent from our various businesses. And after we have that built up through years of effort, all at once we find that our money is very limited.

Finally, Hoffman wanted to make sure the foundries would belong to York Barbell. He estimated that "those in the will have made a tremendous step forward. I am not sure of the worth of the foundrys, but it will run into the millions. I believe that Mike said that the York Barbell Company was worth five million. I talk about our various holdings being worth 25 millions [sic]." Bob envisioned that ownership of the foundries would provide a competitive edge not only with the manufacture of barbells but with marketing the new machines for home gyms that appeared on the horizon. Bob did not reconcile easily with the prospect of death. If it was not possible for him to continue living indefinitely, he happily embraced the oxymoron that he could "continue doing even after my death the things that I have long been doing."⁴³

Several loose ends remained, however, that Hoffman sought to rectify in a 1976 document entitled "Setting the Record Straight." To ensure the smooth and undisputed passage of properties to Alda, he attempted to certify her entitlements through the

sanctity of marriage. It occurred in 1956, according to Hoffman, when they moved into the stone house he had built for them in Dover. "We were officially married that year at Alderman Fickes home and by him." That she retained her previous marriage surname of Ketterman owed to the fact that Bob had purchased for her the Thomasville Inn, a restaurant and dance hall where beer and liquor was sold, and he did not think it wise that he should be identified, as an Olympic coach and worldwide authority on health and fitness, with a tap room. His scenario was "easy to prove" as long as "Alda had her marriage certificate, but unfortunately we have had robberys [sic]. . . . In one of the robberys [sic] a box containing some tax free bonds and our marriage license was stolen. The Alderman is dead, so we can not [sic] get another license."⁴⁴ Other uncertainties included Mike's questionable ownership of properties belonging to Bob and the company. "I do not entirely understand how the property on 26-52 Ridge Ave, got in Mike's name," queried Hoffman. "It is listed as owned by he and his wife. Mike tells me that the deeds to the properties have been turned over, but not registered at the court house. Should place a passage in the will that Mike does not get his share until he turns over deeds to property on Ridge Ave, property at 807 Philadelphia St, and part of farm which had belonged to Rosetta Morris until we made arrangements to buy it back." These reservations culminated in an overall recommendation that any settlement should consist of "more than Mike as Executor of estate. See what is the best legal way to do this," he reminded himself.⁴⁵

What ultimately transpired was a four-hour meeting of the principals at Bob's home with Terpak, Dietz, and the lawyers in one room and Alda in the kitchen. Terpak insists that the resulting will "was Bob's doing. He was not forced to do anything. Alda was within hearing distance. The attorneys explained to Bob that if he gave money to a lot of people there would be the biggest dog



Hoffman with York's General Manager John Terpak (l) and Treasurer Mike Dietz (r), both of whom were named as major beneficiaries in Hoffman's final will and also helped shape how the estate was distributed upon Bob's death.

fight you've ever seen."⁴⁶ It was obvious from the long trail of testimonies and circumstantial evidence extending back decades that Dietz was most culpable for this outcome, but it was equally obvious that Terpak and Ketterman, who had much to gain from this settlement, were also complicit. Exactly how the codicil was contrived cannot be determined. But it was the logical outcome of policies that came into fruition as Bob lapsed into senility and lost what little control he still had over the destiny of his company. Alda confirms that "Bob always said, 'I know Mike is stealing, I just don't know how much.'"⁴⁷ Bob also told Terpak and others that "I know Mike steals but as long as he doesn't steal more than what I'm getting I'm not too worried."⁴⁸ By this reckoning, Bob allowed during his decades of lax corporate oversight and toleration of Mike's manipulations paved the way for the events of March and April of 1978 which disenfranchised so many who had helped make York Barbell so successful. How Hoffman's neglect led to confusion and ultimately blurred the distinction between personal and company assets is best captured in anecdote related by Grimek when he and his wife Angela were driving Bob and Alda to an AAU meeting in Philadelphia. Bob pointed out some dairy animals and says, "they look like our cows." Alda replies, "What do you mean, we don't have cows, Mike has cows." To which Bob casually responded, "Oh, Mike's cows, our cows, what's the difference?"⁴⁹



Bob with Alda Ketterman and his California lawyer, David Matlin, at an AAU convention (circa 1968).

NOTES

1. Interview with Alda Ketterman, 17 September 1992, Dover, Pennsylvania.
2. For background on the organization of the company see John D. Fair, *Musclestown USA, Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).
3. Bob Hoffman, "The Best Investment," *Strength & Health*, 36 (July 1968): 5.
4. Interview with Phil Redman, 14 September 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
5. Interview with Vic Boff, 10 November 1995, Fort Myers, Florida.
6. "A Plea to Help the Monarch of Muscledom," *Musclemag International* (December 1986): 57.
7. Grimek to "Jerry," 21 November 1989, Bob Hoffman Papers in author's possession. "Out in the cold" is not quite right. Grimek received a lump sum when he retired from York Barbell just two weeks before Hoffman's death. Interview with Grimek, 28 August 1987.
8. John Grimek v. The Estate of Robert Hoffman, Court of Common Pleas of York County, Pa., No. 85-SU-04775-01; and memorandum, John Grimek v. The Estate of Robert Hoffman, Superior Court of Pennsylvania, No. 00322 HBG 89, John Terpak Papers in author's possession.
9. Interview with John Grimek.
10. "A Plea to Help the Monarch," 57.
11. Interview with John Terlazzo, 25 August 1987, York, Pennsylvania.
12. Interview with Jan Dellinger, 14 December 1992, Red Lion, Pennsylvania.
13. Interview with Bill Starr, 20 July 1991, Aberdeen, Maryland.
14. Interview with Jack Hoffman, 1 January 1988, Parker, Pennsylvania.
15. Interview with Winston Day, 16 June 1992, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
16. Interview with Phil Redman, 14 September 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
17. Interviews with John Terpak, 25 July 1991, York, Pennsylvania, and Dave Mayor, 8 July 1990, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
18. Interview with Vic Standish, 15 December 1995, York, Pennsylvania.

19. Interview with Terry Todd, 6 February 1993, Austin, Texas.
20. Interview with Murray Levin, 7 July 1992, Boca Raton, Florida.
21. Interview with Don Hess, 17 September 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
22. Interview with John Terpak, 25 July 1991, York, Pennsylvania.
23. Interview with John Grimek.
24. Interview with Richard Pruger, 16 December 1993, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.
25. Interview with Dick Smith, 22 July 1992, Hanover, Pennsylvania.
26. Interview with Vern Weaver, 3 July 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
27. Interview with Donnie Warner, 17 September 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
28. Interview with Vic Standish, 28 December 1993, York, Pennsylvania.
29. David H. Spangler to John Terpak, 29 July 1985, Hoffman Papers.
30. Will and Testament of Robert C. Hoffman, 10 October 1938, *ibid.*
31. Will and Testament of Robert C. Hoffman, 22 October 1944, *ibid.*
32. Will and Testament of Robert C. Hoffman, 30 April 1960, *ibid.*
33. Hoffman to Johnson, no date [circa 1970], *ibid.*
34. York Barbell Company Board of Directors Minutes, 8 June 1965, 1 May 1969, and 2 April 1973, Hoffman Papers.
35. *Ibid.* Bob Hoffman, "How Some of Our Pet Products are Doing," circa 1969.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Interview with Claudia Keister, 10 September, 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
38. Bob Hoffman, "Last Will and Testament and Interim Will," circa 1970.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Interview with Levin.
41. Interview with Ernie Petersen, 4 July 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
42. Matlin to Hoffman, 31 July 1973, 14 November 1974, and 26 March 1976, Hoffman Papers.
43. *Ibid.* Bob Hoffman, "Questions I Need Answered," circa 1975.
44. Bob Hoffman, "Setting the Record Straight," 1976, *ibid.* Alda, however, stated that she "bought the Thomasville Inn herself and had two mortgages on it. She also noted that Bob repeatedly wanted to marry her, but she "kept turning him down." Interview with Ketterman, 15 September 1992, Dover, Pennsylvania.
45. *Ibid.* Bob Hoffman, "I Do Not Entirely Understand," circa 1976.
46. Interviews with Terpak, 25 July 1991 and 15 September 1992.
47. Interview with Ketterman, 15 September 1992, Dover, Pennsylvania.
48. Interview with Terpak, 25 July 1991, York, Pennsylvania.
49. Interview with Dellinger.

IRON GAME HISTORY: THE JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

IRON GAME HISTORY IS PUBLISHED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF
THE H.J. LUTCHER STARK CENTER
FOR PHYSICAL CULTURE AND SPORTS
DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY AND HEALTH EDUCATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN



SUBSCRIPTION FORMS ONLINE AT: WWW.STARKCENTER.ORG

Subscription Rates:

Two issues -- \$25.00 Four issues -- \$45.00

Foreign Subscriptions:

Two issues -- \$30.00 Four issues -- \$50.00

Fellow Support: \$100.00

Two issues and \$75.00 Donation to IGH

Patron Support: \$200.00

Four issues and \$155.00 donation to IGH

Please indicate type of subscription:

Two issues (USA):	\$25.00	_____
Two issues (Foreign):	\$30.00	_____
Four issues (USA):	\$45.00	_____
Four issues (Foreign):	\$50.00	_____
Fellow Support:	\$100.00	_____
Patron Support:	\$200.00	_____

IRON GAME HISTORY

H.J. LUTCHER STARK CENTER
NEZ 5.700, D3600
403 DELOSS DODDS WAY
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78712

MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO: UT-AUSTIN

Renewal? Yes _____

SUBSCRIPTION FORMS ONLINE AT:

No _____

WWW.STARKCENTER.ORG/RESEARCH-2/IRON-GAME-HISTORY/

NAME _____ TELEPHONE _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

COUNTRY _____ EMAIL _____

IRON GAME HISTORY

H. J. LUTCHER STARK CENTER
NEZ 5.700, D3600
403 DELOSS DODDS WAY
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78712

NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 391
AUSTIN, TEXAS

