



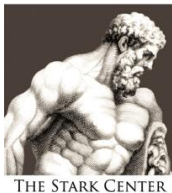
THE STARK CENTER

The H.J. Latcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports
The University of Texas at Austin

Victor (Vic) Boff Collection
1902-1991, undated

Abstract

The Victor (Vic) Boff collection consists of magazines, photographs, and papers collected by Vic Boff, a bodybuilder, winter bather, naturopath, and historian. Materials primarily concern naturopathy, health, weightlifting, exercise equipment, and physical fitness.



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SUMMARY INFORMATION

Size of Collection:	8 boxes [7.25 linear feet]
Creator:	Boff, Victor.
Acquisition Info:	Unknown.
Accruals:	No accruals are expected.
Language(s):	Primarily English, includes Finnish, German, and Tamil.
Processed By:	Caroline Jones, November 2024.
Conservation Notes:	Document repair tape was used on paper and photographic materials. Photocopies on acid-free paper were made of newspaper clippings. Dried adhesive residue was removed from photographic materials. Rolled materials were flattened.

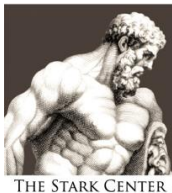
RIGHTS AND ACCESS

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research, but the Stark Center retains the right to limit the use of the Victor (Vic) Boff Collection under certain conditions. For any questions about the collection, you can contact the Stark Center by email at info@starkcenter.org or call (512) 471-4890.

Privacy Restrictions

Manuscript collections and archival records may contain materials with sensitive or confidential information that is protected by federal or state right to privacy laws and regulations. Researchers are advised that the disclosure of certain information pertaining to identifiable living individuals represented in this collection without the consent of those individuals may have legal ramifications (e.g., a cause of action under common law for invasions of privacy may arise if facts concerning an individual's private life are published that would be deemed highly offensive to a reasonable person) for which the H.J. Latcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports and the University of Texas at Austin assumes no responsibility.



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Duplication

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INFORMATION FOR RESEARCHERS

Preferred Citation

Victor (Vic) Boff Collection, The H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, The University of Texas at Austin.

Separated Material

No materials have been separated from the collection.

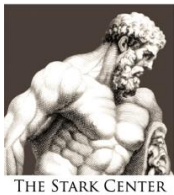
Other Finding Aids

George Jowett Collection, H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, The University of Texas at Austin.

Jesse Mercer Gehman Collection, H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, The University of Texas at Austin.

Ottley Coulter Photograph Collection, H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, The University of Texas at Austin.

Pudgy and Les Stockton Collection, H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, The University of Texas at Austin.



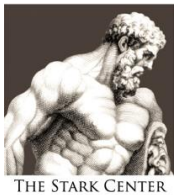
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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Victor “Vic” Boff, also known as “Doc,” was born on October 22, 1917, in Red Lion, Pennsylvania, to Rose and Samuel Boff. At an early age, Boff showed interest in physical culture and fitness by practicing calisthenics and the high bars at the Brooklyn Tompkins playground, where he befriended future weight-lifting champion John Davis. As a teenager, he began strength training, boxing, strong man stunts, baseball, and year-round swimming in the ocean. He boxed professionally, toured with famous strongman Joe Greenstein, “The Mighty Atom,” and played semi-pro baseball with the St. Louis Cardinal’s Rochester farm team until an injury cut his baseball career short.

Boff moved to New York in 1935 and began writing for magazines focused on health and fitness while working at Standard Food Products. His earliest published work appeared in *Let’s Live* magazine in 1935. In 1940 he lived for a year on the Isle of Pines off the coast of Cuba, bringing no provisions and surviving only off the land. In World War II Boff served in the United States Coast Guard under famed boxer Jack Dempsey. Boff married Anna Yurko on September 24, 1943, in Manhattan, New York. In 1947, Boff joined the Iceberg Athletic Club for winter bathing enthusiasts. The club, which began in 1918 for winter bathers who broke away from the Polar Bear Club, met weekly at Coney Island Beach and swam together in the winter. They believed in the positive effects of cold-water swimming on physical health and fitness. He served as the club’s President from 1976 to 1992. He never missed a winter swim since he joined the club and was featured in many local newspaper articles marveling at the club members dedication to swimming in low temperatures, even after blizzards. The club awarded him “The World’s Greatest Winter Bather-For His Dedication and Inspiration to Promote Health and Longevity by Winter Bathing.” The club disbanded in 2007.

In 1950, Boff opened one of the first health food stores in Manhattan, eventually managing two Vic Boff’s Health and Fitness Aids stores in New York with his wife. The stores included health foods, books about exercising and healthy eating, exercise equipment, and kitchen equipment like juicers and water purifiers. He also invented the “Multi-Lift Exerciser” for at-home exercise. His first book, *You Can Be Physically Perfect, Powerfully Strong*, was published in 1975 and his second book, *Vic Boff’s Bodybuilding Bible*, in 1985. Vic continued writing and working as editor for publications like *Healthful Living*, *American Better Health Publications*, and *American Vegetarian-Hygienist* throughout his life. He was friends with naturopath Jesse Mercer Gehman and was instrumental in helping his friends Terry and Jan Todd, Directors of the H.J. Lutzer Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports at the University of Texas at Austin, preserve naturopathic collections. Like Gehman, Vic wrote about healthy eating habits and exercise. He was concerned with the negative effects of smoking, drinking alcohol and coffee, and using steroids. He promoted physical culture and living a healthy lifestyle through his writing, his actions, and his businesses.



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Vic was well known for his weightlifting as well as his passion for the history of strongmen. In 1981 he helped design the York Barbell Hall of Fame in York, Pennsylvania, now known as the Weightlifting Hall of Fame. To celebrate famous strong-man and gym-owner Sig Klein's 80th birthday in 1982, Vic organized a surprise party and brought together weightlifters and strongmen from all over the world to celebrate and honor Klein in New York. This was such a success that it became known as the first dinner of the Association of Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen (AOBS). With Leo Murdock, Johnny Mandel, Rudy Riska, Steve Sadicario, Luigi D'Angelo, Jore Marino, Matt White, and Mike D'Angelo, Boff began distributing small newsletters internationally, reporting on weightlifting events and encouraging others to join the AOBS. He served as President of the AOBS until his death. Each year at the annual dinner, Boff would present awards to honorees who were notable strongmen, body builders, weightlifters, and powerlifters. In 1983, he was inducted into the National Bodybuilder's Hall of Fame in Utica, New York and later in 1996, he received the Oscar Heidenstam Foundation Hall of Fame Special Recognition Award.

Vic Boff and his wife Ann retired to Cape Coral, Florida, in 1992, where he passed away on November 9, 2002, after battling cancer. His ashes were spread in the waters he enjoyed for so many years off Coney Island Beach on January 1, 2003.

Sources, in addition to the records themselves:

Boff, Vic. *Body Builder's Bible for Men and Women*. New York: ARCO Publishing Company, Inc., 1985.

Boff, Vic. *You Can Be Physically Perfect, Powerfully Strong*. New York: ARCO Publishing Company, Inc., 1975.

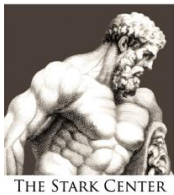
Cenidoza, Dan. "Association of Oldetime Barbell & Strongman." *Dan Cenidoza: Art & Strength*, October 22, 2018. <http://artandstrength.com/2018/10/association-of-oldetime-barbell-strongman/>.

Lazzaro, Joe. Interview by Charles Denson. *Coney Island History Project*, 2011. <https://www.coneyislandhistory.org/content/joe-lazzaro>.

Masiello, Arty. "Staying Close to Nature." *Brooklyn Graphic Magazine/Senior Digest*, February 18, 1984.

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Pearl, Bill, George and Tuesday Coates, and Richard Thornley, Jr. Knoedler, Trudi, ed. *Legends of the Iron Game: Reflections on the History of Strength Training*. 3 vols. Oregon: Bill Pearl Enterprises, Inc., 2010.



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Richardson, Lynda. "CHRONICLE." *New York Times*, January 2, 1992. Gale OneFile: News. Accessed September 3, 2024.

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A174764187/STND?u=txshracd2598&sid=bookmark-STND&xid=146fa929>.

Riell, Howard. "Vic Boff: A Legend, Naturally." *Brooklyn Graphic Magazine*, October 27, 1982.

Rosa, Dr. Ken "Leo." "Farewell to Vic Boff." *Iron Game History* 7, no. 4 (2003): 12-13. https://starkcenter.org/igh_article/igh0704c/.

Thomas, Al. "Vic Boff: The Old Game's Best Friend: Face-to-Face—and by Proxy." *Iron Game History* 7, no. 4 (2003): 1-11. <https://starkcenter.org/igh/igh-v7/igh-v7n4/igh0704a.pdf>.

U.S., WWII Draft Registration Cards, 1940, Fold3. Last modified August 14, 2023. <https://www.fold3.com/publication/816/us-wwii-draft-registration-cards-1940>.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

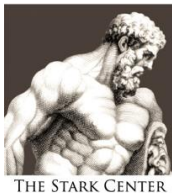
This collection primarily consists of photographs, catalogs, magazines, posters, and newspapers, dating from roughly 1902 to 1991, with the bulk of materials dating 1962 to 1986 and undated. Materials mainly concern health and physical culture, specifically natural medicines, dietary concerns, weightlifting, and exercise.

The collection is organized into seven series. Boff's original folder titles and original order of materials were retained as much as possible. Within each series and subseries materials were arranged alphabetically and chronologically. When needed, series were further organized into subseries and oversized materials were rehoused in an oversized box (Box 8).

The **Catalogs** series is primarily made up of two subseries: **Books** and **Equipment**. Both types of catalogs were likely collected by Boff for his Vic Boff Health and Fitness Aids stores. The **Miscellaneous** subseries includes catalogs and clippings such as dietary supplements, water purifiers, and juicers.

The **Publications** series consists of three subseries. The largest subseries, **Magazine and newsletter sets**, mostly consists of issues of the *National Health Federation Bulletin* and *Prevention*. The National Health Federation (NHF) is a lobbying group that promotes natural medicine, and *Prevention* is a lifestyle magazine focused on healthy living.

The **Doctor Jesse Mercer Gehman materials** include articles and publications concerning natural medicine, health, and fitness. Dr. Gehman was a naturopathic doctor, editor, and author.



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Boff was involved with Gehman's publication *American Vegetarian-Hygienist*, and several of his associations, like the American Naturopathic Association.

Subject files include various topics. Notable materials include articles about the Iceberg Athletic Club (of which Boff was a member and President), and publication materials advertising Healthways dumbbells and barbells as well as workouts created by Richard Kline, physical instructor to Hollywood.

The series **Prints and photographs** contains roughly 300 images covering a wide range of subjects and individuals. Many of these images are included in issues of *The American Vegetarian-Hygienist* from the 1960s. Also present are a significant number of photographs of strongman, actor, and stunt performer Joe Bonomo, who was friends with Boff. The photographs were originally given to Boff as two large, framed composites. The composites were given to the Stark Center by Boff and taken apart for preservation purposes. These images include action shots of Bonomo performing various stunts and acting in silent films in the 1920s and 1930s. Other prominent strongmen in this collection are George Jowett, Bert Elliott, and Joe Rollino.

The two smallest series in the collection are **Posters and flyers** and **Newspapers**. Posters and flyers mainly concern bodybuilding and weightlifting competitions in 1986. The newspapers cover a range of topics, like fluoride, arthritis, and the Iceberg Athletic Club.

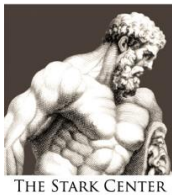
COLLECTION INVENTORY

Series 1: Catalogs, 1962-1986, undated

This series consists of four subseries: 1.1, Books; 1.2, Clippings of book titles; 1.3, Equipment; and 1.4, Miscellaneous.

Subseries 1.1: Books, 1965-1985, undated

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
ARCO Books, February 1970-December 1971, undated	1	1
Ballantine Books, 1971, undated	1	2
Bantam Books, December 1970-July 1971, undated	1	3

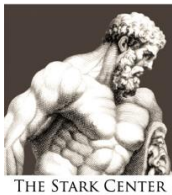


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Books Dynamics and Paperback Library, 1970-1971, undated	1	4
Dell Books, 1970-1971, undated	1	5
Dover Publications, 1969-1971, undated	1	6
Grosset and Dunlap, Inc., 1970-1971, undated	1	7
Macfadden Bartell Books, March 1970-June 1971, undated	1	8
Pyramid Books, 1968-1971, undated	1	9
Signet Books (New American Library), 1970-1971, undated	1	10
Miscellaneous book catalogs, 1965-1985	1	11

Subseries 1.2: Clippings of book titles, 1961-1971, undated

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
Astrology, 1971, undated	1	12
Cookbooks, 1967, undated	1	13
Dieting- Lose Weight, 1970, undated	1	14
Edgar Cayce, 1970, undated	1	15
Exercise and sports, undated	1	16
Health and Sex- Informative, undated	1	17
Inspirational, undated	1	18
Miscellaneous, 1971, undated	1	19
Nutritional guidance, 1961-1970, undated	1	20

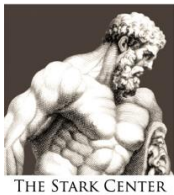


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Occult and Para phenomena, 1969, undated	1	21
Practical guides, 1971, undated	1	22
Philosophical, undated	1	23
Psychological, undated	1	24
Yoga, undated	1	25

Subseries 1.3: Equipment, 1962-1986, undated

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
AMF Whitley, 1967-1985, undated	1	26
Archery and Darts, 1969	1	27
Battle Creek Exercise Equipment, 1963-1986, undated	1	28
Bell Foundry Company (BFCO), 1976-1977, undated	1	29
Dial, Isaac Berger, 1972	1	30
Diversified Products, 1968-1973	1	31
Dynamics Health Equipment, 1976- 1985, undated	1	32
General exercise catalogs, 1980, undated	1	33
Medalist Industries, 1977	1	34
Mini-Gym, 1977	1	35
Miscellaneous exercise aids, 1966- 1982, undated	1	36

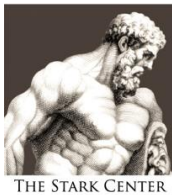


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Miscellaneous sporting goods, 1965-1977, undated	1	37
Roberts, 1969-1971	1	38
Sports nets and related products, 1968, 1971	1	39
Sports visual aids, 1967-1975	2	1
Sta-Slim Products and Ivanko Barbell Company, 1974-1984, undated	2	2
Tropar Trophy, 1972-1973	2	3
Uncategorized, A thru C, 1962-1985, undated	2	4
Uncategorized, D thru J, 1971-1986, undated	2	5
Uncategorized, M thru P, 1976-1984, undated	2	6
Uncategorized, R thru T, 1970-1985, undated	2	7
Uncategorized, U thru Y, 1977-1986, undated	2	8
Uniforms, sports clothing, and supplies, 1965-1984, undated	2	9
Vitamaster, 1976-1985	2	10

Subseries 1.4: Miscellaneous, 1963-1986, undated

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
Appliances, 1976-1983, undated	2	11
Billiard supplies, 1969-1971	2	12



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Business and houseware products, 1974-1986, undated	2	13
Health food, supplements, and related products, 1963-1986, undated	2	14
Medical supplies, undated	2	15
Pinball machines, undated	2	16

Series 2: Publications, 1908-1991, undated

This series consists of three subseries: 2.1, Books; 2.2, Single magazine and newsletter issues; and 2.3, Magazine and newsletter sets.

Subseries 2.1: Books, 1908, 1959

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
<i>Training for Athletics: A Comprehensive Manual Dealing with All Branches of Sport</i> , 1908	2	17
<i>Voice of Experience</i> , 1959	2	18

Subseries 2.2: Single magazine and newsletter issues, 1940-1991, undated

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
A thru H, 1970-1986, undated	2	19
J thru P, 1940-1991	2	20
S thru V, 1962-1991	2	21

Subseries 2.3: Magazine and newsletter sets, 1959-1991

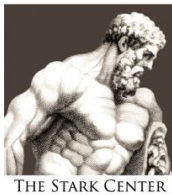
Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
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<i>Body Power</i> , 1988, 1990	3	1
<i>Denis Reno's Weightlifter's Newsletter</i> , 1988-1991	3	2
<i>International Olympic Lifter</i> , 1990-1991	3	3
<i>National Health Federation Bulletin</i> , January 1961-January 1979	3	4 thru 7
<i>National Health Federation's Public Scrutiny</i> , October 1981-February 1982	3	8
<i>National Masters Weightlifting Newsletter</i> (includes Special International Editions), March-August 1991	3	9
<i>NPC (National Physique Committee) News</i> , September 1987, May 1991	3	10
<i>Organic Gardening and Farming</i> , March 1961- April 1974	3	11
<i>Power Hotline</i> , December 1985-April 1986	3	12
<i>Prevention</i> , June 1959-September 1961	3	13 thru 15
<i>Prevention</i> , September 1961- July 1962, April 1982-March 1986	4	1 thru 5
<i>Region IV Weightlifting Newsletter</i> , July-December 1985	4	6
<i>The Sporting News Publishing Company</i> , 1971-1986	4	7 thru 10
<i>Today's Living</i> , March 1975-July 1985	4	11



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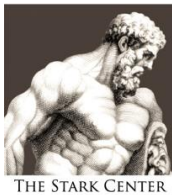
<i>U.S. All-Round Weightlifting Association Strength Journal</i> , November 1989-October 1991	4	12
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Series 3: Doctor Jesse Mercer Gehman materials, 1926-1962, undated

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
American Naturopathic Association Golden Jubilee Congress, 1947	4	13
American Temperance Society, 1955	4	14
Christmas cards, 1957, 1959, undated	4	15
“Health for Victory Box” articles, October 1942-April 1947	4	16
Human Engineering Foundation, 1946-1947, 1949-1950, undated	4	17
Inter-State Narcotic Association, Inc., 1943, undated	4	18
<i>The Narcotic Review</i> , June 1943-June 1947	4	19
Other anti-tobacco organizations, 1926-1952, undated	4	20
Statutes regarding health in District of Columbia, 1929-1962	4	21

Series 4: Subject files, 1947-1990, undated

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
Ancient people, 1966-1968	4	22
Competitions, 1947-1990	4	23

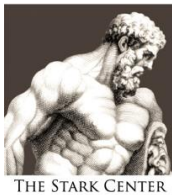


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Health, 1956-1973	4	24
Health stores, 1971, 1978, undated	4	25
Healthways, undated	5	1
Iceberg Athletic Club, 1957-1984, undated	5	2
Library of Physical Power, undated	5	3
Miscellaneous, undated	5	4
Naturopathic topics, 1962-1986, undated	5	5
Physical strength and strongmen, 1940, 1956, 1987, undated	5	6
Publishing materials, undated	5	7
Rights, 1968, 1986, undated	5	8
Vic Boff Health and Fitness Aids, 1978, 1981, undated	5	9

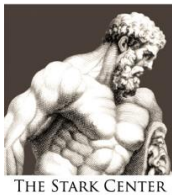
Series 5: Prints and photographs, 1902-1968, undated

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
Ame thru Bof, 1946-1947, c. 1960-1962, undated <i>[Includes Otto Arco, Doris Doscher Baum, Vic Boff, and Paul Bragg.]</i>	5	10
Bonomo, Joe: Assorted movies, 1923-1932 <i>[Includes images from "Beasts of Paradise," "Wolves of the North," "Iron Man," "Heroes of the Wild," "The Sea Tiger," "Vamping Venus," "The Vanishing Legion," "The Sign of the Cross," "The Last Frontier," and "Island of Lost Souls."]</i>	5	11



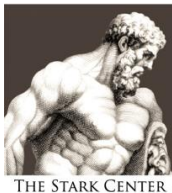
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Bonomo, Joe: <i>The College Cowboy</i> , 1924	5	12
Bonomo, Joe: Fragments, undated	5	13
Bonomo, Joe: <i>The Great Circus Mystery</i> , 1925	5	14
Bonomo, Joe: <i>Perils of the Wild</i> , 1925	5	15
Bonomo, Joe: Studio Photo Sessions, undated <i>[Includes Bonomo in various poses and outfits.]</i>	5	16
Bonomo, Joe: Stunts from unidentified movies, undated <i>[Stunts include Bonomo jumping from rooftops, driving off a dock, hanging from an airplane, jumping into automobiles, and leaping from moving trains.]</i>	5	17
Bonomo, Joe: Various activities, undated <i>[Includes Bonomo with Jack Dempsey, wrestling pose as Joe Atlas, and lifting various weights.]</i>	5	18
Bri thru Dug, 1953-1960, undated <i>[Includes staff writers of "The American Vegetarian Hygienist."]</i>	5	19
Elliott, Bert: Miscellaneous, undated <i>[Includes Mrs. Beverly Jocher Elliott and talent agency advertisements.]</i>	5	20
Elliott, Bert: Various body builder poses, undated <i>[Includes Muscle Beach.]</i>	6	1
Elliott, Bert: Various lifts, undated	6	2



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Elliott, Bert: Weightlifting in Korean War, c.1950-1952 <i>[Elliott lifting makeshift weights and posing, images of 40th Division weightlifting tournament, letter about the images, and clippings.]</i>	6	3
Eng thru Joh, 1931-1964, undated <i>[Includes Arthur Gay, Dr. Jesse Mercer Gehman, Phoebe Marie Holmes, staff writers of the "American Vegetarian-Hygienist," and the Iceberg Athletic Club, including Vic Boff and Joe Rollino.]</i>	6	4
Jowett, George: Lessons 4 thru 10, undated	6	5
Jowett, George: Lessons 11 thru 12 and unspecified, 1931, undated	6	6
Jua thru Osb, 1936-1963, undated <i>[Includes Bob Lewis, Jim Londos, Earle Liederman, Dr. Bernard Lytton-Bernard, Bernarr Macfadden, members of the American Naturopathic Association, Jack McClelland, John McWilliams, Joe Miller, Dr. Barbara Moore, Muscle Beach, Joe Nordquest, and William Oliphant.]</i>	7	1
Pas thru Tur, 1916-1964, undated <i>[Includes Harry Paschall, Vincent Priessnitz, Rancho La Puerta, Charles Rigoulot, Joe Rollino, Eugene Sandow, Dr. Edmond B. Szekely, Armand Tanny, and Demetrios Tophalos.]</i>	7	2
Unidentified people exercising, undated	7	3
Unidentified people posing, 1906, 1931, undated	7	4



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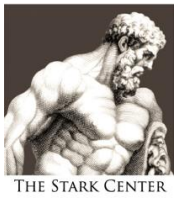
Unidentified wrestlers, undated	7	5
Van thru Zim, 1902-1962, undated <i>[Includes Carl Van Warden and Paul Von Boeckman.]</i>	7	6
Oversized images, 1968, undated <i>[Two large portraits of Bonomo and a panoramic image of the World Body Building Guild (WBBG) Testimonial Dinner held February 18, 1968].</i>	8	1

Series 6: Posters and flyers, 1979, 1986, undated

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
Assorted posters and flyers, 1979, 1986, undated <i>[Includes advertisements for Bodybuilding Championships.]</i>	8	2
Vic Boff advertisements, undated	8	3

Series 7: Newspapers, 1967-1986, undated

Folder Title	Box Number	Folder Number
Newspapers, 1967-1986, undated <i>[Titles include the "Brooklyn Graphic," "National Fluoridation News," "Arthritis Nutrition Aging News," "Freedom (The Independent Journal published by the Church of Scientology)," and "New Yorkin Hutiset (The Finnish New York News."]</i>	8	4



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SUBJECT HEADINGS

Organizations

American Natural Hygiene Society

American Naturopathic Association

Association of Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen

Iceberg Athletic Club

National Physique Committee of the U.S.A.

Rancho La Puerta (Spa)

Vegan Society

Vegetarian Society

World Body Building Guild

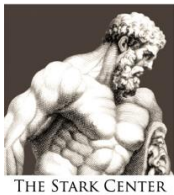
People

Arco, Otto

Bernard, Bernard, 1890-

Boff, Victor

Bonomo, Joe, 1901-1978



The H.J. Latcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports
The University of Texas at Austin

Bruce of Los Angeles

Dempsey, Jack, 1895-1983

Elliott, Bert

Gehman, Jesse Mercer

Holmes, Phoebe Marie

Jowett, George F. (George Fiusdale)

Londos, Jim, 1894-1975

Macfadden, Bernarr, 1868-1955

Moore, Barbara, 1903-1977

Nordquest, Joe

Oliphant, William

Paschall, Harry

Priessnitz, Vincenz, 1799-1851

Rigoulot, Charles Jean

Rollino, Joseph

Sandow, Eugen, 1867-1925

Székely, Edmond Bordeaux

Tophalos, Dēmētrios, 1884-1966

Subjects



THE STARK CENTER

The H.J. Lucher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports
The University of Texas at Austin

Alternative Medicine

Bodybuilding

Drug therapy

Exercise

Exercise equipment industry

Health

Medical care

Naturopathy

Nutrition

Physical education and training

Personal training

Powerlifting

Sporting goods industry

Stunt performers

Vegetarianism

Weightlifting

Weights