



# IRON GAME HISTORY



THE JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

Volume 5 Number 2

October 1998

## A PROGRESS REPORT

Many readers have asked us how we use the collection of materials we have assembled through the years. As a way to reply to these questions, we'd like to offer the following letter, written last month, to the family of the late Roy J. McLean, who helped us establish our collection here at The University of Texas.

Dear McLean Family,

When Roy J. "Mac" McLean and I first began discussing the formation of a center/library for the cultural and historical study of physical culture, I told Mac that Jan and I had two major goals for such a center. Our first goal was to preserve for posterity books, magazines, photographs, personal papers, manuscripts, and other artifacts in the fields of physical fitness, weight training, nutrition, alternative medicine, general health, and other branches of what is most commonly called "physical culture." Our hope was that placing such items at The University would enhance their chances of being preserved over time. Our second goal was to encourage academic scholarship in the field of physical culture by 1) making our collections accessible to researchers, and 2) publishing our quarterly journal, *Iron*

*Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture.*

We are happy to report that, in a variety of ways, we are meeting these goals. Over the past several years, our collection has been used by a number of scholars working on books related to the field of physical culture. Jan's book, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women 1800-1870*, was released this summer by Mercer University Press. She did

most of her research in our collection and was inspired to write the book by materials donated to the Collection by retired Kinesiology professor Dr. Mary Lou LeCompte. This winter, Penn State Press is releasing Dr. John Fair's *Muscle town USA*, a biography of Bob Hoffman, founder of the York Barbell Company and a leading proponent of resistance training in the early twentieth century. Dr. Fair, who is chairman of the history department at Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville, Georgia, has made a number of trips to Texas to use our Collection. In addition to his new book, he has published several articles—based on materials in our collection—in the *Journal of Sport History* and *Iron Game History*. Finally, Southwestern University sociology professor Maria Lowe used our collection for her 1997 book, *Women of Steel:*



*Female Bodybuilders and the Struggle for Self-Definition.* Maria was a graduate student of mine while she was here at UT and her book, published by New York University Press, is based on her dissertation.

There are a number of books presently underway based on holdings in the Collection. This summer, Dr. Jack Berryman, a professor in the medical school at the University of Washington in Seattle, spent over a week here in Austin doing research. Dr. Berryman is the official historian of the American College of Sports Medicine and he had two research goals while he was in Austin. One of his goals was to use our collection to complete a timeline he is creating for

the American College of Sports Medicine's Internet web page. His 300+ page time-line tracks the evolution of sports medicine and exercise history from the ancient Greeks to the present. He was also here, however, to begin research on his new book which will examine the impact of sports medicine on American physical education and exercise. Travelling with Dr. Berryman was Professor James C. Whorton, also of the University of Washington's medical school. Dr. Whorton is one of our most distinguished authors in the field of sport and medical history. His *Crusaders for Fitness: The History of American Health Reformers* is considered a model for

intellectual histories while his many journal articles and presentations at national meetings have established him as the world's leading authority on the history of health reform. Dr. Whorton's new project is a book on the history of naturopathic medicine. He told us that he was astonished at the richness of our collection in this area and, like Dr. Berryman, plans to return to Austin later this year to continue his research.

Dr. Sam Dana of the school of journalism at Loyola University in Chicago is working on a biography of Charles Atlas. Dr. Dana, who specializes in the history of advertising, made two trips to Austin this past academic year to research Atlas' life and his ad campaign to sell "Dynamic Tension"—which is, by the way, the longest running ad campaign in American history. Another scholar, Dr. James Woycke, of the history department at the University of Western Ontario in Canada is also working on a book based in part on our Collection. Dr. Woycke is writing a history of the evolution of bodybuilding in Canada. He is particularly interested in the formation of the International Federation of Bodybuilders and the influence of Joe and Ben Weider, its founders, who grew up in Montreal. Dr. Woycke will visit the Collection this fall and plans to come back for an extended visit in the spring.

Jan has also begun two new book projects related to the Collection. The Human Kinetics Publishing Co. has asked her to edit a book of readings on what some academics are beginning to call "body culture." Over the past five years, there has been a tremendous growth of interest in the academic study of the body, bodybuilding and interpretations of the body. In fact, *Lingua Franca*, a journal about academic life, published an article in its October issue about the sudden explosion of courses and scholarship in this field. (Jan and I were interviewed for the article.) Human Kinetics believes that the time is right for an anthology of current and historical articles that could be used as a text in a "body culture" class. She has asked Dr. Berryman to co-edit the volume because he teaches such a class in the medical history program at the University of Washington. Jan's other project is one on which we are collaborating. She is working on a history of exercise in the twentieth century. She spent most of her summer researching this book, helped by grants from The University and the Amateur Athletic Foundation in Los Angeles. By summer's end, she had decided that she wanted to approach this history by focussing on the events surrounding Muscle Beach in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Because many of the individuals involved in Muscle Beach

are people I've known for years, I have agreed to co-author.

We are also assisting several scholars with their book projects by "long-distance." Dr. Frank Zarnowski of Mount St. Mary's University is researching the Scottish track and field athlete Donald Dinnie. We have sent Dr. Zarnowski Xerox copies of magazine and journal articles for his project and he recently contributed a long article for *Iron Game History* in return. We also helped Dr. Allen Guttmann of Amherst College with his latest book, *The Erotic in Sports*, by providing him with photographs and with some manuscript materials. Nicholas Turse, a Ph.D. candidate at Rutgers, is also working on a physical culture project. Turse is researching physical fitness at the turn of the century. He is specifically looking at Eugen Sandow's work in India, New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand. We are helping Turse with background material on Sandow's life as well as material on the physical fitness movement at the turn of the century. Finally, several years ago, we assisted Dr. Ron Smith of Penn State University with a history of the National Strength and Conditioning Association that he had been asked to write by that body.

In previous years, Dr. Joan Hult of the University of Maryland visited the Collection for her history of women's basketball; Dr. Horst Uberborst, from Germany visited the Collection in connection with his history of the Turner movement in North America; Dr. Jill Matthews of the University of Western Australia spent a week here researching women's bodybuilding; and Dr. Andy Kosar, a Presidential Scholar at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, researched the physical fitness movement of the 1940s. (*Ed. Note: An article by Kosar will appear in the next issue of IGH.*) Last but by no means least, UT's Dr. John Hoberman, whose most recent book was the widely acclaimed *Darwin's Athletes*, is a frequent visitor.

Several graduate students are currently using the Collection. Josh Buck, a masters' student in performance and theater at the University of Maryland, spent several days at the Collection last spring. Buck, who has asked Jan to be on his masters committee, is analyzing from a performance perspective circus and vaudeville "strongman" acts. Here at the University of Texas, four Ph.D. students are currently using the collection for part of their research. Kim Hewitt [American Studies] is using our extensive collection of books on psychology and psychiatry for her dissertation on America's changing attitudes toward these fields in the 1960s. Carolyn de la Pena, another of Jan's graduate students, [American Studies] is looking at America's fascination with electricity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. [The

various electrical athletic devices that began to be used as substitutes for exercise particularly fascinate Ms. de la Pena.] James Harley [Performance and Theater] has asked both me and Jan to serve on his dissertation committee. Harley plans to examine the evolution of sports rules as a function of performance. He believes that many rules come into being in order to make sports interesting to watch rather than to make them more fair and impartial. He will be using our contemporary magazine collection as well as manuscript materials we have from the rules committees of several sports organizations. Alice Checala [American Studies] is writing her dissertation about the connections between masculinity and physical training in the early twentieth century. Finally, Charles Kupfer [American Studies] just completed his dissertation on the influence of the media during World War II. Kupfer, who was my graduate student used the Collection for his section on sports coverage and the use of sport metaphors in battle coverage by American journalists.

Through the years we have also had many visitors to the Collection who are not academics—visitors who are simply fans and followers of the iron game. Many of these visitors are people with national reputations, people like Peary and Mabel Rader, Cory and Jeff Everson, Vic Boff, George Foreman, Joe Roark, Mauro DiPasquale, Joe Puleo, Bill Starr, Steve Reeves, Jim Murray, Joe Assirati, Harold Weiss, Dennis Rogers, Cleve Dean, Bob and Doug Young, Mike Hall, Ellington Darden, Eddie Robinson, Lamar Gant, Judy and Roger Gedney, Steve Neece, Jim Witt, Ricky Crain, Brother Bennett, and Ed Jubinville.

We are also pleased to report that the Collection continues to be used by the media and other outside agencies. The New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City is hosting an exhibition in the spring of 2000 called *Picturing the Modern Amazon: Representations of Today's Muscular Women in Art and Photography*. The exhibition will have three parts: a historical display, a section on comic books, and the primary exhibition—original works of art. Jan has been the historical consultant for the show and our collection is one of the major sources of historical images. We have also assisted the History Channel with two two-hour television specials. This past spring we provided images for *Theater of War: A History of Professional Wrestling*. It aired in May. This summer, we spent more than two weeks being interviewed, helping to find images, and fact-checking their new documentary on the history of physical fitness. Jan has been named historical consultant for the show, which will air in February. Over the past several years, we've

provided photographs to *National Geographic*, *Stern* [Germany], *Scientific American*, *Stanford Humanities Review*, *Lingua Franca*, *Sports Illustrated*, and a variety of other publications. Images and films from the Collection were also used in the documentary film: *Fit: Episodes in the History of the Body* [funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities] that appeared on PBS television. This past spring, Jan was asked to deliver the D.B. Dill Historical Address at the American College of Sports Medicine's annual meeting. Her hour-long presentation entitled *Women and Weights: An Illustrated History* was inspired by the richness of our photography collections. Finally, Educational Development Services of California is using one of our photographs (of Texas strongman Stout Jackson) for a poster promoting physical fitness. It will be distributed in the public schools.

As you can see, we've come a long way toward reaching the goals Mac and I believed were important. While Jan and I continue to hope that the day will come when our Collection will have more space and at least one full-time archivist to help with preservation and the growing number of research requests, we like to think Mac and Nell would be proud of what we've been able to do so far. If we can ever be of any service, please let us know.

—Terry Todd

