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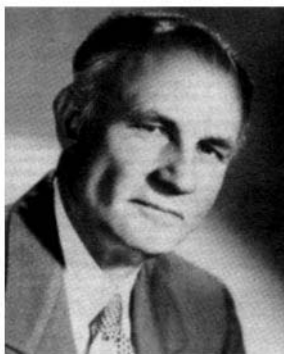
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The Herbert Shelton Collection

I've been collecting magazines and books about exercise for almost 50 years, and in the beginning my collecting efforts were focused on competitive lifting, feats of strength, and bodybuilding. Those areas were the heart of my personal interest, and they remained so for my first six or seven years of collecting. At that point I met Ottley Coulter, a former professional strongman and America's leading collector in the field of physical culture. Ottley allowed me to use his collection in the writing of my doctoral dissertation, and as I worked my way through his many thousands of books and magazines, I learned that there was much more to physical culture than strength and muscles.

I learned about people like Bernarr Macfadden, John Harvey Kellogg, Dudley Allen Sargent, and Herbert Shelton. I learned that the farther back in time a book or magazine was published, the more likely it was to contain information about diet, relaxation, fresh air, sunshine, and hygiene as well as about systematic exercise. Ottley, who was born in 1890, was living proof of this broad focus as both his vast collection and his way of life reflected his belief that heavy lifting alone was only one part of physical culture.

A few years after Ottley took me under his gentle wing, I met Vic Boff, who in later years became one of my closest friends and advisers. He took me much farther into the fascinating world of the non-exercise



Herbert Shelton

aspects of physical culture. Vic, himself, made his life's work in areas such as vegetarianism, naturopathy, hygiene, massage, natural foods, winter bathing, fasting, fresh air, and cosmology. He knew everyone in the field for over 70 years, including Macfadden, Dr. Christian Gian-Cursio, Paul Bragg, Dr. Jesse Mercer Gehman, Benedict Lust, and Dr. Herbert Shelton.

As Vic learned of my efforts in collecting, of my acquisition of Ottley Coulter's collection, and of the move Jan and I made to the University of Texas in 1983, he began to push us to learn more about the fields he knew and loved. He argued that our physical culture collection at U.T. would never be complete until we had acquired the bedrock books and magazines that covered those fields. Under his direction and with his enthusiastic help, we contacted the family of Dr. Jesse Mercer Gehman, who allowed us to come to their home in rural Pennsylvania and take what we wanted of Dr. Gehman's books, magazines, and papers. Vic even helped us pack, and we came away with hundreds of boxes of material.

Next, he introduced us to Sydell Herbst, Dr. Gian-Cursio's longtime friend and personal assistant. Following his death, she had acquired the majority of his collection, which was considerably larger than that of Dr. Gehman. Convinced that we would do our best to see that Dr. Gian-Cursio's collection was saved and used, Sydell allowed us to pack it up and drive it back to

Austin in a large, rented truck.

Some of Gian-Cursio's best books had been sold by his family to the Strand bookstore in New York before Sydell got the rest, and we learned from the Strand who had bought the books. Some years later, we were given those books, too, and the Gian-Cursio collection was reunited.

By then, we realized how important and interesting the fields of alternative medicine, early anti-smoking campaigns, vegetarianism, and etc. were in physical culture, and we were delighted to have acquired so much material in the area. But Vic told us there was one other large collection that would make ours unquestionably the most extensive in the world—the Herbert

Shelton Collection. At that time it was in Tampa, Florida, and was owned by the National Health Association (NHA).

The NHA was originally called the American Natural Hygiene Society (ANHS), and under that name it continued for almost 40 years. From 1928—when he published *Human Life: Its Philosophy and Laws*—until 1968, Dr. Shelton wrote 35 books and hundreds of magazine articles. In 1939 he began publishing *Dr. Shelton's Hygienic Review*, and for over 40 years his fertile mind filled the pages of the magazine. He was also a prolific speaker and appeared all over country spreading his message of healthful living.

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Besides all his other activities, Shelton was an avid collector of books on health and nutrition, and his collection grew over time to 2700 volumes. After his death those volumes were displayed in specially made glass-fronted bookcases in the NHA offices in Tampa. Over ten years ago and at Vic's urging, Jan and I visited the NHA offices to see the collection and to tell the staff at NHA about our own collection at U.T. We told them that we admired Dr. Shelton's work and that if the time ever came when they felt his collection could have a larger impact if it were housed in our library we would treasure and care for it as we knew he had done.

As the years passed we remained in contact with the staff at NHA, and then late last year they called us and told us that if we still wanted the Shelton Collection we could have it. Thus it was that we made another trip to pack and bring home a significant collection of a significant figure in the physical culture field. We are honored to have it, and it has already been used by several researchers. We are deeply grateful for the gift of the collection, as we are for the gifts of the Gehman and Gian-Cursio collections. They are safe here now, and accessible to serious researchers in the fields they cover. In fact, an example of the use to which these collections have been put can be found in the article on page 22 by Dr. Jim Whorton (a professor in the medical school at the University of Seattle). Whorton did most of the research for a recent book on alternative medicine—*Nature Cures*—here in our collection, and his article in this issue deals with Benedict Lust, another prominent physical culturist. It, too, is based on research Dr. Whorton did here at Texas. Another of this issue's articles drew heavily from research done in the parts of the collection dealing with exercise. That article—"Dudley Allen Sargent: Health Machines and the Energized Male Body," by Dr. Carolyn de la Peña begins on page three.

We hope and expect that in the future more researchers will use our collections to study both exercise and the broader fields of physical culture. We further hope that more books and articles will result and that the pioneers of physical culture will not be forgotten. That is our abiding aim.