

# The IRON Grapevine

**Dear IGH,**

I enjoyed the August issue, from cover to cover. The coverage of the Arnold Classic was super, and the explanation of how the sequence of events affected the events that followed, was insightful. Much can be said about how training routines are affected by the sequence of exercises. I wonder how Norbert Schemansky would have done with a straight shaft Apollon Barbell, instead of the bent shaft original he lifted many years ago?

The article on Alan Calvert gave much needed credit to his place in weight training history. The last issue did justice to the Hoffman team's visit to Springfield College and Dr. Karpovich, which opened the eyes of the professor to the benefit and truths about weight training.

The Farnese Hercules is probably one of the two most impressive statues showing human strength and power. The Laocoon Group being the other. Michaelangelo was the master, but Lysippos' rendition is the most powerful, ahead of the other great Greek sculptors.

Also, it was good to read the letter from Pete George, a very great weightlifter. Its good to see many of the greats from the past are still around, interested and contributing to the sport.

**John Crainer**

**Via Email**



**Dear IGH:**

Latest IGH was a zinger! I've always admired the Farnese. Perhaps you could do a similar piece on the "Blind and Chained Samson". . . it is even more massively muscular and apparently no one knows much about its origin or its current location. David Webster sent me a nice drawing of it, but I believe I've only seen one photograph—in an early issue of *Muscle Mag International*.

Of course the Calvert item was right up my alley. I noted that Kim mentions that "after the acquisi-

tion of Milo Barbell, Hoffman began his own equipment company, York Barbell." Truth of the matter is that he bought the bankrupt Milo company in 1935, but had begun manufacture of barbells as early as 1929 when he made the first York Olympic set by copying a Berg set brought over by Milo Steinborn. These sets were advertised in the first issue of *Strength & Health* in December 1932. In an interesting marketing ploy, Hoffman hired Robert Jones, the former manager at Milo, to market Milo barbells in Philadelphia and even ran ads for this venture in *Strength & Health* until 1942 when the war effort impacted the foundries.

**Mike BonDurant**

**Via Email**

*Ed. Note: You're correct, Mike, and we thank you for pointing out the error. On page 36 of John Fair's history of the York Barbell Company (MuscleTown USA) he writes, "In 1929 Bob [Hoffman] began making barbells from the same facilities used in the manufacture of home heaters, but 1932 marks the real beginning of the operation." Fair goes on to explain that very few sets were sold in the early years. The record for a number of years was the twenty-two barbell sets sold during the July 4th week of 1933.*

**Dear IGH:**



Just a quick note to tell youall (is that a word?) how much I enjoyed the new issue of *IGH*. The articles on *Strength* magazine and the Farnese Hercules were superb! A lot of good solid info was in there—you reaffirmed why *IGH* is so good and also more importantly so important! I cannot say I missed you two at the AOBs dinner this year because I did not make it myself. I do not know if you two were there or not; I had some work and personal issues. I for one hope to see you two next year up there. I think when it comes to an event like that—two people involved with the history of the game need to be there.

**Howard Havener**

**Via Email**

*Ed. Note: "Youall" is indeed a word, particularly down here.*

**Dear IGH:**

Enclosed is check for my subscription renewal. In looking over some back issues I noticed an article on Rosetta Hoffman and her impact on women's weight training. I think your readers will find the rest of her life interesting as well.

Bob Hoffman told me that upon their divorce he gave Rosetta \$50,000 as part of the settlement but that that was gone within six months so he started sending her monthly checks.

Her third husband was a man by the name of Morris. Rosetta claims she bought a small farm near Eder, Maryland but lost it because Morris got in some trouble and she wanted to keep him out of jail. I don't know what the trouble was but Morris was known to do a lot of gambling. As Bob's checks came in the money was spent. A man who owned a country store in Eder told me she would cash the check into nickels and spend hours playing the pinball machine until it was gone.

Later they were able to get a small house in nearby Fruitland, Maryland. On the property was a small garage so Morris started selling a few used cars but continued to gamble. One day a man was pumping air into a tire and the tire blew. The man was badly hurt (lost a leg) and there was a lawsuit. Once again Rosetta was about to lose her home.

Rosetta told me that Bob Hoffman, Alda Ketterman, and a lawyer showed up with a suitcase of money and purchased the house. So Rosetta and her husband still had a place to live.

I first met Rosetta when Dick Bachtell came down with his wife Connie. Sometimes he would hunt in this area. We decided to pay Rosetta a visit. We pulled into the yard and knocked on the door. There was no answer so we continued knocking. Connie saw a large woman on crutches looking at us thru the window and called her by name and Rosetta opened the door.

Rosetta was a big woman, on crutches and diabetic. She spent most of her time sitting in a big chair watching a large television set that Bob had given her. Her hair was long and yellowish white. I could tell she was lonely and in a bad way. When her teeth gave her trouble she would work them loose and pull them out over a period of time. Not a very good quality of life!

I would occasionally stop by and see her when in the area. She and Morris visited our house one time and got into a verbal fight right in our living room. She could go off at a moment's notice. She seemed to live in

the past and talked about when she was America's sweetheart. She asked me if her picture was still on the wall at the Broad Street gym. [She had] no idea that the company had grown and moved to Ridge Avenue and later to Route 83. She seemed to delight in telling how she smashed the bathtub and other fixtures in the house on Lightner Hill after Bob showed up with a girlfriend.

Sometimes she would praise Bob and later talk abusively about him. Her attitude seemed to be that even though she was married to another man, Bob still had an obligation to support her because she went to the meets with him and cooked for the weightlifters. She did help Bob get started. After her husband died in 1990 she continued to sit in the chair and watch the television. I think her husband's relatives and others looked out for her. When I saw in the paper that she had died on Christmas Day 1993, I called Alda Ketterman and told her. I hope this information completes the story.

**Charles Spencer**  
**Snow Hill, Maryland**

**Dear IGH:**

Thanks for the incredible job you ALL do, I know this is sort of a niche endeavor but people like me really do notice and appreciate the work and effort you put in to help us feel a part of something special and magical from long bygone days. Thank you.

**Kevin R. Wade**  
**Watertown, TN**

**Dear IGH:**

Since the demise of *Strength & Health* and *Muscular Development* in the mid 1980s and the loss of *Iron Man* to commercial bodybuilding there has been no publication recording the outstanding events that have occurred in our beloved Iron Game during the past twenty-five years. To my mind this is a serious omission as there will be no written record for future historians to refer to when researching.

Would it be possible to have a section in *IGH* covering recent history such as the weight-lifting results from Olympic, World and National Championships, cur-

rent World and National records no matter what type of lifting and if possible, profiles of current Champions throughout the world? I hope you will consider this suggestion, as there is no other publication capable of understanding or even being aware of the wide spectrum of the Iron Game other than the excellent *Iron Game History*.

**Vic Burdett**  
**United Kingdom**

*Although we do run some contemporary pieces—like the Quarter Master article in this issue—we don't have the space to begin covering current events on a regular basis. However, if you haven't seen them, you might want to take a look at **Dennis Reno's Weightlifter's Newsletter**; **Randall Strossen's Milo**, which covers all aspects of the iron game; and **Mike Lambert's Powerlifting USA**.*

**Dear IGH:**



I have been intending to write ever since the March *IGH* about the Weider Endowment Fund—a great achievement, well done. I'm reminded of Tennyson, who wrote in "Ulysses," "Old age hath yet his honor and his toil . . . Some work of noble note may yet be done, Not unbecoming men that strove with gods."

In my own modest way, I shall remain a Patron of *IGH*. It's nice to be in a list of subscribers that includes Dave Draper, Walt Marcyan, Pudgy Stockton, Frank Stranahan, Joe and Betty Weider, and memorial tributes to Steve Reeves and Chuck Sipes.

**Les Longshore**  
**Birmingham, Alabama**  
**Dear IGH:**



I came across your website as I was perusing the Internet for information on the history of physical culture, a topic in which I recently have become interested. I was amazed by the depth of the text and pictorial documentation of the iron game and physical culture, in general, that exists online, and even more amazed to find out about

your Collection. I am sure it is, and will continue to serve as, a very important resource for the study of this field. Congratulations and thank you!

I was a competitive high school and college powerlifter in the late Seventies and early-to-mid Eighties and followed you and Terry as leaders in the field. Graduate school (and then my children) took me away from powerlifting and weightlifting, for a long while, but I am starting to get back into it a bit. Currently I am more involved in Xingyi Chuan, a Chinese martial art, and have "re-discovered" the history of the iron game and general fitness and physical culture through my involvement in the history and theory of Chinese physical culture. It would be a great topic for me to study more formally at some point, I guess.

But I was wondering, has anybody made a documentary movie, on the order of Ken Burns' "Baseball", about the history of the iron game and/or physical culture? I think it would be not only important, but also well received.

**Lou Yurasits**  
**Via email**

*Two major documentaries have looked at the field of physical culture: **Fit: Episodes in the History of the Body** came out in 1991 ([www.straightaheadpictures.com](http://www.straightaheadpictures.com)). The television series **Modern Marvels** also did a two hour special in 1998. The first episode is called, "The Quest for Health" and the second hour is called, "The Quest for Muscle." You can order copies from [www.historychannel.com](http://www.historychannel.com).*

**Dear IGH:**



Ian Batchelor was my favorite uncle when I was growing up and I am trying to locate any and all information I can to insure that I can keep his memory alive for the younger folk in my family. My mother's maiden name was Alice Johansen and she had a sister "Bea" who married Ian. They had one daughter "Janice."

Ian and Bea lived in Gardenia, CA and my family lived in Salinas, CA. Ian and Bea used to come visit us now and then and he would entertain us all. He occasionally went deer hunting with my dad but he was too big to ride our horse. He LOVED to drink beer and lots of it. Bea seemed to try to keep up with him but it cost her in the end. I visited them sometime in the late 60's and my time with Ian was nothing less than wonderful. His stories of his bartender days were most entertaining. When my mother passed away in 1992, I got to keep an old scrap book that contained a few newspaper articles about Ian. I have the *Mighty Joe Young* video where he was one of the ten strong men that had the tug-of-war with Joe. And, I have a few photos from 1957 that I took using my old Brownie Hawkeye camera when he visited our family when my father passed away. I would have been thirteen. I also came across your April 1995 article posted on the web from *Iron Game History* that was written by Terry Todd, entitled "Mac and Jan." The story brought mostly smiles but I was upset to learn how Janice (his only daughter) may have taken advantage of him in his final years. Other than that, my archives are pretty empty. When I speak of Ian I do not want to sound like an old geezer making up unbelievable stories. Ian, bless his heart, seemed unbelievable. Anyhow, any assistance you might provide me would be most appreciated.

**James J. Foster**

Via email

*We're happy to learn that good old Mac is well-remembered by some of his relatives. You're right, by the way, to consider him remarkable, as he was a truly unique man. Most historians of strength would consider him to have been history's greatest arm-wrestler, as he apparently took on all comers for approximately twenty-five years and was never beaten during that time. He would play right or left-handed, with a thumblock grip (the normal grip used in arm or wrist-wrestling) or an openhand grip—depending on the challenger's preference.*

*I visited him quite a few times over the later part of his life, with the first visit coming in 1965 when he was about fifty-eight years old and I was 27. I went to his bar that day with Bert Elliot, one of his good friends from the strength world. Mac was then retired from arm wrestling at that time, having quit at fifty and lost a bit of weight, but he was still a big man—weighing about 280. I was in my lifting prime then, and weighed about 330, and I was proud when he compared our hands and showed me that our hands were almost exactly alike in size and shape. We were both a couple of inches over 6', but our hands weren't overly large for our overall size—which goes to show that hand strength isn't limited to men with huge hands.*

*One of the things we have in our collection here at the University of Texas that we particularly treasure is a hip-lifting belt Mac gave us on one of our trips to visit him at his house in Gardenia. He used to practice hip-lifting, which involves straddling something heavy, hooking a chain to it, and hooking that chain to a wide leather belt that went over the hips and then down to crotch-height or a bit lower so the chain could be connected to the rings at the ends of the belt. This allowed the lifter to slightly bend his legs, place his hands on his thighs, and then straighten his legs so that he would lift the heavy object (usually lying on the ground) a few inches. Huge poundages can be lifted in this way, and Mac used to often practice with a large telephone pole. I think he lifted over 2000 pounds in this way, so he had a high level of strength in other parts of his body than just his hands.*

*I always considered him a special friend, and I was saddened by the circumstances of his last years. But he had a heck of a life when he was in his glory days, and he gave a great deal of happiness to a great many people.*

