



IRON GAME HISTORY



Volume 5 Number 1

May 1998

Harold Weiss—Another Friend Gone

I met Hal Weiss in the early 1960s through a mutual friend—the ex-circus strong man and avid collector Ottley Coulter. Hal and Ottley had been friends for many years, drawn together by their abiding love for the iron game. They also shared a passion for collecting books, magazines, and photographs in the field, and their collections were among the best in the country. I had sought out Ottley because his collection was supposed to be the most complete in the U.S., and Ottley introduced me to Hal. I suspect they sensed that my own love for books, magazines, and photographs about the iron game matched their own.

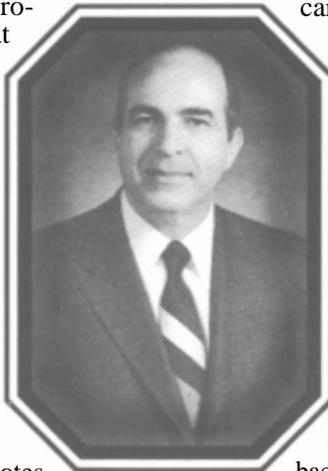
Ottley has been gone for many years now, and this fall we lost Hal to a sudden and massive heart attack. We last saw Hal in October in New York City. He was there with his wife, Helen, to attend the annual gathering of the Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen Association at the Downtown Athletic Club. Hal and Helen had been coming to the meeting of the Association for many years and, as usual, Jan and I spent a lot of our time talking to them and comparing notes about collecting. During those weekends we made many trips together to bookstores such as the Strand, searching for iron game treasures. During the trips we were often accompanied by Dave Webster, another inveterate collector, and Vic Boff, and those trips and the times with Hal and Helen and Dave and Vic were always a highlight of our jaunts to New York.

One of the most interesting things about Hal—who was in many ways an exceptionally interesting man—was that his love of collecting extended far beyond phys-

ical culture. He was also an avid collector of material about motion pictures, Sherlock Holmes, and the West. Readers of *IGH*, in fact, may recall Hal's fine article in Volume One, Number 4&5 about Sherlock Holmes and his physical prowess.

Hal spent his life in Memphis, and he spent his adult life there practicing law. By all accounts Hal was an extremely able attorney, and he developed over his long career a large and very successful practice. To those who knew him outside the law this success was no surprise, because it was impossible to spend much time with Hal without being impressed by his unusual combination of intelligence and charm. Witty and clever with words, Hal had a joke for every occasion, and his geniality and enthusiasm for life impressed everyone who knew him.

In his salad years Hal was also a very strong man, particularly in the pressing movements. At a bodyweight of slightly over two hundred pounds, Hal could clean a pair of 110 pound dumbbells and press them seesaw fashion for eight reps with each arm back in the Fifties. He loved to tell the story about going to Sieg Klein's gym in order to show the master what he could do. Unlike many iron gamers, Hal never lost his enthusiasm for training, and he worked out regularly in his garage gym, going as heavy as he could but honest about his failing strength. "I can't press worth a damn anymore," he would laugh, "but I haven't lost much on the curl or the pulling movements." When Hal and Helen's son, Martin, was young, Hal coached him in weightlifting, and the younger Weiss had tremendous promise, cleaning and jerking well over three hundred



pounds while still a teenager. "It came so easy to him that I think he lost interest," Hal explained adding, "I just wish I had had his natural talent." In the law, however, Martin followed his father's lead and joined the firm.

Nor did Hal tire of watching lifting. He and Helen attended many national and international lifting events over the past decades, including five Olympic Games. Even though his practice allowed him very little time for travel, he loved to see new places with his boon companion, Helen. Together, they made several trips to Austin to see our collection, and it was always such a treat to show the collection to someone who could fully appreciate what we were trying to do. Hal was always a solid supporter of our work, and he sent us many things through the years. And several years ago he told me that when he passed away he wanted his collection to take its place

alongside those of Ottley Coulter, David P. Willoughby, George Hackenschmidt, Joe Assirati, Dr. Jesse Mercer Gehman, Roy J. McLean, and Al Leroux. What can you say at a moment like that except "thank you. Thank you." Helen tells us that many people have called inquiring about the collection but that she has told them it would be coming to Texas. That it was Hal's wish to place it with us so that it would be protected and made available to fans and students of the iron game down through the years.

Not a week goes by in our busy lives that I don't think of Hal and Helen. I simply can't believe he's gone. I like to think that somewhere, he and Ottley and David P. and Sieg and Milo are engaged in a neverending conversation about such things as whether Cyr was stronger than Apollon or whether Sandow's abdominals were better than those of Staff Sergeant Moss.

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The Amazing Donald Dinnie: The Nineteenth Century's Greatest Athlete

Frank Zarnowski



Ed Note: Special thanks are due David Webster for permission to reprint several images from his classic text, *Scottish Highland Games*. Watch for Webster's response to this article in a future issue.

Donald Dinnie's comin' here,
Donald Dinnie's comin' here,
Spread the news baith far and near,
That Donald Dinnie's comin' here.¹

When Donald Dinnie initially toured the U.S. Caledonian circuit in 1870 he created a sensation and earned a small fortune. At thirty-three, Dinnie was already acknowledged as Scotland's greatest athlete, having competed for sixteen Highland Games seasons in his native land. Such was his reputation for feats of strength and versatility that American Caledonian clubs amended their calendars and paid heavy appearance fees to Dinnie to compete at their Gatherings. And so, in July, 1870, Donald Dinnie, the world's greatest athlete and the first superstar of sport, came to America.

North Americans flocked to Highland Gatherings not only to watch Dinnie compete, but simply to "see" Dinnie, an incredible specimen. Trim-waisted, Dinnie stood 6' 1" and possessed a forty-eight inch chest. He weighed fifteen stone (218 pounds), had 26 1/2" thighs, but sported no discernible fat. He was dark in complexion with a sharp, piercing eye, and "the kilt, and nothing but the kilt, is the only covering of his stalwart limbs."² It was said that when Dinnie appeared, resplendent in kilt (and at times wearing flesh-colored tights), he made men's hearts, and women's knees, weak.

Donald Dinnie was not the first traveling professional athlete in search of a living. Yet, in the nineteenth century, no one traveled so much, competed so frequently and won so often as the big Scot Dinnie toured

the English speaking world creating a sensation wherever he appeared. There seems to be no lack of local newspaper accounts of his visits. After competing at all the important Highland gatherings in Scotland and England, Dinnie tramped the world displaying his strength and versatility. He started at Caledonian Games, which featured events native to Scotland, but just as frequently he wrestled in tournaments or simply gave dumbbell-lifting (and later Highland dancing) demonstrations at dance halls. He toured Canada and the U.S.A. on three occasions, then steamed off to Australia and New Zealand in the 1880s, and later touted South Africa. At one stretch he was away for sixteen years, returning to Scotland in 1898 at age sixty-one.

Dinnie satisfied all the conditions of a twentieth century superstar: widespread fame, success, and riches. Over time Dinnie carried the label "World Champion Wrestler," and acquired the unofficial titles of "Greatest Athlete in the World," and "Strongest Man in the World"³ [Editors' Note: Although Dinnie was a fine wrestler and a wonderfully strong man, he was never at the very top of these two fields. He never reached his potential in either wrestling or lifting because of his preference for the profits to be had as a great all-rounder.] The bulk of his career preceded that of boxer John L. Sullivan and baseball star Mike "King" Kelley. But his reputation was every bit their equal

The sporting public flocked to Highland gatherings in the years immediately following the Civil War when prize fighting, the turf, pedestrianism, and cycling also filled the free time of American spectators. So did baseball, which by 1869 had its first professional team,

the Cincinnati Red Stockings. The following season, when Dinnie made his initial American tour, the Red Stockings were the darlings of America. Boston's Wright brothers (Harry and George) had accumulated the nation's top ballplayers, toured them from coast to coast and paid them handsomely. The previous year, the Red Stockings' fifty-seven game unbeaten streak (it eventually matched sixty-six) had made baseball the "national pastime."

Yet for all the notoriety of the Red Stockings, the top sporting attraction in 1870 was Donald Dinnie, who outdrew the nation's top ball-team and every other sporting event on the continent. In a forty-nine day stretch Dinnie appeared in a dozen cities. While the Red Stockings averaged a "phenomenal" 3500 spectators per contest,⁴ Dinnie's crowds were triple that. He drew twenty thousand spectators at the New York Caledonian Games, fifteen thousand in Toronto, and thousands more in smaller towns. Over his lengthy career it is likely that somewhere between three and five million spectators watched him perform.

And he was ungodly successful. Dinnie was one of the world's most powerful men yet he was also the most multi-faceted athlete of his or any other day. On his 1870 tour he attempted seventy-five Caledonian throwing, running, and jumping events at annual club meetings. Remarkably, Dinnie won sixty-eight of them and placed (top three) in the remaining seven, collecting several thousand dollars in prize money.⁵ One Highland Games authority estimates that Dinnie won over eleven thousand contests in a professional career which

began as a teenager and carried into his seventies.

And Dinnie made a pile of money. In 1870, for example, not only did he win prize money at Caledonian gatherings, but the clubs paid his transportation and provided appearance fees (e.g. Chicago Caledonian Club paid Dinnie \$100 to appear, Montreal \$50). When these fees were added to his winnings Dinnie easily exceeded the unrivaled \$1,400 annual salary of Cincinnati star George Wright.⁶ It was a handsome return for the eldest of ten children who had started as an apprentice mason. Expressed in the purchasing power of today's money, Dinnie's life time earnings exceeded \$2.5 million.⁷



THE SCOTTISH HIGHLAND GAMES ARE AMONG THE WORLD'S OLDEST SPORTING EVENTS. THIS NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGRAVING SHOWS AN EARLY HAMMER-TOSSING COMPETITION.



Dinnie was born at Balnacraig, near Aboyne, Aberdeenshire, Scotland on 8 July 1837. His father, Robert, was a mason and local strongman. Donald was one of six gifted athletic sons, all of whom grew to six feet and weighed over two hundred pounds. All went into masonry work except Walter, who became a Scotland Yard detective. There were also four daughters.

Although a sharp student, Donald left school at age fifteen and became interested in athletics. He turned professional at age sixteen but split his time between athletics and masonry until 1867. For the next *forty-three* years Dinnie, attracted by the monetary lure, unfailingly appeared at Highland Games in his homeland, England, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

What is most unusual about Dinnie's is that

he was one of the nineteenth century's top athletes in at least three separate sports: track and field wrestling, and weightlifting. This article will investigate his career in each. Dinnie was initially a track and field strongman. Competing in as many as ten Highland events in a single day was standard for him, and one Scottish Highland Games claimed that Dinnie once won sixteen events in a single day—the entire track and field card. Even on his American tours, Dinnie attempted as many as a dozen events per meeting. In the early 1860's, by winning numerous events at the Coatbridge Highland Games, Dinnie upset William Tait and won the "All-Round" championship, laying claim to the title, "Champion of Scotland" Dinnie kept the title for virtually twenty seasons. Scottish all-rounds evolved into the nineteenth century American All-Around, the forerunner of the twentieth century decathlon whose champion is called the "World's Greatest Athlete."⁸ For the second half of the nineteenth century there was no doubt who was the world's greatest athlete. It was Donald Dinnie.

Few doubted that Dinnie was the world's greatest athlete in 1870. One who did, however, was Thomas Campbell, a fine Canadian athlete who criticized Dinnie publicly. But Donal' was not one to take criticism lightly, so he issued a challenge to Campbell, any Canadian, or anyone else to meet him in a nine event contest for \$1000. Dinnie's "all-around" contest included the standard Highland events:

1. Putting the Heavy Stone
2. Putting the Light Stone
3. Throwing the Heavy Hammer
4. Throwing the Light Hammer
5. Tossing the Caber
6. Throwing the 56 lb Weight for Height
7. Wrestling
8. Running⁹
9. Leaping⁹

The challenge shut Campbell up. In fact no one took up the challenge. Good thing, since Dinnie was virtually unbeatable on his North American tour. In one stretch he won twenty-one consecutive events including heavy throws, jumps, and sprints. At the Brooklyn Caledonian Games, Donald entered seven events and won them all. A week later, in Boston, he went six for six. Then he won six of eight in New York and eleven of twelve in Scranton. Dinnie had a 4-0 record against America's most versatile athlete, George Goldie, the Princeton coach and won fourteen of seventeen events against Canada's finest athlete, Peter Fraser of Toronto. In two Caledonian meets (Toronto and Brooklyn), Dinnie was presented with "championship medals" for the best all-around athlete.

Two years later Dinnie returned to North Amer-

ica,¹⁰ bringing friend and fellow-athlete James Fleming with him. Again Dinnie drew big crowds but early in the tour, in Buffalo, he badly injured his shoulder in a vaulting accident. Unwilling to cancel the tour (and forfeit the appearance fees and prize money) Donal' continued to compete with his left arm in a sling. In spite of the handicap he entered fifteen meetings and still won fifty-eight of seventy-seven events, including a 16-3 show vs Goldie.¹¹

Dinnie was so proficient that athletes often complained that he won most of the prize money. Prizes usually varied from \$4 to \$20 per event, depending on the wealth of the host club. Since Dinnie always won most of the prize money his appearance at some Highland gatherings was not always appreciated by fellow athletes. Host clubs frequently had to offer a second set of prizes to pacify non-touring Scots. A popular Dinnie ditty of the day went:

He's springy, elastic and light when he's running,
Comes up to the mark in time and to spare;
His opponents can't match him or beat him in
cunning.

They say we were beat because Dinnie was
there.¹²

Caledonian Games reached their American peak in the 1870's, then declined in popularity. Dinnie returned to help revitalize them in 1882 and, even at age forty-five, still won the majority of events. Afterwards, he continued to tour the world wrestling, throwing, running, and jumping against all comers. His age did not seem to matter. Eventually he settled in Australia, finally returning to England in 1898. He lost all of his money through ill-advised investments and, as a result, had to compete until he was well past his best. By the early twentieth century he was the grand old man of the Highlands Games, still winning special competitions



It may be useful to examine Dinnie's career in what have become three separate sports: athletics (track and field), wrestling, and weightlifting. In Dinnie's day the distinctions were not as sharp and one might find a Highland meeting which featured all three sports.

Athletics

In the sport of track and field Dinnie was rivaled only by amateur runner Lon Myers (1858 - 1899), whose eleven year career was fleeting when compared to that of Dinnie's and whose total for career victories was as scrawny (relative to Dinnie's total) as Myers' physique.¹³ One historian credits Myers with 240 career victories, a wonderful total and certainly higher than that of any other

nineteenth century amateur. Yet Donald Dinnie's career was five times as long and his wins exceeded those of Myers by a factor of forty.¹⁴

Some sport historians have claimed that perhaps the English pedestrian Captain Robert Barclay [**Ed note: See: Scott Crawford, "Captain Barclay: Extraordinary Exerciser of the Nineteenth Century, *Iron Game History* 1(March 1991): 22-44]** or the native American distance runner, Deerfoot were the sport's premier performers of the nineteenth century. They were not by a long shot, and for the same reasons given above in the Dinnie/Myers comparison. No sport is more dominated by statisticians than track and field. Naively they consider unlisted records of little value. So if Dinnie's name doesn't grace their record books, how good could he possibly have been? Frankly, the answer is, better than anyone "in the books." For the following reasons he has to be regarded the sport's top athlete of the nineteenth century.

First, the length of his career is perhaps unparalleled in the history of that sport: Dinnie competed at a national and international (today's terms) for fifty-five years—from 1853 to 1908. Even past age seventy, his hammer distances were first rate. He ducked no one and met the top athletes four continents had to offer. Dinnie attended all the principal games in Scotland and England. He toured North America on three occasions, and spent the better part of fifteen years barnstorming New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa.

Second, the number of Dinnie's career victories (in all forms of sport) is unmatched in history. David Webster estimates that Dinnie's victories exceeded a phenomenal eleven thousand, a number not even approached by twentieth century jockeys.¹⁵ Consider the meaning of the eleven thousand figure. The National Football League has yet to play 11,000 games in its history. No Major League Baseball franchise has accumulated that many victories in the entire twentieth century. It took Michael Jordan nearly six NBA seasons to score 11,000 points. And he got thirty a night A victory on the average of one per day would take over thirty years. In sporting terms the mark is stupefying.

Third, the margins of Dinnie's victories were gaudy. He dominated his competition normally winning hammer competitions by twenty feet or more, and stone

tosses by five feet. And ~ margins could have been more. Unconcerned about "records," Dinnie would take one toss or put which was good enough to win. The other competitors would throw as often as the rules permitted while he went away to compete at some other event. Dinnie (and his opponents) came only to win prizes¹⁶ and no one won more.

Finally, and probably most importantly, Dinnie's unique range of ability—from events requiring strength to those requiring spring and speed—has not been duplicated in track and field history. For example, no one ever was, concurrently, the world's top high jumper, *and* shot putter, and hammer thrower, and also ran within one or two ticks of the 100 yard dash record, *and* was a top hurdler. No wonder he was consistently tabbed the world's "All-round Champion." In the twentieth century, Dinnie would have been a decathlon man. A comparison of personal records with twenty

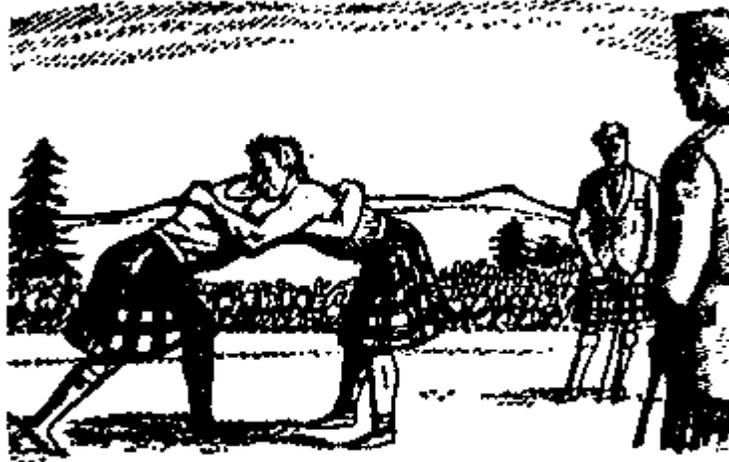
century counterpart Jim Thorpe, in the five events common to both men, finds Dinnie on top, 3-2.¹⁷

One way to gauge Dinnie's immense ability would be to track how long it took the world to catch up to his marvelous performances. His sixteen-pound shot put (stone toss) record was not surpassed for thirty-nine years. It took eight seasons to better his hammer mark and eight years to top his high jump best.¹⁸

A comparison of Dinnie's best performances to the winning and placing Olympic marks (the Modern Games were renewed in 1896 when Dinnie was 59), indicates how far ahead of his time Dinnie was.¹⁹ The evidence appears overwhelming that Dinnie was the century's top track and field performer.

Wrestling

At age sixteen, Dinnie won his first wrestling match for money—one pound—at a festival in Kincardine O'Neil.²⁰ He wrestled frequently but it wasn't until his touring days in the 1880s, when he took on all comers, that his international wrestling fame spread. At age forty-five, while on his third American visit, the nimble Dinnie, combining unmatched power with many unknown holds and grips won three significant matches to lay claim as the world's premier wrestler.²¹ First, in Plainfield, NJ., he won the mixed styles championship of America (and massive gold medal) in a tournament sponsored by the



Police Gazette, a major sporting publication of the day. Among his victims were American strongman Duncan C. Ross and Irish champion James C. Daly.²²

Soon thereafter, Dinnie arranged a match with William Muldoon, then America's champion Greco-Roman wrestler. Muldoon had ducked Dinnie for months and finally agreed to meet Donal' for fifty pounds and half the gate, but only if Dinnie could win twice as many falls—five Greco-Roman and ten Cumberland style—in a timed match Muldoon regularly applied strangling holds in the Greco-Roman portion, and Donal, unknowing of the rules and unwilling to break Muldoon's fingers or wrists, conceded each of the first five bouts. Needing ten Cumberland style falls for victory, Dinnie threw his opponent nine straight times before the gong sounded ending the match.²³ Thus Donal' lost the bet by one fall. But it is doubtful any wrestler could have duplicated this feat Dinnie then engaged to compete at the major Caledonian Games in San Francisco where he defeated the American wrestler, Farrel.

Dinnie then crossed to Australia where he met Professor William Miller, longtime Australian champion, in feats of strength and then wrestling.²⁴ After surpassing Miller in almost every strength feat only to be given a "draw" by the referee, Dinnie attacked his opponent with gusto. He made certain that there would be no draw by lifting Miller and throwing him so violently that the latter broke his leg.²⁵ Astonishingly, one Australian reference work claims that the famous match was a draw.²⁶

Crawford claims that, since Dinnie was one of the top wrestlers of the nineteenth century, in order to entice competitors, he had to be willing to lose more than others would lose.²⁷ Even so, Webster estimates that, in Dinnie's lengthy career, he won over two thousand wrestling matches.²⁸

Weightlifting

How strong was Dinnie? One story should suffice. Outside the hotel in Potarch, Scotland, next to the River Dee, there are two large, unwieldy boulders which in bygone days had been used in tethering horses. The smaller weighs 340 pounds and the other 445. A round iron ring is fastened in the top of each weight, large enough to fit the grip of a single hand. The story (surely apocryphal) is that Dinnie's father, Robert, was able to lift the 445 pound stone onto a 3 1/2 foot wall. What is irrefutable is that Donald himself, in the presence of many spectators, carried both stones a distance of five to six yards. By putting the both stones together, keeping one stone in front of him and the other behind while straddling



THIS RARE PHOTOGRAPH OF DONALD DINNIE WAS TAKEN IN APPROXIMATELY 1895. HE WAS THEN IN HIS LATE FIFTIES

—TODD-McLEAN COLLECTION

them, Dinnie was able to lift and haul both simultaneously.

In Scottish folk-lore this feat virtually canonized Dinnie. Once referred to as the "Stones of Dee," and now known as the "Dinnie Stones" carrying them appears to be, century and one half later, an unduplicated feat Dinnie, an ideally proportioned big man, fused great arm, shoulder and leg strength with agility. While On tour he challenged all comers to dumbbell lifting.²⁹ Dinnie won over two hundred worldwide weightlifting contests in his long career, all before the 1900-1930 era of strongmen began.



Today one wonders why Dinnie is not better

remembered. There are many reasons, some of which have to do with the modernization of sport. But others deal with socio-economic factors and his personality. Here are a few.

First, sport has become “record conscious.” And today, Dinnie’s name cannot be found in the record books. While Dinnie was at his track and field peak (say 1865-1880) the sport converted from one in which prize money was the focus to one in which non-monetary prizes were the goal. Athletes competed for “honor” in an amateur world. This mutation blazed both in the British Isles and North America, and it caused many people to look askance at traveling professionals like Dinnie who competed as a means of making a living, even though many of their performances were far superior to those of the amateurs. This may have been, in essence, an attempt at class distinction.

As a result, professional performances were ignored for record purposes. Track and weightlifting marks made by professionals were looked upon as dubious. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century record keepers like William B. Curtis (New York Athletic Club and editor of the *Spirit of the Times*) and James E. Sullivan scorned professional marks, often claiming they were both fraudulent and achieved by the wrong type of people. In reality no culture kept more accurate records than the Scots who maintained meticulous records up and down Scotland and in North America. But the professional marks were simply ignored. Incidentally, there has only been a minor effort to dig up these records by twentieth century statisticians.

More portentous than record keeping is the issue of economic status. Track and field was class distinct during Dinnie’s era and his mercenary track, wrestling, and lifting feats were not suitable outlets for many. It was improper for gentlemen to rub elbows with the working class “professionals.” For many years nothing was recognized as a track record in America unless it was made by the right sort of person (read: amateurs from the elite clubs or colleges), and made in the proper geographical region (read: East Coast). Since Caledonian feats qualified under none of the amateur standards, they were ignored in America for record purposes. The same was true in the British Isles.

But there are other reasons for Dinnie’s lack of present. The Caledonian/Highland Games movement declined in popularity in North America after 1880, perhaps a victim of its own success. Crowds, and therefore prize money, became modest. By the beginning of the twentieth century the Caledonian Games, both in Scotland and America had diminished relevance.

What’s more, Dinnie was a victim of wanderlust, a sporting soldier of fortune whose frequent foreign jaunts left his homeland reputation somewhat lessened by the

early twentieth century. After three successful Caledonian tours of America (1870, 1872, and 1882) Dinnie tromped to New Zealand and Australia, touring, performing, and living there. In all, he spent nineteen prime years away from Scotland.

Also, most of Dinnie’s performances occurred before the standardization of modern sport. This is particularly true in track and field and weightlifting, where today throwing implements, starting blocks, and even barbells are standardized. Dinnie’s performances have been relegated to footnote status. Even more significant were rule changes.

Dinnie’s top Caledonian events were the caber, putting the stone, throwing the hammer, and high leaping. No one was able to turn the huge logs he was able to turn but the event was never embraced by amateur track and so his caber records have been neglected. Standardization and alteration of equipment have also kept him off the record books in both the shot and hammer. For example, each Highland Games offered several stones to toss, and although these stones were used for long periods, they were not identical from meeting to meeting. Most gatherings offered a heavy stone, usually ranging from sixteen to twenty-five pounds, and a light stone, somewhere between fourteen to eighteen pounds, to put Dinnie was nearly invincible as a shot putter and held many gatherings’ record. But the lack of a standard weight has kept him off the record books, especially after amateur track settled on a “16 pound shot” as the heavy tossing event. Even so, Dinnie recorded an accurately measured 49’6” effort at Kinoull Perth, Scotland in 1868 with a stone meticulously weighed at 16 pounds, 2 ounces. Note that amateur shot putters, competing in an event virtually indistinguishable with the Highland stone toss, did not surpass his “stone record” for thirty-nine years. **[Editors’ Note: Also significant is that a stone weighing sixteen pounds is considerable larger and thus harder to throw than a sixteen pound metal shot. Clearly, Dinnie could have put a metal shot of sixteen pounds much farther than a stone of equal weight.]**

Even more detrimental to his reputation were significant rule changes in the hammer event. Traditionally each Highland Gathering offered a “heavy” (sixteen to twenty-four pounds) and a “light” (twelve to sixteen pounds) hammer, most often an iron ball attached to a 3 1/2’ wooden handle. When the amateurs (in the late 1880s) modified the event with a longer and more flexible wire handle, longer distances resulted and all previous wooden handle records vaporized. But the Caledonians/Highlanders continued to use the wooden-handled hammers of various weights. Statisticians, unwilling to keep a record for every possible weight and handle length, threw up their hands. As a result Caledonian hammer records never got much credit after 1880. It should be

noted that Dinnie's best 16 pound hammer throw with a four foot wooden handle and two turns was 144 - 1/2',³⁰ a mark amateurs did not surpass even with their wire models until 1892.³¹ Dinnie had no chance at today's long throwing events, the discus and javelin, which were virtually unknown in his lime.

One does find several of Dinnie's Highland Games marks still considered in the progression of the world's high jump record.³² At the time his 5'-11" scissors-style clearances at Turriff (1859) and Montrose (1860) were the best ever recorded. But too many on lookers witnessed his precisely surveyed and logged 6'-1" leap at Turriff, Aberdeenshire, in 1868, for it to be ignored. He leaped 6'-1" again at Kinoul Perth that same season yet neither mark has found its way into modern record progression lists. It took almost eight years for an amateur, Oxford student Marshall Brooks, to top Dinnie's mark.³³ And there are numerous reports that Dinnie was unnerved by the loss of his "record" to an amateur.³⁴

Another factor which has influenced his ongoing reputation is that in his day Dinnie was not universally liked. Normally softspoken, Dinnie could and did, gall others. There appears to be an attempt by some modern writers to protect Dinnie's competitive reputation. Webster, for example, goes overboard to maintain that Dinnie was a first rate sportsman, that is, an inspiration to all who met him.³⁵ At times he was. But Dinnie certainly was not perfect and it must be recognized that he had a mercenary streak, and, after he made a decision to be a full-time professional in 1867, all of his energy was focused on maximizing a financial return.

On one occasion he refused to take part in a caber toss unless guaranteed a two pound appearance fee. It seems that all the contests had ended before royalty appeared. This time it was Prince Albert at the Mar Lodge Games and the Games Committee appealed to Dinnie to go back out and toss the caber. "Aye," said Donal, "I'll gang oot, but I want twa pound." Dinnie continued, "I pay me taxes and win no' take less." Persuasion was hopeless and the other Highlanders took the field without him. When none was able to turn the caber Dinnie pushed his way through the crowd and tossed the huge log easily.³⁶ That was Dinnie. Avaricious. But he wouldn't have his sport humiliated by mortals either.

He was blunt and straightforward, simply seeing himself as a super athlete, with gifts mere humans may not have possessed. He could be testy. Most reports of Caledonian/Highland gatherings do not report Dinnie incidents. But a few do. On his first visit to Canada, for example, Donald complained bitterly after a foot race, displaying a scratch on his neck as evidence and demanding compensation. Most eyes rolled. But for Dinnie it was important since he expected to win the \$10 as first prize and not his \$2 for third place.³⁷

A few weeks later, on his initial New York Caledonian Club meeting, the *Spirit of the Times* reports that Dinnie, "behaved himself with regard to one or two matters more like a spoiled child than a grown man..." When informed that he must use the host club's hammers instead of his own longer handled ones he pouted and refused to compete. Only coaxing and soothing of his wounded spirit restored him to the arena.³⁸ It was well known among Caledonians that longer wooden-handled hammers resulted in superior marks. Other newspapers also describe Dinnie's attempts to run roughshod over games' committees in spite of having an enormous strength advantage.

The fact is that Dinnie was a fierce competitor. His psyche and pocketbook couldn't afford a loss. So it should not be unexpected that, over fifty years and thousands of contests, he became unglued at times.

However, he *was* the best athlete of his age, regardless of egomania or conceit. Some have faulted Dinnie for rather inconsistent performances at times. For example, in 1871 at Aboyne he won the high jump at a petty 5'-1" and the long jump with a trifling 16'-6."³⁹ But for Dinnie, only the victory was important. He would often take one throw, then wander off to another event if his toss was challenged he'd be back soon enough for a second effort. And, if not, he'd won the prize. In other words, at times, Dinnie just went through the motions to win.

Donaldson neatly summed up Dinnie's pugnacious disposition, "had he lived in primitive times (he) would have been much like the old chief who on his death bed, when asked to forgive his enemies, said he had no enemies, he had killed them all."⁴⁰

It seems to me that all this made Donald Dinnie a thoroughly modern athlete. For example, NBA stars today are not called for some fouls to keep them on the court. And some teams and athletes are given better seeds to assure tournament advancement. It was the same in Dinnie's day. He *was* the feature and he expected star treatment. He was earning a living. This is not an excuse for the brooding demeanor of a superstar. But it should not be unexpected nor hidden either. It was, albeit minor, apart of the Dinnie legend



After retuning to his homeland in 1898, to a less than gratifying welcome, Dinnie was forced to continue his athletic career. Ill-advised investments and the great slump of the 1890s absorbed most of his fortune. At various times the splendid and vain Scot operated a hotel, an undertaking business, and a fish and chips shop. The grand old man competed in something akin to a master's section at Highland Games through 1910. As Dinnie approached his seventy-fifth birthday *Health & Strength*

magazine sponsored a fund-raising benefit in honor of their champion. Donald Dinnie died in London in 1916.⁴¹

In summary, Donald Dinnie was an athlete of singular rank. He was so invincible in his heyday, and such a compelling personality, that the press made a considerable fuss wherever he traveled. His feats of strength and versatility: tossing cabers; lifting, carrying and tossing stones; throwing hammers and weights; leaping, hurdling; and sprinting were the fabric of legends. No one can deny that he was the best all-around athlete of the nineteenth century. His life was unique for its Chamberlain-like (but verifiable) number of triumphs, his fame, and his fifty-seven years of sustained reputation as a champion.

Notes:

1. Dinnie's presence inspired poetry. This stanza by Alex H. Wingfield, Hamilton, Ontario, was the opening of a lengthy poem which reminded Americans of Dinnie's initial Caledonian tour. *Scottish-American Journal*, 11 August 1870, 5.
2. There are many descriptions, but few photos of Dinnie in his prime. Most are remarkably consistent. This one dates from Charles Donaldson, *Men of Muscle* (Glasgow: Carter & Pratt, 1901), 22.
3. Scott A. G. M. Crawford "Donald Dinnie in Dunedin," *New Zealand Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, 9 (1) 1976: 12.
4. Baseball histories variously report the Red-Stockings season attendance between one hundred thousand and two hundred thousand. I've been generous here in acquiescing to the latter figure, making their average attendance a bit over thirty-five hundred for fifty-seven contests. Dinnie, on the other hand, drew more than one hundred thousand in just twelve contests.
5. A weekly New York newspaper, *The Scottish-American Journal*, both advertised and extensively reported the results of virtually every North American Caledonian meeting. This statement is a compilation of Dinnie's successes. Often Dinnie would compete in ten or more events per meeting, in essence doing "decathlons" weekly.
6. David P. Webster, *Scottish Highland Games* (Glasgow: Collins, 1959), 101. Webster took his estimate of 10,000 Dinnie victories from a 1913 life history in *Health & Strength* magazine.
7. Dinnie's winnings and fees for seven weeks during the 1870 tour exceeded \$1,400. In current (1998) purchasing power this amounts to approximately three hundred thousand dollars.
8. Webster conservatively estimates Dinnie's cash winning at approximately twenty-five thousand pounds before proceeds from strength promotions. Other estimates, converted by an exchange rate factor (it was approximately \$4.83/pound in 1890) have been published at one hundred thousand dollars. Using private and public Consumer Price Indices from 1890 to the present we find that consumer prices, on average, are 20.6 times those of 1890. In today's purchasing power it would seem reasonable to estimate Dinnie's career winning as being in excess of \$2.5 million.
9. Frank Zamowski, *Decathlon: A History of Track and Fields Most Challenging Event* (Champaign, IL: Leisure Press, 1989).
10. *Scottish American Journal*, 1 Sept. 1870, 5.
11. Unfortunately there is much misinformation about Dinnie's North American tours. For instance Webster's and Redmond's claims (Gerald Redmond, *The Caledonian Games in 19th Century America* (Rutherford, NJ: FDU Press), 63-66, and Webster, *Scottish Highland Games*, 93-101, are incorrect in claiming that Dinnie toured the US in 1871 and 1877. His actual American tour years were: 1870, 1872, and 1882.
12. It is relatively easy to compile results from North American Caledonian Games during the Dinnie tours. *The Scottish American Journal* religiously advertised most of the meetings, normally including a list of events and appropriate prize money by place. Then, several weeks later *SAJ* would publish the results, often three or four deep by event, frequently with marks. It was the beginning of the modern sporting page.
13. Webster, *Scottish Highland Games*, 93
14. Don Potts, *Lon Meyers* (Mountain View, CA: Tafnews Press, 1993). Potts has recreated an amazingly accurate record of Myers' feats which dominated middle distance running from 1878 to 1888. Myers was a true amateur superstar who officially turned professional in the late 1880s. Potts' appendix lists 188 meetings, 377 contests, and 240 career victories (including heats) for Myers.
15. Webster, *Scottish Highland Games*, 101. There have been some historical concerns about Webster's accounting, especially in the number of his estimated hammer wins. But it makes little difference; even if he is a thousand wins off, who cares? Even in the long and storied careers of modern day stars, such as Carl Lewis and Jackie Joyner Kersee, their combined career wins do not exceed three thousand, less than a third of Dinnie's total. So if Webster is a bit generous, who cares? The track & field victories alone exceeded eight thousand. Incidentally, the all-time riding victory leader, with a bit over 8800, is Bill Shoemaker, whose career as a jockey was about as long as Dinnie's.
16. Donaldson, *Men of Muscle*, 29-30. *The Scottish-American Journal* reported results of all Caledonian Games during Dinnie's three American tours. His margins of victory, especially in the heavy events, were phenomenal.
17. A comparison of the five events both Dinnie and Thor-

pe contested, using standard distances or weights, finds Dinnie on top in the shot put, hammer, and hundred yard dash. Thorpe had better marks in the long jump and high jump. Differences in all other events belie comparison, 18. It is easy to forget that some of Dinnie's best events (for example: caber toss, heavy stone, heavy hammer) have not survived the modern Olympic program. Regardless, a comparison of those events that do remain give us an insight to his range of ability.

Event	Mark	Better winning mark/place in top 8
High Jump	6-1	1900 Paris/1908 London
Shot Put	49-6	1912 Stockholm/1948 London
16 Lb Hammer	144-1/2	—/1924 Paris
Sprinting	10-2/5	1900 Paris/1920 Antwerp
Hop-Step-Jump	44-??	—/1906 Athens

comparisons made with David Wallechinsky's *Complete Book of the Olympics* (New York: Penguin, 1988). Dinnie's best hundred-yard time has been adjusted to one hundred meters.

19. "The Life Story of Donald Dinnie," *Health & Strength* (30 November 1912): 301.

20. Crawford, "Dinnie in Dunedin," 36.

21. Donaldson, *Men of Muscle*, 30.

22. Ibid, 30.

23. The term "professor" was not an academic one. Miller (born in England in 1846) professed to know all there was to know about sports, hence the self-ordained title. He was a fine athlete and at 5'-10" and 196 pounds, claimed to be the "world champion athlete." He was living in Australia in the 1880s. He died in Baltimore in 1939.

24. Donaldson, *Men of Muscle*, 31.

25. Deidre Morris, "William Miller" in *The Makers of America's Sporting Traditions*, Michael McKeman, ed. (Melbourne University Press, 1993), 174. There are many references to Dinnie's victory over Miller. One Australian author, astonishingly enough claims that Miller

actually drew the match with Dinnie, and unnecessarily embellishes the "Professor's" fine career, although it was nothing like Dinnie's.

26. Crawford, "Dinnie in Dunedin," 15.

27. Webster, *Scottish Highland Games*, 101.

28. Crawford "Dinnie in Dunedin," 12

29. David P. Willoughby, *The Super Athletes*, New York: A.S. Barnes, 1970), 165.

30. Dinnie's sixteen pound shot mark was eventually surpassed by the ponderous Ralph Rose, by half an inch at the AAU Championships in Norfolk, VA, 7 September 1907. See: Ekehard Megede and Richard Hymans eds., *Progression of World Best Performances and Official IAAF World Records* (Monaco: IAAF, 1995).

31. "The Life Story of Donald Dinnie," *Health & Strength* 15 February 1913: 42.

32. Ireland's James S. Mitchell tossed the sixteen pound hammer 145'-3/4" to win the New York Athletic Club Fall Games at the Polo Grounds on 8 October 1892. See Megede & Hymans, *Progression*, 182.

33. Brooks' 6'-2 1/2" leap came in London on April 4, 1876. Ibid, 141.

34. Crawford, "Dinnie in Dunedin," 12-13. Crawford states that Dinnie was so upset that he voiced his concerns in a local newspaper

35. Webster, *Scottish Highland Games*, 93.

36. Ibid, 100.

37. "Caldonian Society Festival," *Toronto Globe* 9 Aug 1870, 4.

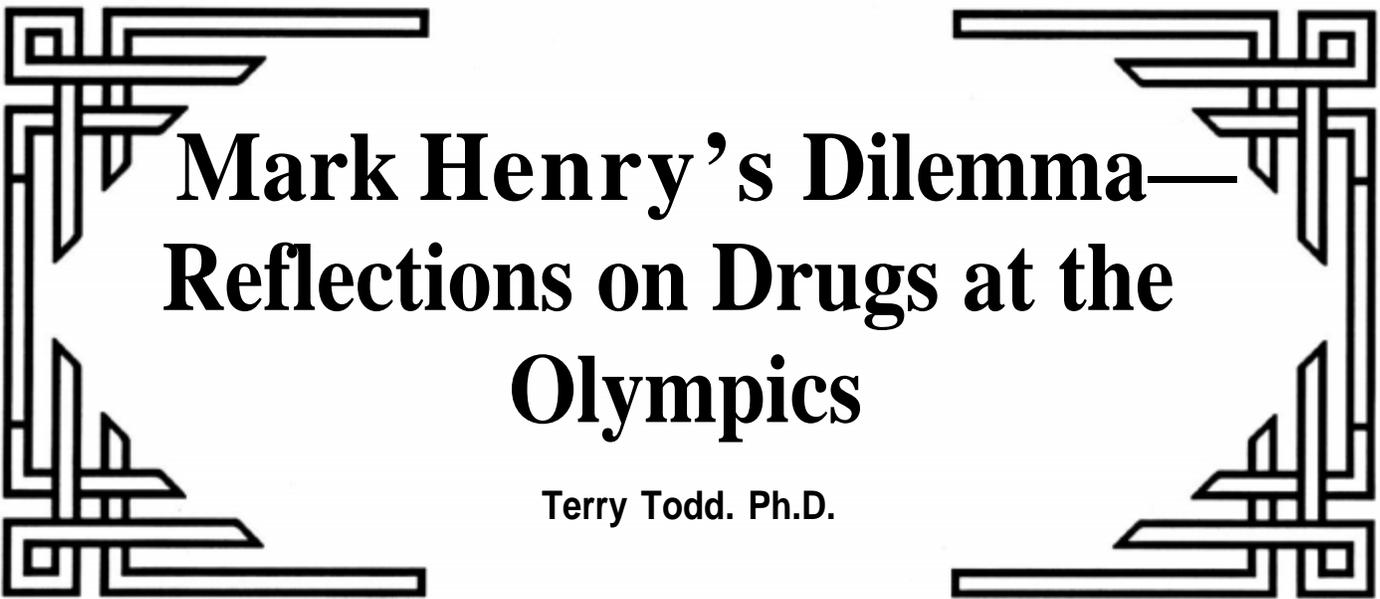
38. *Spirit of the Times*, 10 September 1870, 54. The account then noted what a splendid athlete Donald Dinnie was. He won \$67.50 (equivalent today to over \$1,400) in prizes with six firsts one second, and one third place.

39. Crawford, "Dinnie in Dunedin": 13.

40. Donaldson, *Men of Muscle*, 31-32.

41. "Scotland's Greatest Athlete Dead," *New York Times*, 5 April 1916, 14.





Mark Henry's Dilemma— Reflections on Drugs at the Olympics

Terry Todd, Ph.D.

In the most recent Olympic Games, Mark Henry represented the United States in weightlifting. He earned the right to compete by winning the U.S. National Championships in the Spring of 1996 with a total of 400 kilos (882 pounds) made up of a 396 pound snatch and a 485 pound clean and jerk. This 400 kilo total, in the opinion of many experts in track field of international lifting—including Dragomir Ciroslan, a former Olympic medalist and the current coach of the U.S. team—was the highest ever made by an athlete who had never used anabolic steroids. Who was lifetime drugfree. Unfortunately for Mark and for the entire concept of “clean” competition, his historically significant 400 kilo total failed to place him among the top ten qualifiers in Atlanta. Even so, knowing that the deck was stacked against him, he trained for the games with all of his large heart, going to a remote island off the coast of Nova Scotia (where Jan and I have a summer home) for his final eight weeks of preparation. This dedication paid off and he made lifts in practice of 407 in the snatch and 507 in the clean and jerk. Because Mark is usually able to lift substantially more in meets than in training, these two personal records indicated to us that he should make approximately 424 in the snatch and 529 in the clean and jerk. But as Scotland's Robert Burns teaches us, “The best-laid schemes of mice and men” go easily astray. As luck would have it, Mark missed his second attempt in the snatch and sustained an injury to his back on his third attempt, effectively removing him from the competition. Yet even if he had made the 424 snatch and the 529 clean and jerk, he would have finished out of the medals.

What this means is that Mark Henry, generally acknowledged—even by many of the Eastern Bloc ath-

letes who outrank him in weightlifting—to be the strongest man in the world, doesn't have a chance on his best day of beating a group of men who have enhanced their natural gifts by taking anabolic steroids. For months before the Olympics, Mark spoke out about this to the media, saying the sport was so dirty that he planned to leave it after the Games were over. That he had taken all the unfairness he could stand. Well, the Games are over now and Mark has retired from weightlifting, vowing never to return unless the sport is cleaned up. During the Games, he signed a ten year, multi-million dollar contract with the World Wrestling Federation, joining such iron game notables as George Hackenschmidt, George Lurich, Milo Steinborn, Paul Anderson, Bruno Sammartino, and Ken Patera in entering the squared circle as a way to earn a living. He broke his leg in the Fall of 1996, but by the summer of the following year he had rehabbed it enough to be able to win his second national powerlifting championship. He plans to continue heavy training in powerlifting, although his travel schedule makes sustained training difficult. Mark won the World Championships in power lifting in 1995 even though he trained on the lifts sparingly, so he is excited by the prospect of increasing his world records in the squat (954), deadlift (903) and total (2339). Although the travelling he must do makes sustained training difficult, Mark is working out as hard as he can, and within the past two weeks he has done five reps in the bench with 495, three reps in the squat with 855 (with no suit and no knee wraps), and three reps in the standing press with 405. He currently weighs 380, and I recently measured his right upper arm at 24”.

Mark's WWF contract is unique in many ways, one of which is that it encourages him to make public

appearances in front of young people on behalf of drug free sports. Another unusual aspect of the contract is that it gives Mark at least three months off each year from wrestling so he can train for the national and world championships in weight lifting or powerlifting. Barring injury, Mark hopes to return to the platform in late 1998, to lift for many more years, and to eventually squat at least 1100 pounds without a "squat suit" and to deadlift 1000. And he plans to do it drug free.



Now for a bit of background. When my wife, Jan, and I decided in 1990 to help Mark realize his dream of becoming the strongest man in the world we did our best to make sure that he was not using and had not used anabolic steroids. (For anyone who might not know, anabolic steroids are artificial forms of the male hormone, testosterone, and they help build strength and muscle mass) By 1990, Jan and I had already spent many years speaking out and writing articles in opposition to the use of these drugs, and had we learned that Mark was "on the juice," as body-builders and competitive lifters say, we would not have volunteered to help him.

We suspected when we first saw Mark that he was a steroid user, basing our suspicions on his prodigious size and strength, but the more we looked into the matter the more we realized that he was exactly what he claimed to be—drugfree. A story which helped to convince us came from one of Mark's coaches, who told us that at the state powerlifting meet in Mark's junior year a drug-using young man walked up after Mark had won the state title for the second year in a row and asked quietly, "Mark, what kind of juice are you on?" To which Mark answered in all honesty, "Well, I had some orange juice for breakfast." Even as a junior in high school, Mark was so out

of the steroid loop that he was unaware that "juice" was gym speak for "steroids."

Jan and I realized from hearing stories like this that Mark had been shielded from the ugly underbelly of the iron sports by having grown up in a small town like Silsbee, Texas—population eight thousand—and by having trained at his high school gym, with high school athletes. Had he come from a city and trained with older lifters who were, themselves, steroid users he would almost certainly have been told by those older lifters, "Hey, Mark,

if you want to really get big and strong you've got to get on the 'roids. All the top guys are on the stuff and it's the only way you'll ever get to the top. As big and strong as you are for your age, man, if you go on the juice you could be a champion." In just this way, hundreds of thousands of teenage boys begin using steroids, and it's certainly possible that Mark would have gone down that same road had his background been different. As it was, by the time he really knew what steroids were, he was already stronger than almost anyone who might have recommended their use and so he had the psychological strength to just say no.

One of the things which makes Jan and I proudest about our involvement with Mark is how fervently and effectively he speaks out against the use of these powerful, potentially dangerous drugs. He never gives an interview or a talk to young people without saying that he's never used steroids and that anyone who says you can't get strong without drugs is a liar. Many times I've heard him say that if he had to cheat and take drugs to be a champion he'd rather not be a champion. To back up his claim Mark can point out that he has probably been drug tested more often than any other athlete over the past several years—approximately fifty times. The U.S. Weightlifting Federation tested him often, many times without any advance warning,



MARK HENRY IS SHOWN HERE AS HE PREPARES TO PULL 396 POUNDS FROM THE FLOOR AT THE 1996 U.S. NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS. THIS SNATCH REMAINS THE AMERICAN RECORD.

and he has also been tested by six other federations—the American Drugfree Powerlifting Association, the U.S. Olympic Committee, the International Weightlifting Federation, the World Drugfree Powerlifting Federation, the World Wrestling Federation, and the International Olympic Committee. Some of these groups test only at competitions but some also test with no prior notice, a procedure which makes it much more difficult for a drug-using athlete to escape detection.

In comparison to the sort of drug testing Mark has faced over the past several years, most of the top Olympic lifters in the world are tested very little and most, if not all, of Mark's top competitors either were using or had used anabolic steroids. Jim Schmitz, the past president of the U.S. Weightlifting Federation, recently stated that he was certain every medalist in Atlanta in weight lifting had used anabolic steroids. Schmitz went on to say that even if their steroid use had occurred months ago the athletes who used these drugs would have an advantage over lifetime clean lifters. In other words, the drugs these men took provided a substantial and unfair advantage over Mark and anyone else who had never taken them.

There are arguments as to how much the steroids help a lifter, but most experts believe that they provide a ten to twenty percent edge. Using this standard, instead of the 529 pounds Mark's practice lifts had led us to expect in the clean and jerk, for instance, he would have been capable of lifting 582 or 635—enough to have easily won the gold medal.

As to the drug use of his opponents, consider this. One of his main competitors, Alexander Kurlovich, was caught in 1985 coming into Canada with a suitcase containing approximately forty thousand dollars worth of steroids. Kurlovich had been invited to a contest in Montreal, and he apparently planned to sell the drugs to Canadian and American lifters, a common practice in those days among Eastern Bloc athletes. In any case, Kurlovich lost the drugs to the customs people, but because he was a foreign athlete they let him go. Even so, the incident was widely publicized, and his country—then the Soviet Union—was sufficiently embarrassed that they banned him for life. Then, however, after a Bulgarian, Antonio Krastev, began to outlift all the other Soviets, the “lifetime” ban was reduced by the Soviet federation in time for Kurlovich to compete in the 1988 Olympics, which he won. He won again in 1992, but in early 1995—after a meet in Germany—he tested positive for an anabolic steroid. This time Kurlovich was banned for two years, which meant he would have been ineligible for the Atlanta Games, but he and his country—Belarus—appealed the ban and, amazingly, the International Weightlifting Fed-

eration reduced the suspension to one year

As for the man who eventually won the gold medal in Atlanta—Andri Chemerkin—an anabolic cloud also hung over his head before the Olympic Games. What happened is that several months after Chemerkin won the world championships last fall in China, an article appeared in an Australian newspaper stating that he had failed the drug test given at the meet. As expected, accounts of this article and Chemerkin's expected lifetime ban spread through the lifting community like a prairie fire, but then, after no action was taken by the International Weightlifting Federation, a darker rumor began to circulate. This rumor, which came to me from several sources—at least one of which was very highly placed—alleged that there were three reasons Chemerkin wasn't banned: 1) because of his status as the reigning world superheavy weight champion, 2) because the IWF was already reeling from the approximately eighty “positives” they'd reported over the previous year, and 3) because the closeness of the Olympic Games would insure unusual media scrutiny. For these reasons, the IWF had allegedly decided not to report Chemerkin's positive. Not to penalize a guilty man. To sweep it all under the rug. The head of the IWF, Tamas Ajan of Hungary, denied the rumor, but it persisted nonetheless.

Another chapter to this story took place following the lifting of the superheavyweights, during the press conference involving Chemerkin and the other two medalists—Ronnie Weller of Germany, the silver medalist and Stefan Botev of Australia (He's from Bulgaria, actually, but has lived off and on for the past several years in Australia and represents that country in international competition). During the press conference, a reporter asked Ronnie Weller, “How do you respond to Mark Henry's allegations that as a lifetime clean lifter he is unable to compete with the top men in the sport since all of the top men use anabolic steroids?” To which Weller said, after a pause, “All of the people who are really inside the sport know the truth about this. Beyond that I would not like to comment.” In other words, he seemed to be saying that Mark was correct. This remarkable admission from the man who won the gold medal in Seoul and had just won the silver medal in Atlanta took a great deal of courage. One thing is certain. There is no question that when a lifetime clean lifter like Mark Henry lifts against men using steroids it's like taking a knife to a gunfight. And lest anyone think bronze medalist Stefan Botev is being ignored, I've been told by Professor Angel Spassov and Emilian Iankov, both of whom worked with Botev when he was representing Bulgaria, that Botev, along with all the other marvelous Bulgarian lifters on the national team, was a

regular user of anabolic drugs.

This is the sort of thing Mark and other clean lifters face, as the Weightlifting Federation, which is run by a former Eastern Bloc official, has an embarrassingly bad record in the area of fighting drug use. What's more, Kurlovich was apparently only caught in 1995 because a new test was developed which reached back a bit farther in time, thus foiling his calculations as to when he needed to stop taking the drugs in order to pass the test. Now, of course, the word is out among the former Eastern Bloc lifters as to how to beat the new tests. The proof of this is apparent in the explosion of world records in weightlifting during the Games. No sport in Atlanta created as many world records. Of the ten bodyweight divisions, only one failed to produce new world records. Even in that class, the winner had a world record over his head in the clean and jerk but was unable to hold it because of a slight injury to his hand. What this record-breaking means is that the new and supposedly much-improved drug screen developed in Germany by the late Professor Manfred Donike failed to live up to the claims of certain members of the IOC and the IWF, who had been pointing to the new screening procedures as proof that the guilty would be caught and punished and that the Games would be "clean." Unfortunately, once the lifters and other drug-using athletes understood the new clearance times, the test presented little problem for them.

Even more unfortunately, the lack of an effective drug-screening process was only part of the difficulties facing clean lifters in Atlanta. Consider the extraordinary tale of Russia's Alex Petrov, who won the world championship in China in the fall of 1995 only to learn later that he had tested positive for anabolic steroids and would therefore be banned for life. When news of the test result and the lifetime ban reached the American team, there was a sense of satisfaction, a sense that at least one of the top cheaters had been caught and punished. Imagine the shock and dismay among the Americans just before Atlanta when it was learned that Petrov would lift for Russia at the Games. Apparently, and astonishingly, what happened is that the International Weightlifting Federation accepted a statement from a woman who represented herself as Petrov's former girlfriend claiming that without Petrov's knowledge she had "put steroids in his protein drink." So Petrov lifted and, as expected, he won. This logic-defying action by the IWF cost them any credibility they had among the American lifters. In fact, in an interview after the lifting, Tom Gough, the U.S. athlete who lifted in Petrov's class, scoffed at the decision, saying that "Maybe they can sell that story in Russia but not here," and adding that "money talks and bullshit walks."

To add insult to injury, consider this. Mark and I arrived in Atlanta approximately two weeks before he lifted, and on the evening before, an HBO Olympic Special had aired which featured Mark's career. During this fourteen minute segment, Mark spoke out strongly against the current situation saying that any organization like the International Weightlifting Federation which let a man like Alexander Kurlovich—a "drug-selling, drug-using embarrassment to the sport"—continue to lift was a dirty organization. That first evening in Atlanta, we were told by several officials from the U.S. Weightlifting Federation that the top brass from the IWF had complained bitterly to them about Mark's comment and had asked that he be silenced. What gall! No wonder there is a movement among the International Olympic Committee to throw weightlifting out of the Games.

So, for these and other related reasons, Mark Henry has left a sport he loves, a sport in which had things been done to level the playing field he would very likely have won a gold medal for the U.S. and become the best in the world in weightlifting as well as powerlifting. Mark's official best lifts in the powerlifts, added to his best lifts in weightlifting produce the highest five-lift total ever made and stamp him, according to lifting statistician Herb Glossbrenner, as history's greatest lifter.

In my opinion and in the opinion of many other authorities, Mark's official performances have earned for him the title as the "Strongest Man in the World." As for the World's Strongest Man television show, Mark has told the producers that he will not take part until all of the events test strength and not endurance. But he is not afraid of competition. In powerlifting, for example, his \$10,000 open challenge to Anthony Clark and anyone else has not been accepted. He would also like to continue in weightlifting, but not as things stand now. He has often asked me why the International Weightlifting Federation has not done more to lessen the effect of drugs in the sport. My answer is that many of the top officials come from the era when such drugs were either legal or were accepted as just another aspect of the game, and that they are more concerned about public relations than they are about the plight of clean lifters. I have also told him that I wish the IWF had the same philosophy as the World Swimming Federation, which has worked very hard to root illegal drugs from that sport. So Mark knows that more, much more, could be done. Thus it is that as he concentrates on powerlifting and on his new career as a professional wrestler with the WWF, it is with a heavy heart and a sense that he and other lifetime clean lifters are being made fools of by the very organization which should protect and cherish them.

SOME LESSER KNOWN STRONGMEN OF THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES

Steve Neece

[Editor's note: Steve Neece has lived and trained and followed the iron game in southern California for almost four decades, and through the years I have been impressed—sometimes even astounded—by his remarkable memory of what he has seen. And so I asked him to recount some of his experiences—to tell our readers about a few of the colorful and powerful men he has known and seen. Although we cannot vouch in every case for the accuracy of his recollections, it would be unwise to bet against him. I should add that Steve was, and is, a very huge and strong man himself, standing 6'3" and often weighing well over three hundred pounds. Steve is also a journalist, and his column appears monthly in *Muscle Mag International*.]

Because I was asked to write of my remembrances of some of the strong men I encountered in my long ago youth, I will endeavor to do so as best I can. The men I will be telling you about trained at Muscle Beach Santa Monica; Muscle Beach Venice, then known as "The Pit;" and the old Pasadena Gym. Except among their aging contemporaries these men are for the most part unknown to modern day enthusiasts of strength. There are several reasons for this. One is that these men for the most part did not compete and most were in their prime before powerlift-

ing became official, besides which most of them chose other exercises to demonstrate their strength. Because of this they have not received the recognition accorded those who did leave some records in the three powerlifts used today.

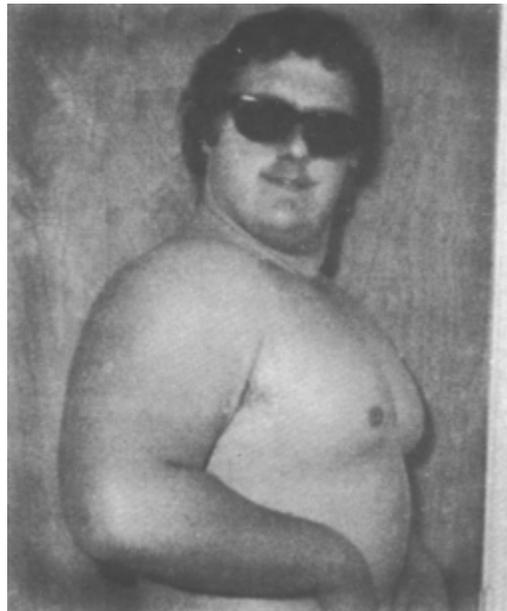
When you read of the men I will be telling you about please judge them on the lifts and exercises they

practiced, not on those they did not. Also try to take into consideration the era in which they lifted. This is often hard for younger readers but do try.

STEVE MERJANIAN

The first man I want to mention is a man I knew well—Steve Merjanian. The lifts I will relate are those I personally witnessed. I was around him a lot in the mid to late sixties and saw many amazing feats of strength. He may have exceeded some of the lifts I mentioned but I think this a fairly accurate record. To my knowledge Steve was the first man to really popularize the incline barbell press. There were those who used it before him and did big numbers but the real popularity of the exercise on the west coast dated from a 1963 photo in *Iron Man* of

him doing 440 on a bench with an angle of approximately forty degrees. All of the subsequent inclines I relate were done at this angle. When I moved to the Venice area a year later, his best had increased to 470 and I personally witnessed a 460. Late that year (1964), just a few weeks



AUTHOR STEVE NEECE IN A PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE 1960's. NOTE COOLSHADES.

before my twentieth birthday I managed a three hundred pound incline as he smiled in approval. It made my day. As great an incliner as Steve was, I think he was an even better over head presser. There was a padded chair at the pit in Venice that was free standing. It was approximately seventy-five degrees in angle which is about as strict as it is humanly possible to press at, especially with a barbell. It was so strict that you had to turn your head to the side when you pressed or the bar would hit your chin. While I am at it I want to say that it is impossible to press at a ninety degree angle. Those that say they do invariably stick their butts out six inches from the backrest. What they think they are proving I don't know. Anyway, I saw Steve numerous times max in the 365-375 range while seated in the chair, the weight having been handed to him at the SHOULDERS by a two man spot. This was 1964-65 and I think he later (1968?) may have reached four hundred at this approximate angle. The largest dumbbells at the pit weighted 144 pounds each and I saw him more than once do eight reps with them seated on the chair, lifting one into position himself and having the other handed to him at the shoulder. At this time overhead spots on any form of seated pressing, in front of or behind the neck, was considered cheating. A press was started at the shoulders. Presses behind the neck were usually done sitting on a flat bench press bench, ducking your head under the bar and lifting it clear of the rack on the back of your shoulders, pressing it overhead and then lowering it to your shoulders and returning it to the rack. A man who could do three hundred in this manner was considered to be strong. I reckon that a lot of the guys that do (or claim to do) four hundred or more in the current style (overhead liftoff, bringing the bar down to the top of the head & pressing it up) would be unable to do three hundred in this manner. Steve could also do cheating swinging lateral raises to the side with the 144's, swinging them to shoulder height for several reps.

Steve was strong at other exercises as well. Joe Gold built the first selectorized three hundred pound overhead pulldown machine at the original Gold's Gym on Pacific Avenue. It seemed to me that the rods the weight stack moved on were not very smooth and this, plus my weak grip (I didn't know about straps then) kept me away from it. There were a lot of strong men at Gold's but few used that piece of equipment and Steve was the only one who could use the full stack as an exercise poundage for eight to ten reps. No telling what he could have done on the smooth moving equipment we have today! Even with sticky rods the full stack was not a challenge to him.

Among other offhand feats of strength I saw him perform was a standing triceps press with 275 pounds. I never saw him do lying extensions or pressdowns though he may have at one time. Steve was also known for not liking the bench press and seldom practiced it. Once, how-

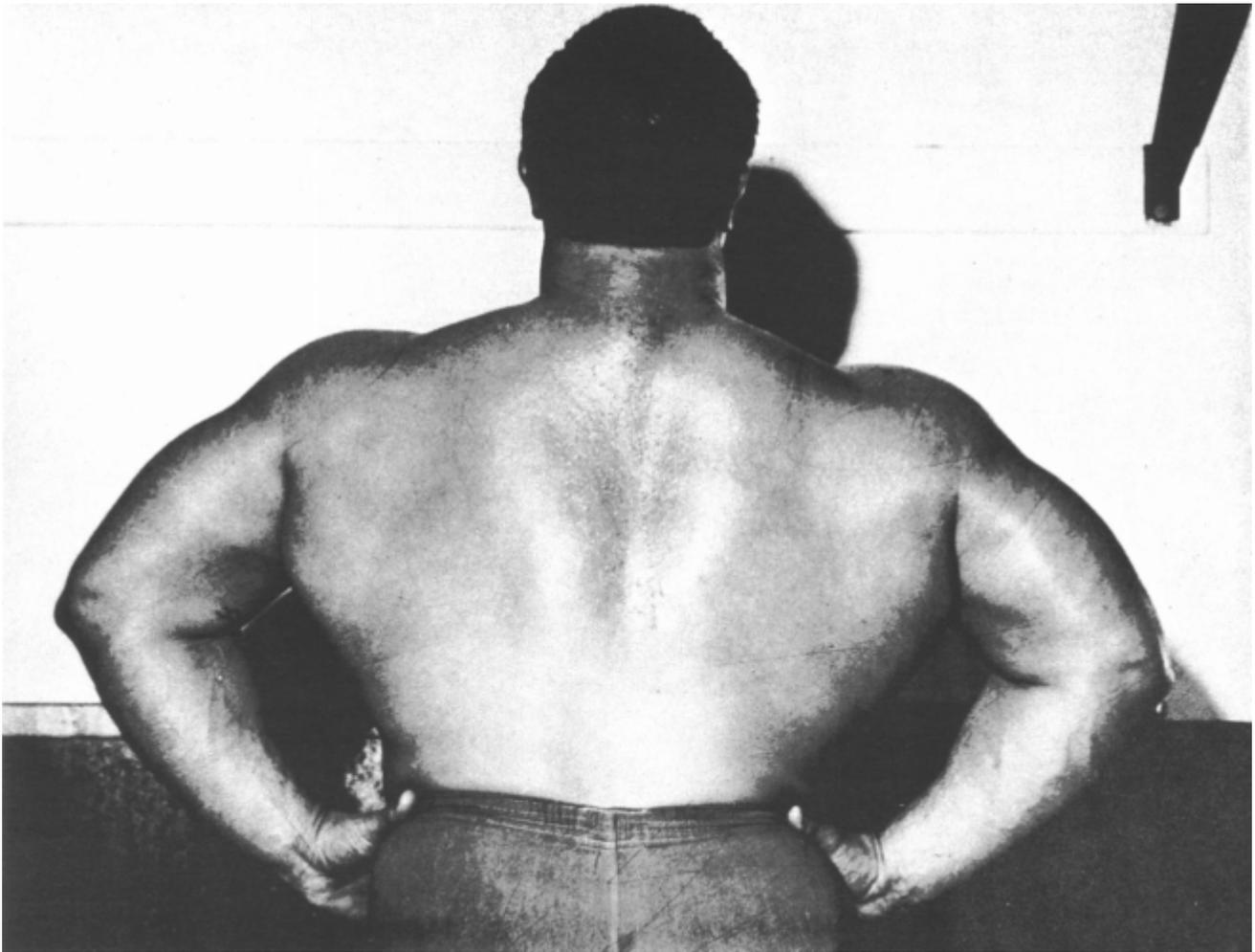
ever, in 1966, he was cajoled into entering a bench contest held at the Venice Beach pit. Despite being at a light (for him) bodyweight of 270 he did a 475 touch and go lift, winning that event. He may have subsequently done five hundred but I don't know for sure. Most of the time he could incline more than he could bench. Though I never saw him work his legs per se he did say that in his earlier years he did train them. They were certainly formidable looking with a calf of around twenty inches at a top bodyweight of just under three hundred pounds at 5'11". One day at Gold's some fellows were doing front squats with 315 so Steve walked over and probably out of curiosity did five easy reps. He had mentioned at one time taking 405 cold and doing it in a friendly contest with a pal who specialized in the move. It was the only time I personally saw him do any kind of squat and I have to wonder what he could have done had he applied himself. I saw him on at least one occasion leap onto a table tennis table from a standing position to the awe of a number of kids at the park where we worked. They couldn't believe a man that size could do such a jump and I was impressed to say the least. For a time, Steve and I, plus a number of other guys from Gold's, along with a couple of dozen mostly very large fellows, including a number of pro athletes, were working as liaisons for the department of Parks & Recreation. We were go-betweens between the park personnel and any problems that arose and we were called the Special Problems Unit. I can say that no matter how rowdy the park was before Steve arrived they behaved themselves when he was there! (If I may digress for a moment, I think it is interesting to note that this was a twenty hour a week part time job that paid very modestly yet during the year and a half (1966-67) that I worked it, there were such men involved in the program as baseball great Leon Wagner, several active pro football players, a former pro football player who was currently the vice-principal of a local high school and the former 1936 Olympic silver medalist Matthew (Mack) Robinson, the older brother of Jackie Robinson. With the possible exception of Mack, these men obviously did not need the money but I can only assume they felt an obligation to give back to the community and possibly enjoyed the camaraderie and occasional scrapes that went with it)

I believe Steve reached his greatest strength in 1968 At the time there were three men at Gold's who were over four hundred on the incline: Steve, myself, and a man named Joe Kanaster, about whom I will tell you later. There were several others in the 375-400 range, there were others who had gone over four hundred in the past but no longer trained there and a couple of others who would hit four hundred or more at a later date. Pat Casey had retired the year before but there were others coming up and it seemed Bill "Peanuts" West was determined to find somebody who would unseat Steve as the

strongest presser around. It is my opinion that Peanuts resented Steve' not competing in the three powerlifts and only occasionally training at his (Peanuts') garage. Peanuts thought of himself as one of the founders of the sport and he was very zealous in his efforts to get everybody involved in what he probably considered to be at least partly his creation. Steve, however, marched to his own drummer and had no interest in the three lifts. In addition, he liked to enjoy life and only trained when he felt like it. Many was the time we asked ourselves how strong he would have been had he followed a more disciplined routine and had the drive of a Pat Casey, Peanuts West, George Frenn etc. But such was not the case and we will never know. Pat Casey commented more than once on Steve's untapped potential and seemed to feel it was a terrible waste. I, perhaps grandiosely, thought I was Steve's heir apparent on the incline and seated pressing moves. I had inclined 425 the year before and a year later at age twenty-three I knew I was good for more though hard labor at the post office had sidetracked me. Then out of Oklahoma came Joe Kanaster. Joe was about 5'10", 255 pounds and a real wild man. He was a powerlifter and Peanuts got him doing inclines to help his bench press. His first max was around 370 and I was impressed but didn't feel threatened. However, he climbed steadily and was soon over four hundred with no end in sight. He eventually hit 445 with the help of elbow wraps. It was another form of assistance I wish I would have availed myself of at the time. Anyway, Joe's rapid rise served to light a fire under Steve and the results were awesome. One evening when most of us were present he put on a display of strength I will never forget. He started by doing presses behind neck. Joe Gold had built a piece of apparatus with a back rest and a rack for the barbell on top. The rack was not adjustable height-wise and was set too high for just about all of us, which made it almost impossible to get a proper start with it. Steve was too tight in the shoulders to reach back for it and it was at the wrong height for self-spotting. Therefore he asked for a two man overhead spot. He did a couple of warm-up sets, the last being six reps with 315 where every rep was brought below the bottom of the ear before being pressed to arms' length. He then asked for 390 and once again brought the bar below his ear before he pressed it overhead to the awe of all those present. After a break he worked his way up on the incline; his top set was two reps with 460. I think that had he come in fresh he had a good shot of making 500 that day. He never mentioned maxing more than 475 but it was obvious from what I just related that he was good for more.

I know that some of you reading this remember Pat Casey's incline feats, both with barbells and dumbbells. Pat used an incline that was, I think, the bench used for the famous photos of him pressing the two hundred pound dumbbells. Peanuts used to needle Pat about Steve's inclines and one day in 1967 just before he retired Pat decided to settle it once and for all. It was at Peanut's garage and George Frenn wrote about it in Weider's magazine. Someone also took a picture of Pat inclining 515. Peanuts and his bunch told Steve that he had been dethroned. However, looking at the photo I could tell they were using an angle of about thirty degrees, or eight to ten degrees less than the angle on the bench Steve and the Gold's/Venice/Muscle Beach crew used. Another tip-off was the poundages George reported others doing that night. In every case they were twenty-five to forty pounds more than I had seen them do on standard forty degree angle benches and I had seen all of them train. Who suggested that they use the lower angle? I wouldn't be surprised if it was Peanuts. I am sure Pat was not being deliberately deceptive. I have always respected his honesty. He and Steve were friends and I have to believe he knew what angle he used. Did he just go along with the others? It is a shame they didn't use the forty degree angle so the question could have been settled once and for all, because it is clear to anyone who knows anything at all about incline pressing that a difference of ten degrees makes a significant difference in what a person can lift **[Ed. note: Frenn's article claims the angle was forty-two degrees.]**

Others at the time pointed to the pressing feats of shot-putter Dallas Long as being equal, or nearly so, to Steve's. Not so! This is not to take anything away from Dallas Long, who was a tremendous presser. In fact, considering his long arms, he may have been among the best ever. However, tales grow. An article in *Strength & Health*, written in early 1964 detailed his training poundages and had numerous shots of him training. It was written several months before the Olympics and Long had not reached his peak strength. He was shown inclining on Bill Pearl's low incline bench and I think they mentioned sets of three with 370. Dallas was later credited with a max of 450, presumably done on this same bench. It is my opinion that for every degree a bench is lowered a percentage point should be added to the weight pressed and vice versa. Seeing that the angle was at least ten degrees lower I think that 450 at thirty degrees or less is equal to about 405 at forty degrees. It also showed Long doing seated dumbbell presses, I think with a pair of 130's. I noticed that he was resting the butt end of the dumbbell on the top of his shoulder. This meant that the



STEVE MARJANIAN'S BACK RANKS AMONG THE THICKEST IN LIFTING HISTORY.
THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN THE EARLY 1960s.

—TODD McLEAN COLLECTION

actual press was started several inches above the shoulders. Long was credited with doing three reps with a pair of 160's and a single with a pair of 190's. Presuming they were done in the same manner, and there were that many more plates on the dumbbells, the 190's would have rested so high that it would have amounted to about one half of a press—the top half. Long's barbell press was listed as 320 for two reps. He may have done more than this in the months leading up to the 1964 Olympics and I don't remember if it was done seated or standing. In any case, someone strong enough to correctly press a pair of 190's should be able to possibly 420 for two with a barbell, rather than 320.

As for some of Steve's bodily stats, he was 5'11" and at his largest was just under three hundred pounds. I never got to measure him so I am "guesstimating." His calves, as I said earlier, were a good twenty inches and his thighs were in the thirty inch range. His upper arm was

probably a little over twenty inches and was mostly triceps as he seldom did curls. His neck had to be at least twenty-one inches and his chest in the high fifties, possibly even sixty inches. However I think what most impressed me were his forearms. I have never seen a more impressive pair and I believe they would have measured at least 18 inches in a gooseneck position. His date of birth is 29 July 1935, so he was in his early thirties in the time frame I am describing. Steve inspired me and was always supportive of my progress. We had many laughs together and I remember those days fondly. He was truly a wonder of nature. He enjoyed training and being strong but he enjoyed life as much or more. I think he had the right idea. He still lives in the Venice area and I hear he still trains mornings at the World Gym. I ran into him a few months back and he made my day when he said he always read my columns in *Muscle Mag*. "I love reading 'em," he told me, "I laugh my ass off!"

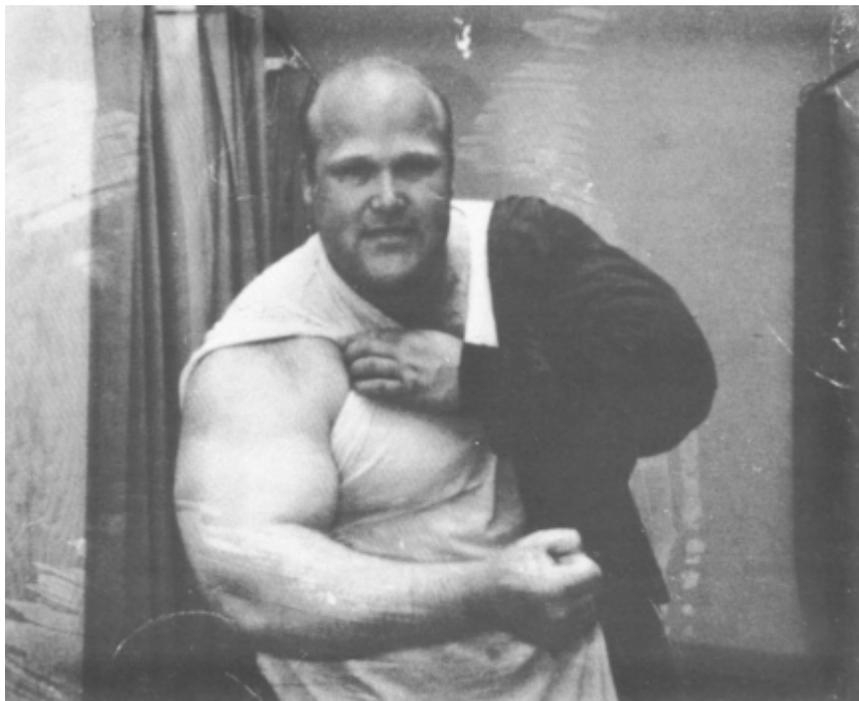
CHUCK AHRENS

Charlie was another of my early inspirations. I will never forget those pics of him standing with Paul Anderson and Dave Ashman on the old Muscle Beach. How could anybody be that wide!!? Or thick!!? His feats of strength seemed unbelievable and I identified with his non-conformist ways.

I finally met him in 1964 when I moved to the Santa Monica/Venice area. He trained a few miles inland at Bruce Conner's gym in Westwood, and I joined just so I could watch him train. Steve Marjanian also trained there occasionally and they were great friends and had been since the early Fifties. They were quite the duo. I think they had sort of an unwritten/spoken agreement that they would not do each others' favorite exercises. Charlie had a pair of made-up dumbbells there that had a very long piece of pipe for a handle. It stuck out six to eight inches on each end and made it easier to spot him as a man could take each end while he hauled the other one up himself. According to an elderly gentleman name Francis, who knew him from childhood, the dumbbells were set at 156 pounds each, but any number of plates could be added to them as they were of the plate-loading, wrench-collar type. I never stopped to add up the plates but it seemed right. He pressed these leaning against a padded incline board with hooks at the top that were hooked to the rung of a ladder that was set against a wall. This was common then but probably unfamiliar to younger readers. The board was set at about seventy

degrees or slightly less. He did not press them in an orthodox manner but rather pressed them diagonally to the side and did not lock out. Indeed, it would have been impossible to do so because of the length of the handles. Once in late 1964 and again in late 1965 he told me he had pressed a pair of dumbbells loaded to 225 pounds in this manner. The reps were done in an explosive manner where it was hard to see exactly how close to lockout they were. I hesitate to write all of the feats printed up about him as I was not there. I did see one feat of strength that still

amazes me to this day. There was an Olympic bar with a thirty-five pound plate on each side, collarless, on the floor. He bent do and lifted it clear of the floor with one hand so it was hanging from his hand with his arm fully extended downward. He was bent over with his free hand braced on his knee. No part of the arm holding the weight touched any part of his body. He then curled the weight up to his chin without any body movement. Think first of all of the power it takes to do a strict curl



THIS IS THE ONLY KNOWN PHOTO OF CHUCK AHREN'S MASSIVE ARMS. FAMOUS FOR HIS ECCENTRICITIES AS WELL AS HIS STRENGTH, AHRENS ALWAYS WORE LONG SLEEVES AND LOOSE FITTING CLOTHING.

-TODD McLEAN COLLECTION

in that manner with even a 115 pound dumbbell. Now imagine the wrist and hand power it took to keep the barbell balanced during the lift. A tilting of even the least degree would have slid the plates off! It was the greatest feat of curling power I have ever witnessed. He may have been the strongest curler in the history of the sport.

Among the feats attributed to him was a 405 pound lying triceps extension. I find this believable as I myself did eight with 275 on several occasions and he was much

stronger than I was. He had no use for the bench press and to my knowledge never did any. Rumors surfaced from time to time that on one occasion just to show detractors what he could do he did anywhere from eighteen to twenty-eight reps with four hundred on the bench press and quit out of boredom, but I have known many people who were around him for many years and none of them personally witnessed it and Charlie never mentioned it to me. Therefore I classify that as one of the many myths that sprang up around him. He was also said to have side pressed more than three hundred pounds for several reps but again it is impossible for me to substantiate. Perhaps impossible is the wrong word. Let us say I am so far unable to substantiate it. I would love to hear from anybody who witnessed such a feat I imagine three hundred was well within his capabilities. He was said to brace his free hand on a pole or a wall when he side pressed. This would seem logical as he never trained his legs and they might not have been able to support a free standing effort with that much weight. Though it would be hard to prove, I feel he may have had more all around upper body strength than anybody of his time and would compare well even against modern day behemoths.

I have the feeling that Charlie may have been past his peak by the time I first met him in 1964. He had become increasingly reclusive by then and did not seem to have ongoing enthusiasm for training. In describing his appearance you must remember he wore baggy clothes and never took his shirt off. He was around 6'1" and I would estimate that he weighed around 320 when I knew him. The nearest comparison I can make as far as thickness and width is the late Jeep Swenson. Charlie's chest was said to be 62" and I can believe it. He allowed me to feel his arms and they were the hardest I have ever felt. Finally in 1966 he rolled up one sleeve for a famous arm shot. It looked to be in the 22-23 inch range. Ironically, considering the tales of his grip strength and his prowess at arm wrestling, he had small, almost delicate looking hands! I am not sure when he was born but I think it was somewhere between 1930 and 1932. Interestingly, in speaking with those who knew him from his youth and from several early accounts of his prowess, his growth to the behemoth category was a sudden one. He began training in his mid teens and according to Steve Merjanian weighed about 230 when they first met in 1952 or 1953. An early magazine account of his exploits in 1955 had him weighing 240. Yet by 1957 he was a full fledged monster weighing in the 280-300 range. A 1956 write-

up in *Strength & Health* had him weighing 250. So what happened? The only person who ever spoke of it to me was Paul Magistretti who said it was like watching someone grow before your very eyes. [Ed Note: **We must remember that although testosterone was being manufactured by 1935, it was almost never used by people in the iron game. Remember also that 1957 was several years before Bill March, Tony Garcy, and Lou Riecke—aided by John Ziegler—introduced anabolic steroids to the strength sports in this country. Dianabol was not manufactured until 1958.**] Maybe one day we'll know. Charlie is one of the great mysteries of the iron game and it may well be that was how he wanted/wants it.

RICHARD KEE

Richard Kee may be an even greater mystery than Chuck Ahrens. I have never seen a photo of him and like Charlie he never took his shirt off. However, I saw him several times a week the first nine months of my weight training career. He was the first really big guy I ever saw in the flesh and he awed me speechless, as he did my friends. I had seen huge pro wrestlers on TV but never in person I had thought Yukon Eric was awesome but this guy was a step beyond. Kee stood six feet tall and weighed 280. I could tell his legs were large, but most of his weight was in his mammoth upper body. He heightened his size by wearing long sleeve plaid shirts and often a tanker jacket. Sometimes he would vary this by wearing a floor length kimono over his plaid shirt instead of the jacket.

Let me tell you about the Pasadena Gym in 1959. It was the most hard-core gym this side of the old Muscle Beach. It was located in a rather rundown commercial area on Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena and it gave the block an extra flavor of its own. Its clientele included businessmen and professionals who lived and worked in nearby more affluent areas, but who liked the rough and tumble ambiance, much as jaded thrill seekers now do their gym slumming in places like Gold's Venice. It was definitely a blue collar kind of place among the hard-core trainees. The junior high, high school and collegiate wannabe's took some unmerciful hazing from these guys and it took a strong ego to survive. A few of them may have been big shots or bullies on their high school campus but they soon found they were at the bottom of the pecking order at Pasadena. Something told me this was my destiny so I stuck it out despite frequent overt and

covert humiliations. We were expected to run errands for the top dogs at any time they wished and I don't remember any of my peers refusing. Richard Kee had a hotplate in the office (he was the assistant manager) and whenever he was out of food he would send one of us to the market down the street. One time I tried to keep the change and told him the prices had risen. I had the money clenched in my fist and he grabbed my hand and started to squeeze. The pain was agonizing but I continued to protest my innocence. Finally he let up and dismissed me. The fifty cent piece in the palm of my hand was embedded so deeply the outline was visible for more than a day. That was the hardest money I ever earned.

Among the hardcore members were a young (nineteen to twenty year old) Pat Casey, Lee Phillips, manager Gene Mozee, C. V. Hanson, Bob Post, shot putter Clark Branson, well known bodybuilder Joe Barata and deadlift ace Jerry Barz. I am sure I have forgotten many others. Needless to say my embattled fourteen year old ego took many a jolt just watching these guys. Pat Casey may have been better known even then but Richard Kee was undisputedly the strongest man in the gym. He was the man they deferred to. I remember him doing a couple of straight armed front raises with a 135 pound barbell with what looked to be very little body motion. I didn't realize then that even a slight amount of motion can radically increase the amount of weight you can do; all I knew was I couldn't even clean it, much less raise it over my head straight armed. The only other time I saw him lift a weight was one day when he was pushing a large broom dusting the area near a squat stand that had a 255 pound barbell on it. Clad in his tanker jacket, he walked over and took the bar off the racks on his back. Was he going to squat? No. He proceeded to do eight reps in the press behind neck with every rep lowered down to the shoulders! He then racked the weight and resumed dusting. At the time he was said to be capable of a 540 bench and 440 incline and what I saw led me to believe it. Despite his size and strength he insisted he was a bodybuilder and was patterning himself after Reg Park. In fact, he regularly corresponded with Park, who had recently moved to south Africa.

As with Steve and Charley, Kee was the subject of many legends both of a physical nature and for his eccentricities. One day in the office I saw a number of books on guitar instruction and several magazines with articles on current rock-n-roll heroes. I may be wrong but I seem to remember soon afterward seeing an electric guitar discreetly shelved. Could it be? Yep, Richard Kee was considering rock stardom! It got out and even his size and strength didn't save him from being the butt of much

hilarity. He persisted for awhile but I guess he eventually gave up on the idea. I wonder if he ever serenaded the gym? If so did they dare to protest? In the summer of 1959 I moved to the San Diego area and did not have contact with the Pasadena Gym for several years. Through the grapevine I learned that Kee had trimmed to a leaner 240 and was to make his long awaited bodybuilding debut. It never happened. Rumor had it that Reg Park flew out from South Africa for the occasion and was understandably enraged when Kee backed out. I can't vouch for the truth of it but it makes a great story. Other stories have curious bodybuilders prowling Kee's back yard and trying to peek through his window to see if he finally undressed and showered in the privacy of his home. This I can believe knowing some of the crazies in the Pasadena crowd. Had any pics been taken they would be priceless today.

According to those who knew him Kee took up weight training at age eighteen in 1953. He was six feet tall and weighed 135 pounds and according to these same people had no shoulder width. How in the world he developed one of the widest sets of shoulders in iron game history is a mystery that may never be solved. Many a narrow skinny guy would pay a fortune to know. Here's another twist of fate; Kee and Steve Merjanian both went to Manual Arts High School at the same time! It's ironic that Steve, who was naturally strong and husky to begin with and started training possibly a little earlier than Kee, didn't attain elite strength levels until several years after Kee did. This is the result of Kee's incredible focus and single-minded drive as opposed to Steve's laid-back, happy go lucky approach.

C. V. HANSON

I first met C. V. at the Pasadena Gym in 1959. He was 6'2 1/2" and weighed around 250 at the time and was one of the big fellas. I did not see him again until 1963 when I was training at a gym in San Diego and he started back after a two year layoff. He weighed about 220 then but had gotten as high as 275 before he laid off. C. V. moved back to the Los Angeles area a few months later and continued to regain and exceed his former size and strength. By early 1965 he was near three hundred pounds. He would stay in the 280-305 range from 1965-1968. At this time he was reportedly capable of a three hundred pound seated press behind neck, a four hundred pound incline and a 505 bench. He was also a strong curler and did enough leg work to squat 550. Other than Merjanian he was the only man I ever saw use the full 300 pound stack on the overhead pulldown at the old Gold's on Pacific Avenue. I think he did sets of six.

According to mutual friend Maylen (formerly Maylen Wiltse) C. V. started weight training at age nineteen weighing 158 pounds at his full height and was unable to bench one hundred pounds. Under Maylen's expert tutelage he was weighing two hundred pounds in four months. C. V. was also a Harvard graduate—a highly intelligent man from a prominent and affluent family. He once returned a \$12,000 check to his parents and insisted on living life his own way. C. V. was born in 1936.

BOB POST

Another mystery man. Bob was one of the Pasadena crew and I remember him from 1959. He stood 6'4" and weighed around 250 then. I don't remember much of his training except seeing him do standing dumbbell curls with the 85's for several reps. In 1961 he weighed 315. To my knowledge there is only one published photo of him; it shows him in a back lat spread at 315. Don't recall any training poundages mentioned but I imagine he had a lot of curling and pulling power at that weight. Don't think he trained legs. Dropped out of the sport in the early Sixties.

JOE KANASTER

The Oklahoma Wild Man made his first appearance in the Venice area in early 1968. He was 5'10" and weighed around 255 with very wide shoulders and a thick chest. He had done a few powerlifting meets back home and I seem to remember he totaled around sixteen hundred pounds or maybe slightly over. He had come out to train with Bill West at the original Westside Barbell Club and he did supplementary training at the original Gold's. By chance I first met him at a smorgasbord restaurant that was very popular with the big guys. We got on very well as we were of the same generation and had a

number of interests outside the sport in common.

It soon became apparent that he was far stronger than his few official stats indicated and he was improving at breakneck speed. He also had a kamikaze attitude towards chemical assistance of any kind and was often jacked up to the brink of explosion. This probably contributed to his eventual burnout, but while the flame was lit he set off some spectacular fireworks.

Among the lifts I personally witnessed were the following: a 445 incline, a 325 seated press behind neck and a 675 squat. The PBN was done by moving a free standing flat bench up to the squat rack and moving the bar to a point to where it sat at a height that you could duck your head under the bar while seated straddling the bench. The squat rack was of the sloping variety with notches every few inches so you could adjust the bar to whatever height you needed. Joe ducked his head under the bar and sat back to clear the notches. Bracing his feet,

there was a sudden explosion as the weight shot upwards to arms' length. He pushed so hard with his feet that the bench actually moved backwards or may be he just moved backwards on the bench but something moved. He also slumped his torso slightly before beginning the lift to get the recoil effect when he straightened up as he pressed.

It was nonetheless an awesome feat. He never did front presses and I'm not sure if he ever did the seated dumbbell press. The 675 squat was done with just shorts and a lifting belt—without knee wraps and taken down to just below parallel. He mentioned a 505 touch-and-go bench and a 725 squat and I can easily believe both, especially the squat when he added knee wrapping. He and George Frenn and Tom Overholtzer were the first men I personally witnessed who used extensive elbow wraps that were



CHUCK AHRENS DOES TWO REPS IN THE TRICEPS PRESS AT MUSCLE BEACH WITH 345 POUNDS IN 1957, PRIOR TO THE STEROID ERA. THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN BY THE LATE BERT ELLIOTT.—TODD-McCLEAN COLLECTION

soon to become so popular. Joe's personal gym bests on the three powerlifts would have put him in the 1850-1900 range in the 1968-1969 time frame but the one meet I know of him entering during this time was a disaster as he only got one bench press in and missed all his squats. A few years later he came through the area again. This time he weighed 185 and had gone on to other pursuits. Despite his laughter he still had a glint in his eye. Whatever the pursuit, he never did anything half-way.

WAYNE COLEMAN

Younger readers and fans of pro wrestling may know him as Superstar Billy Graham. I first met him in 1969 at Gold's. He was three hundred pounds at 6'3". His arms were in the 22" range and they awed a young Arnold Schwarzenegger. It would take more space than I have to tell his story so I will limit myself to the time frame in which I knew him. His natural hair color was dark brown and when I first met him he had a mustache and looked like a western outlaw.

In fact, he had an outlaw presence even before he adopted the character of Superstar Billy Graham. He had a Steve McQueen/Robert Mitchum sort of presence. He drew people to him. His training temperament was more that of a body builder than a powerlifter. The only exercises I ever saw him go all out on were the bench and the squat. On the rest he just did enough to keep the blood flowing. He benched a touch-n-go 550 in 1969. He'd just finished a season of pro football in Canada but wanted to move on to other things. He was getting by working for a collection agency but he knew it was a dead-end job. Pro wrestling beckoned and the rest is history.

We got along well. When we first met I was the same height and weight he was but we were built differently. His arms were larger and better shaped than mine and I was wider in the shoulders and bigger in the chest. His legs were slightly larger than mine and he had a harder more rugged overall look that I envied. There was no ego clash as we specialized in different exercises. He was only two years older than I was but he seemed much older. He was instrumental in getting me into pro wrestling in 1971 and he helped save my life in 1969 when I had a seizure in Gold's and swallowed my tongue. I owe him much. He was a very good arm wrestler and often did it as part of his wrestling persona on TV. I once did a worked arm wrestling match with him for Los Angeles on TV. I pretended to be a big Swede that came out of the audience and challenged him. It went over great and the promoter wanted to make a series out of it but he wouldn't pay me so it fell through. In 1972 he was in Los Angeles for much of the year. He had leaned own to 275 and was acquiring the physique that would make him famous. I saw him at that time do a narrow stance squat well below

parallel with 650 and clean (once) and press a pair of 105 pound dumbbells two to three sets of ten reps. He had world class curling power but I never saw him go all out so I don't know exactly how strong he was. He was also said to be very strong in overhead pulldowns but I never saw him do that exercise and he never went very heavy (for him) in the seated pulley rows I saw him do. It was harder to maintain size and strength in pro wrestling in the Seventies than it is today, now that top wrestlers fly everywhere and don't work as often. The grueling travel schedules of that time put an end to increases in his size and strength. Had circumstances been otherwise, there is no telling how large and strong he would have become.

Many young wrestling fans today probably never heard of him which is tragic and ironic. If Hulk Hogan is the biggest draw in the history of pro wrestling, he owes it all to Superstar Billy Graham. Hogan's act is a direct steal from the "Star," right down to referring to his arms as his "pythons." When Hogan first came along he was considered to be a Billy Graham clone. In fact, a chance meeting in the Seventies in a Florida roadhouse between a young Terry Bollea and Wayne and Steve Cepello (Steve Strong) set the spark that started Bollea on the road to fame and fortune as Hulk Hogan.

OLIVER SACKS

The more literate among you probably know of Oliver Sacks as a best selling author (*Awakenings*, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, etc.), as the head of Neurology at the world famous Bellevue Hospital in New York City, as a professor of clinical neurology at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and as a man considered by many to be the foremost authority on neurology in the world today. But how many of you know that before he scaled those illustrious heights he was one of the strongest squatters of his day? Very few men on the face of the earth could squat 650 pounds in 1963 and Oliver Sacks was one of them. He stood 6', possibly 6'1" and at his largest weighed three hundred pounds. In a squatting contest in late 1963 against Lee Phillips he did 620 weighing 290 and Phillips did seven hundred pounds at 315. They were the strongest squatters in California at that time. Unfortunately, shortly afterward Sacks was badly injured swimming in rough ocean water and it may have ended his strength career. Soon after his accident he went on a diet that brought his weight down to around 225. A couple of years after that he became the head of the Neurology Department at Bellevue and after that I would imagine he was too busy to consider resuming heavy training even if he had been able to do so and had the desire. Still, it is interesting to speculate how much stronger he could have become if he had not gone in the water that fateful day. In fact, I wonder how strong he

would have been if he had led an abstemious lifestyle then. He was a riotous liver who, so they said, indulged in booze, cigars and mind-altering chemicals and he was known to go on eating binges. He also had a fondness for motorcycles and I presume he rode them whether he was sober or intoxicated. I regret that I only spoke with him briefly once as he was training less by the time I arrived and probably at different places and times. Many were the tales told of his escapades. He was a Renaissance man in every sense of the word, including indulging in the table manners of that period in several local smorgasbords. He also was fond when in a festive mood of breaking into bawdy drinking songs from his native England.

I do not know much of his other training, but I remember him or somebody else mentioning a standing press in excess of three hundred pounds. Curiously, one of his best selling books is called *A Leg To Stand On*, in which he relates how an injury to his leg led to unforeseen psychological trauma and gave him the feeling that the injured leg was no longer a part of him. If he had not lived life on the edge he might not have gained the insights that have contributed so greatly to the field of neurology.

JIM HAMILTON

The late Jim Hamilton was known primarily as a benchner after his early twenties due to a leg injury in a motorcycle accident that curtailed any lower body training or standing overhead lifting. Before that he was an all around lifter though I don't remember any specific lifts credited to him during that time. I could be mistaken but I seem to recall reading of him doing a 385 pound press from the racks before the accident. I don't remember the exact year of the accident but I seem to remember him saying it was either in 1959 or 1960. Jim competed in numerous bench meets over the years and he is generally credited with having done five hundred in Bill West's garage in 1962 weighing about 285. He was slightly under six feet tall and generally wore loose rather raggedy clothes and presented a disheveled appearance that was heightened by frizzy hair, owlsh glasses and often an unkempt beard. In fact, he told more than one tale of being accosted by police as a suspected vagrant. Ironically he was a math and computer whiz who worked for the Rand Corporation. He was a pal of Oliver Sacks and may have been his superior in dissipation. While I never knew him to indulge in cigars or other tobacco products he was a heavy boozier and overeater and he took many dangerous drugs, one of which caused his demise in 1973 at the age of 37. Again I have to wonder how strong he would have been without the indulgences that eventually killed him. He was a brilliant man who earned a Ford Foundation Scholarship as a teenager because of his gifts in the math field. A terrible waste of talent both intellectual and physical

JOEL PREZANT

Joel was a free spirited non-conformist who happened to be very strong. He stood six feet and weighed around 250, all in the upper body. In 1964 I saw him do a 410 incline with a collar-to-collar grip. He also did a collar-to-collar bench with 475. On the seated press in the free standing chair at the Venice Beach pit, he did three hundred on several occasions and I remember seeing him do 315 on one occasion. He didn't work his legs when I knew him but he said he did some leg work earlier on. He had great natural strength and with very little training he deadlifted six hundred in nearly stiff legged style in 1970. He faded from the scene not long after though I occasionally saw him around town. He was born in 1939 and I last saw him a few years ago. Except for a little gray he hadn't aged in twenty-five years despite little or no training in more than twenty years. Some people have all the luck. An undisciplined trainer who trained what he wanted to, when he wanted to. No telling how strong he would have been with a more scientific approach.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

When I look back at the men I have just written of several things strike me. Perhaps most tellingly, they were all nonconformists, both in their personal lives and in their training. Secondly, I don't feel any of them reached their full potential of size and strength. Few of us do, even champions, but they all fell short of their full potential, many by wide margins. I shared fond times and friendships with many of them and cherish these recollections and I hope this article will give them some of the belated respect and recognition they deserve. Most probably realized that their nonconformity would keep them from getting the recognition they deserved, but they remained true to themselves and did their own thing and I admire them tremendously for it. You will note that I described many of them as highly intelligent. This seems to be less the case these days but back then the sport drew more strong-minded non-conformists because it was not accepted as it is today. Also, they did their thing at a time when performance enhancing drugs were in their infancy and you had to depend on deductive reasoning to overcome sticking points and improve your routines.

Most of these fellows would be strong even by today's standards. What size and strength could they have attained had they had access to today's training aids? The mind boggles! I am sure I have missed some worthy men from that period who I have either forgotten or never met because they lived in other parts of the country. My hope is that my account of those days—when the West Coast was the home of many of the strongest men in the world—has brought back some of your memories and given credit where credit was due.



Dear IGH,

It was good to see you and Terry in New York again for the Oldetime Strongmen banquet, and also to more recently correspond via e-mail. I am enclosing some material that refutes Kenneth Dutton's statement on page 10, first full paragraph, in *Iron Game History*, Vol. 4(5&6): "There has been only one hairy-chested Tarzan (Mike Henry). . . ." However, I would assume that Mr. Dutton most likely derived his information on this matter from Michael Malone's book, *Heroes of Eros: Male Sensuality In the Movies*. In any case, I was sure that in one of his five Tarzan movies, *Tarzan's Greatest Adventure*, the obviously weight-trained Gordon Scott had been hairy-chested. So just for the sake of accuracy I am bringing this to your attention Author Dutton's article was quite interesting and thought-provoking, but he overlooked some things. So, I've included two items (including pictures reproduced in magazines) that demonstrate what I'm talking about. A third source that could be checked is George T. McWhorter, curator of the Burroughs Memorial Collection at The University of Louisville's Ekstrom Library in Kentucky. An interesting and well-illustrated cover article relating to Mr. McWhorter and the Burroughs collection is in *Biblio* magazine, Vol. 1 (2), Sept-Oct. 1996.

Gordon Scott and his weight-training routines were featured in *Strength & Health* in January and September 1955, and in *Mr. America*, November 1960. In Gave Essoe's 1968 book, *Tarzan of the Movies*, chapter sixteen on Scott is titled "Tarzan The Best"

Jim Sanders
Garner, NC



Dear IGH,

Quite fortuitously I came across the Berryman and Park volume on *Essays in the History of Sports Medicine* and thoroughly enjoyed the essay on the history of anabolic steroid use in sports, by you, Terry, and the essay on the role that Bernarr Macfadden played in the reform of feminine figure, by you, Jan. Coincidentally, both of them had some indirect personal relevance to me. Before I indicate why, I must commend the both of you for writing such scholarly yet highly readable and interesting essays. That combination of qualities can be quite rare.

Taking the essays in chronological order, I'll start with yours, Jan. While I never met Bernarr Macfadden, I did meet and even work for Paul C. Bragg who followed in Macfadden's footsteps. I met Bragg and his "daughter" Patricia when they were giving a series of Health Lectures in New York City. He was lecturing and selling his products and books. I hit it off well with the both of them and helped out at the lectures, arranging the products, surveying the audience, etc. We kept in close touch while he and Patricia toured the world, and one time I helped them out in Chicago while they were giving a lecture series. One time, when they came back to NYC from France, I helped Bragg recover from some injury he experienced there. He went on a long juice fast in order to heal his leg; they were staying at a hotel overlooking Central Park and I vividly recall purchasing fruits and vegetables in the area, which he would juice. Paul mentioned Macfadden often but I did not question him in detail about Macfadden since I was most interested in Paul's own philosophy of health and exercise.

I did meet Johnnie Lee Macfadden many times. The Braggs were good friends with her and she attended some of their lectures. Then, much later on, she lectured on metaphysics, spirituality, positive thinking and, to a lesser extent, on health. Johnnie Lee had a cosmetic business and publicized some of her products at Norvell's lectures.

Now to your article on steroid use in sports, Terry. There is a Federal prison in Bradford; it is relatively new. Serving time in the facility was one Tommy Gioiosa. Unless you are an avid Cincinnati Reds baseball fan, that name is not likely to mean much to you. Tommy was kind of adopted by Pete Rose. He became Rose's "gopher." Tommy lived with Rose and his wife for some time, Rose was his idol. Tommy began working out in a gym in Cincinnati and became strongly involved with steroids in a manner strikingly similar to what you described in your essay. They negatively impacted Tommy in nearly every

way: personality-wise, relationship-wise, and physically. According to Tommy, a friend of his in Cincinnati asked him to deliver a duffel bag. Turns out it contained drugs. Also, Pete Rose was heavily involved in gambling, as his gopher, Tommy was charged with a series of law violations (I forget the specifics). Unlike most of Rose's "hangers on" Tommy refused to implicate Rose in any wrongdoing. Tommy was sent to prison, transferred among several of them, and ended up at FCI McKean, here in Bradford. A county commissioner befriended Tommy, who was then allowed to give lectures in the Bradford area to schools, colleges, and service organizations while he was finishing his time at FCI McKean. When Tommy gave his presentation at UPB I was very "touched" by it. He is a charismatic speaker and used slides to show the effects of steroid use on a person's body. A Bradford surgeon removed Tommy's "breasts" and the slides depicting the "before" and "after" configurations of his chest were quite compelling. Anyway, I became quite friendly with Tommy Gioiosa, arranged additional presentations for him and since he wanted to write a book detailing his experiences with steroids and with Pete Rose (who completely "dis-owned" Tommy) endeavored to find a publisher who would be interested in publishing his manuscript

Tommy went to Florida upon being released from FCI McKean. We had kept in close contact but not during the past year or so. As a result of your rekindling my interest, I may call him.. Incidentally, Tommy had some of the MDs you mention testify, at his trial, that steroid use produces a sense of invulnerability and loss of control. However, the jury/jury didn't buy the argument

I find it interesting that in the past few years there has been an enormous interest in the use of substances that are legal but are purported to produce effects similar to the illegal steroids (without the undesirable side-effects). Also, that the Twin Labs Nutritional Company, which produces and sells many of these substances, published a bodybuilding magazine which claims that the featured bodybuilders do *not* use steroids.

Also, nutritionally oriented MDs and biochemists have written books extolling the virtues of such hormones as melatonin, DHEA and others; some of which are now freely available in Health Food Stores. Your essay put this phenomenon in historical perspective.

Continued success.

Michael Klausner
University of Pittsburgh at Bradford

The book Professor Klausner refers to was published by the University of Illinois Press in 1992. It contains a number of other essays on the history of exercise and physical culture that some readers would no doubt find of interest.



Dear IGH,

Several issue back, you ran an article covering George Barker Windship. I found it very informative. Windship showed that huge weights could be lifted in the hip lift with the large structure of the hips and heavy muscles in this area. As I have gotten older (sixty-five) my specialty is the hip lift, using an Iron Mind squat hip belt. Last year at age sixty-four my best was eleven hundred pounds for thirty reps and 1405 pounds for ten reps. As the Y.M.C.A. has only four hundred pound plates, it is hard to get up to a heavy weight without tying extra dumbbells to the bar.

Will be looking forward to the next issue.

Lee Gesbeck
Berwyn, IL



Ed Note: For those of you with access to the internet, we now have a home page for the Todd-McLean Collection and *Iron Game History*. The site contains a few photos from the collection as well as detailed information about our holdings and policies. Subscription and back issue information are also available The internet address is: www.edb.utexas.edu/faculty/jtodd/index.html. To send us an e-mail, write: j.todd@mail.utexas.edu.

Book Review by David Chapman

The Indian Club as Folk Art

Alice J. Hoffman, *Indian Clubs* (NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), ISBN 0-8109-2670-9.

Will collectors and arts of the future ever wax eloquent about the beauty of a plate barbell, the zen-like simplicity of a squat rack or the sculptural qualities of the Soloflex exerciser? The chances are not good, but you never know.

Alice Hoffman has produced a beautiful book that argues quite effectively for the acceptance of another piece of exercise equipment, the humble Indian club, as a piece of art. In addition to justifying the clubs as art, Hoffman looks into the history of these wooden cudgels. She finds that Indian clubs were traditional weapons brought from the Subcontinent to Europe by British exercise enthusiasts in the mid-nineteenth century. They were quickly adopted as a means of improving the physique, and shortly thereafter it seemed as if everyone wanted to swing the clubs and achieve physical perfection. In fact, club-swinging became a fad that quickly spread throughout the western world.

One of the interesting points in the book is that clubs were rapidly and unquestioningly accepted by the athletic community. Within ten years, everyone (or so it seemed) was caught up in the Indian club craze. Hoffman points out a few reasons for this rapid acceptance. Since clubs could be mass produced in various weights and shapes, they were adaptable to any level of strength or body shape. Thus, they could be swung by men, women, or children with equal effect. Unfortunately, Hoffman does not offer any historical or philosophical reasons for this quick acceptance nor is there any reference to the larger sporting craze that was by and large responsible for the popularity of Indian club swinging. Neither is there any mention that club swinging was an Olympic event nor descriptions of the massed gymnastics displays featuring hundreds of club swingers swooping their clubs in unison.

For me, the biggest revelation of this book was the surprising variety of shapes, materials, and colors in which Indian clubs were produced. Despite its simple, basic contour, clubs achieved a variety of form that boggles the mind. Length, width, and weight all varied with

each manufacturer, but then added to these variations were the decorations that often adorned the clubs. They were variously festooned with rich inlaid wood, metal appliques, and painted decorations of every conceivable description.

Many of the clubs are prime examples of folk art. Folk art is defined as a utilitarian object which has been decorated or refined so that it becomes an expression of the owner's individuality and personal taste. Most commonly, these decorations included geometric designs, floral patterns, patriotic devices, and even "naughty Nellies" featuring soft-core pornography.

Hoffman posits that the linking of Indian clubs with the sinuous female physique is no mere accident. In her description of one club, the author writes, "Like a Jean Arp sculpture, the sensuous silhouette of the club is at once feminine in nature and bold in stature, embracing the space around it." This is an interesting point and I wish the author had explored it more thoroughly rather than mentioning it and then dropping the subject.

Clearly, the author is more at home when discussing Indian clubs as works of art; she is somewhat less knowledgeable when recording the historical or sporting side of things. The principal purpose of this book is to alert antique collectors to the beauty and sensuousness of these lowly and forgotten objects, so sport history must occasionally take a back seat. But in a way this is a good thing, since it allows those of us in the athletic world to view these artifacts in a new light.

This is a beautiful, large format book with magnificent photographs by William Abranowicz. It has a bibliography which is adequate but by no means exhaustive, and a list of sources to help the reader build an Indian club collection of his own. *Indian Clubs* takes a lowly piece of exercise equipment out of the gymnasium and puts it on a pedestal, thereby allowing us to view it as both a graceful tool and a true *objet d'art*. For that we should be grateful.



SANDOW: NO FOLLY WITH ZIEGFELD'S FIRST GLORIFICATION

Josh Buck, University of Maryland

On 21 March 1896, Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. starred the French Actress Anna Held in *A Parlor Match*, and this production is what historians cite as the precedent that later became Ziegfeld's hallmark the glorification of women. Although there is validity in this historical account, it is nevertheless misleading. Three years earlier, Ziegfeld had glorified a man, a strongman named Eugen Sandow, and it was then, in 1893 rather than 1896, that the now famous Ziegfeld techniques for glorification emerged.

Sandow was truly the first person to be "glorified" by Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., as Patricia Ziegfeld pointed out in her autobiography: "Eugene [sic] Sandow was Daddy's first experiment in the fine art of glorification."¹ Yet no one has studied this initial experiment or fully explained how Eugen Sandow's fame in America was due to the exploits and promotions of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.

Although Ziegfeld began his successful career in 1893, books on Ziegfeld contain only a few paragraphs or pages that deal with his career before Anna Held, and few researchers have studied Ziegfeld's early career or examined the managerial techniques that he used before *A Parlor Match*.² From such information there is much that can be learned about this impresario extraordinaire; a man who spent thousands of dollars on a single dress worn once; a man who would revolutionize the American revue; and a man who would create a legacy through the glorification of women.³

In summer 1893, Ziegfeld found a way to rescue his father's failing venture at the Chicago Columbian Exposition. Florenz Ziegfeld, Sr., director of musical events for the Exposition, found his Trocadero Theater company in dire straights.⁴ Aware of the public's growing interest in Vaudeville, Ziegfeld, Jr. went to New York City and headed for the Casino Theater, known for its variety shows.⁵

The main attraction at the Casino was a musical farce called *Adonis*, with Henry Dixie in the title role. The final scene consisted of a tableau with the "delicate and wispy Dixie" striking a classic pose while the curtain was being drawn.⁶ The curtain immediately opened to reveal a true Adonis: Eugen Sandow.⁷ The performance then continued with Sandow striking various other poses to display his muscles and ended with his trademark: having three horses walk across a plank which lay over his stomach while he was in the Tomb of Hercules position.⁸

Legend contends that Ziegfeld went backstage

after the final curtain and, when Sandow arrived in his dressing room, offered him a contract. Whether this story is accurate or not, Ziegfeld did sign Sandow as the headliner for the Trocadero Theatre. Because Sandow's managers were disappointed with their meager revenue from the strong man, they happily agreed to relinquish him to Ziegfeld.⁹ Having little money to offer, Ziegfeld convinced Sandow to accept ten percent of the ticket sales rather than the one thousand dollar she was demanding.¹⁰

Historians have attributed Ziegfeld's interest in the Casino Theatre to its popularity in the vaudeville circuit; however, this explanation overlooks the likelihood that Sandow was familiar to Ziegfeld before his departure for New York. Four year's earlier, on 30 October 1889, the *Chicago Tribune* ran on its front page the news that an "Unknown" was "stronger than Sampson."¹¹ This referred to the previous night at Westminster Aquarium in London, where Sandow had beaten strongman Charles A. Sampson and assumed the title of the strongest man in the world.¹² It is plausible—even probable—that Ziegfeld had read this article and sought out Sandow as the headliner for the Trocadero rather than simply stumbling across the strongman through serendipity, as Patricia Ziegfeld suggested.¹³

To introduce Sandow to his Chicago public, Ziegfeld, Jr. invested the last of his finances in an advertising blitz in Chicago.¹⁴ He "papered the town with posters of the scantily clad muscleman and placed rather lurid advertisements in local theatre programs to tantalize the public."¹⁵ Ziegfeld also created "highly romanticized . . . biographies of Sandow to catch the media's eye."¹⁶ The blitz worked, for on 1 August 1893, Eugen Sandow premiered in the Windy City at the Trocadero Theatre, performing to a packed house.¹⁷

As he built a reputation for Sandow, Ziegfeld's talent for manipulation became apparent. Ziegfeld invited some of Chicago's prominent women to Sandow's premiere, gambling that the presence of these ladies would bolster publicity. After the performance, Ziegfeld positioned himself at center stage, and taking another gamble, announced that anyone willing to donate three hundred dollars to charity would be granted a private interview in Sandow's dressing room. His gamble paid off, for neither Mrs. Potter Palmer nor Mrs. George Pullman would allow the public to believe that she was unconcerned with social causes. Both ladies, duped by Ziegfeld's ploy, soon found themselves in Sandow's dress-

ing room, being offered the opportunity to feel the muscles of this modern day Hercules.¹⁸ Inasmuch as Ziegfeld planned for the ladies to go backstage, he probably also planned for the pressmen to be waiting outside the dressing room, enabling them to cover the ladies' experience and print every word. Ziegfeld's scheme worked, and by the next day, as Marjorie Farnsworth put it, "You were no one, really no one, my dear, unless you felt Sandow's muscles."¹⁹

Later, Ziegfeld arranged for Amy Leslie, the drama critic for the *Chicago Daily News*, to interview Sandow in a nearby park. The timing of the events that transpired was so well choreographed that it is hard to believe that Ziegfeld had not manipulated this course of events as well. Following Ziegfeld's directions, Sandow, while strolling through the park during the interview, picked a snapdragon and explained that the flower reminded him of his youth in Germany. As Leslie was reflecting on the strongman's sensitive side, an irate guard appeared and tried to apprehend the strongman for picking the flower. According to John Burke, the guard shouted "that Sandow had broken the law . . . Unwisely the guard grabbed Sandow by the elbow." Sandow, however, "simply picked up the guard and held him at arms' length, examining him as if he were some curious specimen of the parks fauna." He put the guard down only when Miss Leslie pleaded for him to do so.²⁰

There are reasons to believe that Ziegfeld was pulling the strings of this puppet show. The park, which was on the Exposition's grounds, was quite large. The odds of a guard observing Sandow Rick the flower were not very high. Further, if Ziegfeld's advertising blitz was so successful (and it was: "Sandow's act. . . [at] the Trocadero . . . raked in \$30,000 in six weeks"²¹), there must have been few who could not recognize the strongman. Indeed, if the guard was unaware of Sandow's identity, he would have arrested Sandow for the attack. Finally, if muscleman Sandow was supposed to be a "gentle giant, equally comfortable with a bouquet of flowers or a heavy barbell in his hand," then his violent response seems out of character.²² Ziegfeld's hand appears yet again.

Ziegfeld seemed to know what the public wanted, and he gave it to them. What they wanted in 1893—the Gilded Age of the Victorian Era—was sex. Ziegfeld challenged the mores of—and so titillated—society by revamping Sandow's costumes from a "blue top and discreet pink tights that covered [Sandow] from neck to toe," into nothing but silk briefs.²³

Sometime earlier, Sandow had posed for several nude photographs depicting classic Greek and Roman postures. Although Anthony Comstock, the watchdog of America during the Victorian Era said that "nude paintings . . . are the decoration of infamous resorts, and the law-abiding American will never admit them to the sacred confines of the home,"²⁴ thanks to Ziegfeld's advertising,

these pictures could be found in the bedrooms of many of high-society's adolescent girls. These pictures were bought and displayed by these girls to pay homage to their latest idol. Many American aristocrats had been exposed to Greek and Roman art while travelling abroad, and thus were more accepting of these classically inspired photographs.²⁵ In each case, Sandow was photographed in the nude except for the strategically placed fig leaf. The leaf proved to be yet another gimmick used to gain publicity—prompting discussions about how the leaf was attached. According to Chapman, there were several techniques utilized. One method used a wire around Sandow's waist, which was later etched out of the photograph. The other common method was to either tie or glue the leaf directly to Sandow.²⁶

Ziegfeld also exploited the fashionable gossip columns. The American public's preoccupation with these columns was no secret, and like everyone else, Ziegfeld knew that people who were written about one day were the next day's conversation piece. While Sandow was still performing in Chicago, Ziegfeld fabricated stories—personally created rumors—linking Sandow with the actress and sex symbol Lillian Russell. They were written about prolifically; columnists guessing when they met, how they met, and even when they would wed.²⁷ Months later, when Ziegfeld heard about Sandow's real marriage, he dredged up these old rumors to keep American women from learning that Sandow was no longer an eligible bachelor.²⁸

After the Columbian Exposition, the Sandow Trocadero Vaudevilles had a short vacation, performed their show in New York City, then headed west to California, playing San Francisco and several other West Coast cities. While the Sandow Trocadero Vaudevilles were in San Francisco for the Mid-Winter Fair, Ziegfeld learned that he could manipulate the United States Judicial system for free publicity.²⁹ Shortly after their premiere performance in the Bay area on 23 April 1894, Ziegfeld had Irving Montgomery arrested for impersonating Sandow. Ziegfeld and Sandow sued for fifty-thousand dollars "for all the confusion [Montgomery] had caused in the minds of the gullible public." Montgomery counter-sued, and a court hearing began.³⁰

After the troupe left California, they took a vacation. Ziegfeld returned to Chicago and Sandow went to England where he married Blanche Brookes whom he had met while he was in Manchester, England, several years earlier.³¹ While there, Sandow had posed in a "fine series of pictures" for her father, a well-known local photographer. Sandow and Blanche became friends and remained in contact from their first meeting until their marriage.³²

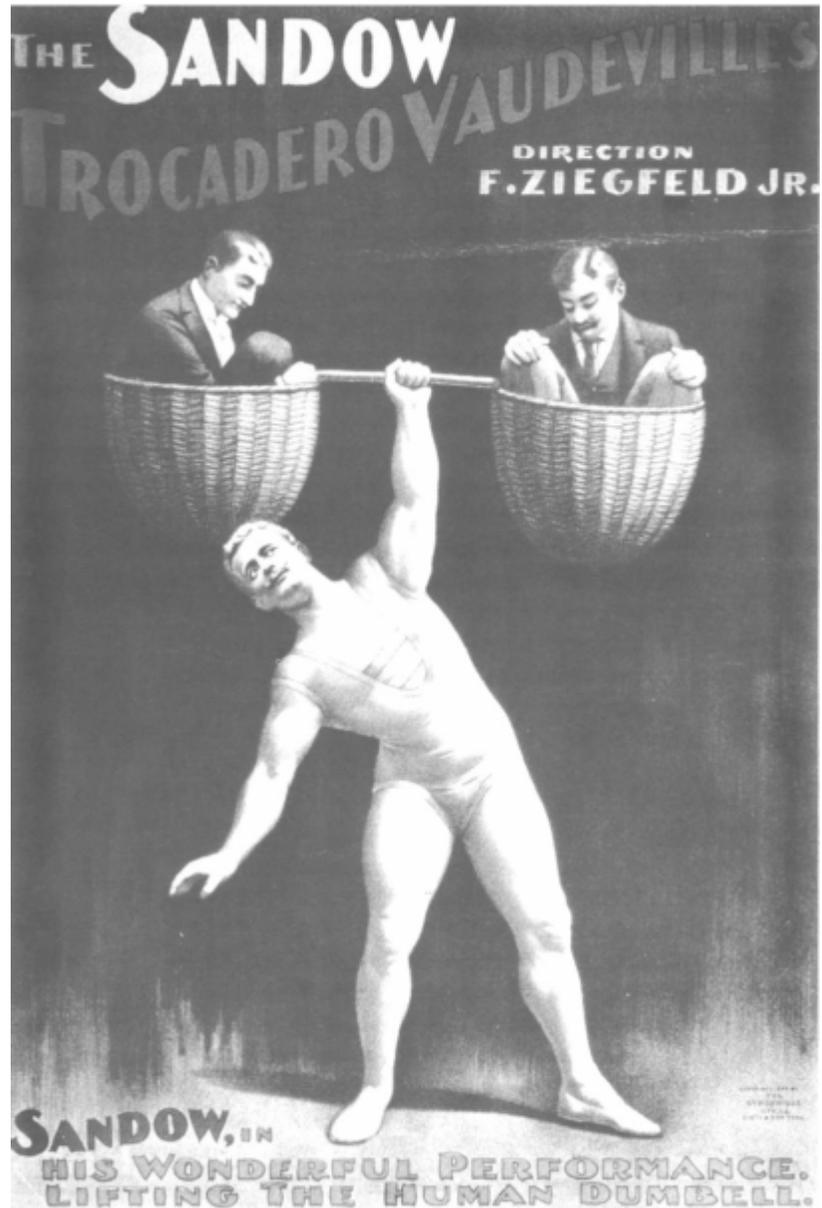
Sandow and his bride returned to the United States and, with Ziegfeld and the rest of the Sandow Trocadero Vaudevilles, began a seven-and-a-half-month tour on 1

October 1894. The troupe played such cities as Philadelphia, Baltimore and Cleveland (to which they returned several times).³³

During this time, Ziegfeld developed a formula for maximum publicity. They always arrived on Sunday night. Monday afternoons were devoted to promoting Sandow; the matinee for Monday was omitted, and most advertisements for the show ran a disclaimer like the one in the *Philadelphia Press*: “On account of a private exhibition given by Mr. Sandow to physicians and members of the press on Monday afternoon, the matinee of that day will be omitted.”³⁴ The Monday afternoon demonstrations, designed to allow doctors to view Sandow and to challenge Ziegfeld’s claims that Sandow was “physically perfect,” were by invitation only.³⁵ The exhibition usually began with Sandow entering the room “with his body hidden from view by a large Turkish bathing robe.”³⁶ He would always stand in the spot that afforded the best lighting and, with much theatricality, would throw off his robe to reveal himself “in all of his physical beauty, bared to the waist.”³⁷ He would proceed to show his control over the different muscle groups by posing and flexing, all the while lecturing on those muscles. During the course of the lecture, Sandow would discuss all the major muscles and call “each muscle by its scientific name.”³⁸ This was apparently quite impressive to the medical people of the nineteenth century, for most articles about the exhibitions draw attention to this feat.

Another portion of the presentation was Sandow’s demonstration of his phenomenal ability to expand his chest, and this, as with the rest of the presentation, received much coverage in the papers. The average man, according to Sandow, is able to expand his chest by only about two inches. Sandow maintained that he could use his highly developed abdominal muscles and thus increase his chest expansion by an unheard of fourteen inches—from forty-seven inches to sixty-one inches.³⁹ [Ed. Note: **Seemingly impossible chest expansions were often part of a strongman’s repertoire, but they were due much less to an ability to expand a set of muscles than to creative use of the tape coupled with an ability to compress the ribcage and surrounding musculature for the “before” measurement.**]

After the lecture and displays of muscle control, Sandow would demonstrate his strength by lifting a volunteer from the floor to the table. To add drama, Sandow



would place his hand on the floor with the palm facing up. He would then ask a volunteer to stand in his palm and would lift the volunteer from the floor to the table without bending his arm at the elbow.⁴⁰ To exhibit the strength of his abdominal muscles, Sandow would lie supine on the floor and allow a volunteer to stand on his abdomen. Once Sandow had taken a deep breath, he would quickly contract his abdominal muscles, knocking the volunteer off. One article recounts that Dr. Sargent Harvard’s physical advisor and anatomical expert, who weighed 178 pounds, was “shot up into the air two feet.”⁴¹

Dr. Sargent also examined Sandow and was quite impressed with the German strongman; many articles quoted the doctor’s opinion: “Altogether, Sandow is the most wonderful specimen of man I have ever seen. He is strong, active and graceful, combining the characteristics

of Apollo, Hercules and the ideal athlete. There is not the slightest evidence of sham about him. On the contrary, he is just what he pretends to be."⁴²

The private presentation, which usually lasted about an hour, was not limited to displaying Sandow. To warm up the audience before Sandow entered, Ziegfeld would have the "Clever Calculating.. Collie Dog," Miss Scottie, handled by Mr. L.G. Lewis, perform. She entertained the assembly by her skills in addition and subtraction as well as her most impressive trick: playing a hand of cards with someone from the gathering of doctors and newspapermen. Miss Scottie usually won.⁴³

The private performance was more than educational. It was an easy way for Ziegfeld to secure endorsements the leading physicians of the cities. What better advertising than having respected physicians telling their patients, friends, and neighbors that they had just witnessed "the strongest man on on earth," or the "superb picture of muscular male perfection"?⁴⁴

Ziegfeld used many other advertising techniques. The Sunday before the week's performance, major papers in each city ran stories stating where and when the troupe was to perform. All of the articles were essentially the same, using the same quotations, metaphors, and adjectives to describe the Sandow Tracadero Company; their near invariability suggests that Ziegfeld created the news releases and handed them to the papers for publication. In that same Sunday paper, there was usually a large advertisement for the show, with pictures of Sandow with horses walking over his stomach, Sandow holding a horse, or Sandow flexing his muscles. Beginning Monday, the advertisement was usually smaller, about four or five lines. There was almost always an advertisement again preceding the last performance, to remind the public.

In a time before television, advertising relied on vivid and tantalizing words Ziegfeld, a master of vivid and tantalizing words, enlivened the announcements with such stimulating phrases as, "A Congress of Wonders," "Inaugural Presentation in America," "A Revolution in the Annals of Vaudeville," and SANDOW The World Knows Not His Equal."⁴⁵ He even billed the Trocadero Vaudevilles as "The Most Expensive and Most Refined Vaudeville Aggregation Ever Formed."⁴⁶

During the tour, Ziegfeld used more than doctors and advertisements to promote Sandow. He also used such gimmicks as autographed pictures of Sandow for all the women at the Wednesday and Saturday matinees.⁴⁷ As with other strongman acts of the time, Ziegfeld challenged the public to duplicate Sandow's performance. As a reward, Ziegfeld offered ten thousand dollars and the golden Championship of the World belt to anyone who could match Sandow.⁴⁸

With ticket sales ranging from fifteen cents to a dollar fifty, Ziegfeld was able to gross quite a large figure.⁴⁹ According to Richard E. and Paulette Ziegfeld, Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. "made nearly \$250,000 (about \$5 million today[1998])" on the tour.⁵⁰

No matter what Ziegfeld was saying or doing, the press was there to capture the moment and reprint it in their papers. Ziegfeld and Sandow were happy to be written about and fawned over by the press, as evidenced by the plethora of antics they specifically designed and catered for the journalists. These antics would range from excitement such as scandal, to reports of new acts in their program. At the turn of the century, Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.'s savvy for using the media to his advantage came to the fore. He had an ability to present what the public wanted: scandal, romance, and good old-fashioned entertainment.

The years between 1893 and 1896 were a testing ground of sorts for Ziegfeld. It was during this time that he sharpened many skills that would later be used to exploit and promote his most successful and famous venture, *The Ziegfeld Follies*. With few exceptions, all the antics, ploys, and manipulation Ziegfeld used to promote Eugen Sandow find parallels later in his career, as they had proved to be successful techniques.

One important parallel between Ziegfeld's time with Sandow and his later career was his use of costume. Ziegfeld sold Sandow through sex appeal in part by changing Sandow's costume to nothing but silk briefs, knowing that it would cause a sensation. It is here that the concept of "glorification" began to take shape. Later with the Follies, Ziegfeld sold his chorus girls in much the same way, rarely showing nudity—rather he presented something even more erotic.⁵¹ He knew how to present the human body so as to suggest and not to offend. It was with this knowledge of how to present "a pretty girl. . . that haunts you night and day" that Ziegfeld was able to create an empire.⁵²

Similarly, Ziegfeld began using gossip columns to his benefit when he planted rumors about Russell and Sandow. Four years later he would use the same columns to promote Anna Held, and even further in the future, to glorify his showgirls by encouraging rumors that all Follies girls married millionaires.⁵³

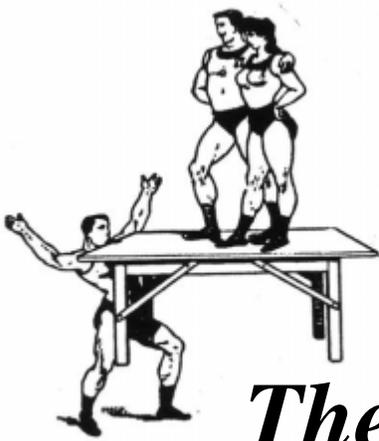
Finally, while in San Francisco with Sandow, Ziegfeld realized how much free press coverage could be gleaned from a single court case. For the remainder of his career he would be in and out of court, suing for copyright infringement, being sued for alimony and non-payment, and suing and being sued for a multitude of other reasons,⁵⁴ as with the famous case of the milkman and Anna Held's baths.⁵⁵

When Eugen Sandow came to America, he was relatively unknown on this side of the Atlantic; however, in large part because of Ziegfeld, Sandow became a household name, an endorser of several products, and, later in life, a successful author. He was also able to mount several solo American tours.⁵⁶ It is obvious that Ziegfeld, whether consciously or subconsciously, tested all of his techniques of glorification with Sandow as his "initial experiment." It is evident that nearly all of Ziegfeld's endeavors were successful in elevating Sandow from a mediocre act at the Casino Theatre in New York City to one of *the* icons of the nineteenth century.

Notes:

1. Patricia Ziegfeld, *The Ziegfelds' Girl: Confessions of an Abnormally Happy Childhood* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1946), 36.
2. David L. Chapman's *Sandow the Magnificent* is perhaps the most detailed book covering the period discussed here, however, it should be noted that the book is a biography of Sandow, and deals with Ziegfeld only as part of Sandow's life. Only two chapters discuss Sandow's relationship with Ziegfeld, viz., "New York and Chicago, 1893-94" and "The Tour of America, 1894-96." David L. Chapman, *Sandow the Magnificent: Eugen Sandow and the Beginnings of Bodybuilding* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). I am greatly indebted to David Chapman for his help with this paper.
3. Michael Lasser, "The Glorifier: Florenz Ziegfeld and the Creation of the American Showgirl," *The American Scholar* 63(Summer 1994): 445. Some historians contend that Ziegfeld was little more than a playboy and an exploiter of women.
4. Charles Higham, *Ziegfeld* (Chicago: Regnery, 1972), 10-12.
5. *Ibid.*, 12.
6. Chapman, *Sandow*, 49.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, 50. The Tomb d Hercules was a supporting feat rather than a true lift. It was very popular with stage athletes.
9. Highman, *Ziegfeld*, 12.
10. Marjorie Farnsworth, *The Ziegfeld Follies*, with an introduction by Billie Burke Ziegfeld (New York: Bonanza Books, 1956), 14. In the end, Sandow averaged three thousand dollars per week.
11. *Chicago Tribune*, 30 October 1889. Sandow is referred to as "Unknown" in the article until the final sentence.
12. *Ibid.*; Chapman, *Sandow*, 23-32.
13. P. Ziegfeld, *Confessions*, 35-36.
14. Farnsworth, *Follies*, 14
15. Chapman, *Sandow*, 60.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Higham, *Ziegfeld*, 13.
18. *Ibid.*, 14.
19. Farnsworth, *Follies*, 16.
20. John Burke, *Duet in Diamonds* (New York: Putnam, 1972), 86; see also, Chapman, *Sandow*, 61.
21. Roger Austen, "Flo Ziegfeld's Blond Bodybuilder," *California Library Magazine* 4 June 1978, 31.
22. Chapman, *Sandow*, 61.
23. *Ibid.*, 62.
24. James Laver, *Manners and Morals in the Age of Optimism, 1848-1914* (New York Harper and Row, 1966), 197.
25. Chapman, *Sandow*, 64-65.
26. Telephone interview with David L. Chapman, 16 November 1996.
27. Burke, *Duet*, 86. Burke points out that not only were the rumors untrue, but that Russell was not impressed with Sandow, saying, "She found the rather simple and naive German something less than overpowering as a personality." Chapman, too, questions the closeness of their friendship. Chapman, *Sandow*, 62.
28. Chapman, *Sandow*, 92.
29. Details of Sandow's California's appearances can be found in Chapter five of Chapman's *Sandow*, 70-99.
30. Austen, "Blond Bodybuilder," 31-33.
31. Chapman, *Sandow*, 91; *New York Times*, 9 August 1894.
32. Chapman, *Sandow*, 71.
33. *New York Dramatic Mirror* October 1894-May 1895.
34. *Philadelphia Press*, 7 October 1894.
35. *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), 6 October 1894; *Baltimore Sun*, 23 October 1894.
36. *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, 23 October 1894.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Baltimore Sun*, 23 October 1894.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Philadelphia Record*, 7 October 1894.
41. *Ibid.* Dr. Dudley Allen Sargent was at that time an Assistant Professor of Physical Training and the Director of the Hemenway Gymnasium at Harvard. Telephone interview with Curatorial Assistant at Harvard University Archives, 5 December 1996.
42. *Philadelphia Evening Item*, 7 October 1894.
43. *Baltimore American & Commercial Advertiser*, 23 Oct. 1894.
44. *Chicago Daily News*, 19 January 1895; *Philadelphia Sunday Item*, 17 February 1895.
45. *Philadelphia Record*, 17 February 1895; *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, 28 October 1894; *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), 6 October 1894; *Philadelphia Press*, 7 October 1894.
46. *Philadelphia Evening Item*, 7 October 1894.
47. *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, 17 March 1895.
48. *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, 28 October 1894.
49. *Chicago Times*, 20 January 1895.
50. Richard E. Ziegfeld and Paulette Ziegfeld, *The Ziegfeld Touch: The Life and Times of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.* With a foreword by Patricia Ziegfeld Stephenson (NY: H. N. Abrams, 1993), 28.
51. Lasser, "Glorifier," 445.
52. Irving Berlin, *A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody* (New York): Irving Berlin Music Company, 1946). This song was originally written and produced for The Ziegfeld Follies of 1919.
53. Lasser, "Glorifier," 447.
54. The court cases can be traced through the *New York Times Index*.
55. Ziegfeld had milk delivered every day to Held's hotel room; he informed the press that it was sent to the room so Held could bathe in it to keep her complexion young and soft. A few weeks later, as publicity began to fade, Ziegfeld had the milkman sue for non-payment; Ziegfeld counter-sued saying it was sour milk. Farnsworth, *Ziegfeld Follies*, 17.
56. Telephone interview with David L. Chapman, 16 November 1996. According to Chapman, Sandow was in the process of planning another tour of the U.S. when he died in 1925 in England.





Dr. Ken "Leo" Rosa

The Association of Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen 15th Annual Reunion/Dinner

Hollywood movie people have their Oscar ceremonies. There are the Grammy awards in music. Certain sports have their Most Valuable Player awards. For us in the physical culture world we have the wonderful annual Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen Association reunion where we honor OUR outstanding people. Mighty Atom biographer and TV producer Ed Spielman has said that the camaraderie he has seen at our reunions is unique. As much as most of us used to look forward to each issue of *Strength & Health*, *Iron Man*, *Your Physique*, and *Muscle Power* magazines inspiring us to our eagerly anticipated workouts in those thrilling days of yesteryear, we now look forward to the rekindling of the spirit at our annual gatherings in the hallowed Downtown Athletic Club of New York City. It's fitting that we should meet in the home of the Heisman Trophy.

Our Fifteenth annual reunion on 27 September 1997 was superb. This is an era in which there is an enormous interest in things nostalgic. We do it in music, movies, radio, television. There is a yearning for the "good old days." When I was a boy I had a keen interest in everything having to do with physical culture. I zealously read every word in each issue of *Strength & Health* magazine. I was so impatient for the next issue to appear on the newsstands that I explored the stores that sold used books in hopes of finding back issues. It was in the older back issues that I read about the king of the heavyweight class in weightlifting during his peak competitive years, Dave Mayor. To me Dave Mayor was another giant figure from the early Joe Louis, Jesse Owens legendary years. In 1937 Dave Mayor weighed about 265 and had 19 1/2 inch arms, which were possibly the largest

muscular arms in the world at the time. The pages of *Strength & Health* also contained accounts of the lifting accomplishments of super middleweight champion Frank Spellman during my adolescent years. Even though my interest was bodybuilding, I could not help being fascinated by the exploits of the lifters. Now, so many decades later, I was thrilled to see that two of the honorees were Dave Mayor and Frank Spellman. I also had the pleasure of sitting next to an amazing man, Bill Clark, who was the third honoree. Bill Clark has accomplished impressive lifts during over four decades during which he has contributed profoundly to the Iron Game.

There's always excitement as one enters the Harbor Room of the Downtown Athletic Club eagerly anticipating the renewal of old acquaintanceships and perhaps the establishment of new ones. Big Johnny Ogle was there. Bruce Wilhelm, of strongman fame, was also present. A fellow I refer to as Captain Marvel introduced me to a sensationally muscular young bodybuilder named Annie Riviccio. She is very impressive with a charming smile. Annie gladly struck a few impromptu poses which captured the admiring attention of the fortunate in close proximity. Perhaps at some future reunion she might consent to delight this appreciative physical culture audience with a posing exhibition.

Marvin, world's strongest youth of the 1950s, had conflicting schedules and was unable to attend this reunion. I also missed the presence of Jules Bacon, the 1943 Mr. America, Jules was not only a fine physique champion but he appreciated good music which makes him special to me. John Grimek was the inspiration of most of us. If there had never been a John Grimek there

possibly would never have been a Bill Pearl or a Reg Park or, consequently, an Arnold Schwarzenegger. Perhaps many of us would have gone in different directions if there had not been a John Grimek to have inspired us. For the first time John was absent. Dr. Jan Todd informed us that the absence was due to an injury and a hip operation.

Rosemary Murdock Miller is the daughter of the unforgettable first M.C. of the Oldtimers' reunions, Leo Murdock, who was an encyclopedia of Iron Game history. Rosemary phoned me a couple of weeks before this reunion and confided that she would like to do something which would honor her late father as well as Vic Boff. Rosemary decided to create the Leo Murdock "Carry On" award. Steve Sadicario, The Mighty Stefan, our present-day, extremely capable M.C. helped to keep Vic unsuspecting. When I took the microphone and informed everyone that the Leo Murdock award had been created there was spontaneous and respectful applause at the mention of Leo's name. Rosemary came to the dais and we presented the plaque to a surprised and very deserving Vic Boff. This turned out to be the night of surprises for Vic Boff as he was also presented with the AAU Emblem and Pin by Dave Mayor and with an Appreciation Plaque from the New England Team in support of All Around Lifting, by Frank Ciavattone.

The always articulate Arthur Drechsler paid well-deserved tribute to 1948 Olympic weightlifting gold medalist Frank Spellman. My friend Dr. Al Thomas is one of the most compelling speakers around. Al lauded the amazing lifting accomplishments of America's strongest weightlifter and national champion in 1937, Dave Mayor. Dr. Terry Todd revealed that Bill Clark is a major league baseball scout, a distinguished lifter particularly excelling in hip and thigh lifts, and a pioneering official in various forms of competitive lifting.

Vic Boff presented the Association's Highest Achievement Award to each of the honorees. Well-known artist Jim Sanders presented a beautiful color painting to each honoree depicting each in his Iron Game prime.

Showtime is a special part of our reunions. That's why our gatherings are unique and unduplicated anywhere. From beginning to end the audience was spellbound watching Frank Ciavattone one arm deadlift over 400 pounds. Next, the posing artistry of natural, muscular marvel Russ Testo was powerful and beautiful. Russ Testo's physique is pleasingly symmetrical. His posing

is always creative with just the right musical accompaniment

Then we were all once again blown away by Slim Farman, The Hammerman. One could run out of emotions in trying to describe The Hammerman's almost indescribable exhibition of raw power and incredible concentration. In fact, this is the strength performance during which there is literally no sound from the audience because everyone's attention is totally riveted to the performer. I have never seen anything like it Slim's sheer force of concentration is stunning. To me, his musculature is quite impressive. He's like what I think a real Tarzan might be like. I have seen Slim's performance many times and I am still thrilled every time. Rather than my attempting to do justice in describing what Slim does I will strongly urge anyone who has never seen his performance to correct that situation. No matter how far you have to travel it's well worth the trip. Slim Farman is the undisputed world's champion at what he does. This was a most rewarding Fifteenth reunion. As always, we're all grateful to Vic Boff for his superhuman efforts on behalf of The Association of Oldtime Barbell and Strongmen.

Thank you Vic.

