



IRON GAME HISTORY



THE JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

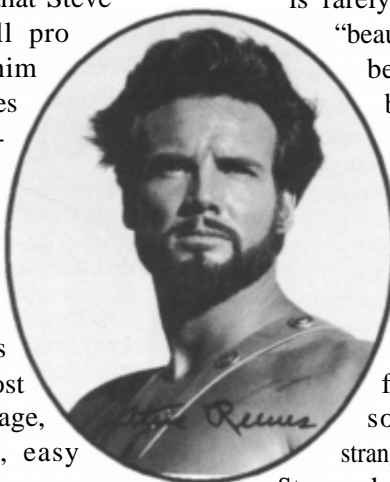
May/June 2000

Volume 6 Number 3

Steve Reeves—1925-2000

When we learned from mutual friends that Steve Reeves had died in a hospital in Escondido, California, we found it hard to believe. Hard to believe that a man who—as of August of 1999, when we spent a day with him on his horse ranch—was the quintessence of vigorous health had fallen ill and then died. Hard to believe he would even be in the hospital, except to visit a sick friend. What struck us on our trip to his ranch, just as it had every other time we saw him, was that Steve Reeves was a man blessed out of all proportion by nature. Everyone who ever saw him would argue that physically, Steve Reeves had what could only be called an embarrassment of riches. He was, indeed, a perfect man come to life. When we saw him last summer he told us that he weighed 215 pounds, and that his weight had stayed around that figure for some years. At 6'1" and dressed in the jeans and boots of the horseman that he most assuredly was, he still had the erect carriage, broad shoulders, and narrow-hipped, easy movement of a young athlete.

One thing that has always been interesting about Steve is that because his face and body were so refined, many people tended to think of him as not being a particularly large or big-boned man. But when a person would meet him and shake that wide, thick, work-hardened mitt any thoughts of Steve being a small man were laid quickly and completely to rest.



I first met Steve, other than in the pages of the muscle magazines, when I was a very young man. I was sitting in the cool, dark Paramount Theater in Austin, Texas, popcorn in my hand, waiting for a god to appear on the screen. In time he did appear, and he did not disappoint. It was classic type-casting—Steve Reeves playing Hercules. A god playing a god. For reasons too complicated to go into here, the word that fits Steve best is rarely used in the iron game. That word is “beautiful.” Steve was the essence of masculine beauty, and he retained much of this beauty until the end of his life.

When I came to know him in later years, I was pleased to learn that when nature blessed Steve so extravagantly the blessing was leavened with a healthy sense of humor. He knew how to make light of his true uniqueness. Armand Tanny, one of his old pals from the Muscle Beach days told me that sometimes, when there were a few strangers down at the beach crowded around Steve where he was seated, he'd pause, move one bare foot forward, look down at it as he turned it this way and that, and quietly observe to no one in particular, “See anything wrong with that foot? It looks more or less perfect to me. Great proportion, shapely toes, blends well into the ankle. Yep, a perfect foot.” He'd then lean back and stare out into the middle distance, waiting to see how long it would take for the strangers to realize he was jok-

ing. Apparently, sometimes they never did because, as a matter of fact, the foot *was* perfect.

A few years ago, Steve and his companion, Debra Englehorn, spent several days with us at the our library here at UT and looking at ranches outside Austin. Because we live on a ranch here in Texas, when we repaid the visit we were very interested to see his own place. Everywhere we looked there was ample evidence of the care and thought he had lavished on his beloved horses. From the handsome, customized stable to the paddocks; from the riding rings to the shining coats of his magnificent stallions; from the way he walked

among them, stroking one and speaking quietly to the next, I could see how appropriate it was that this most beautiful of men had surrounded himself with, and given much of his life to, the most beautiful of animals.

Just as we did with John Grimek, we will devote the next issue entirely to articles about the life and accomplishments of Steve Reeves. We invite anyone who has something to contribute—be it an article, a photo, a letter, or just an idea—to contact us soon so we can make the Reeves issue as complete and representative as possible.

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The Father of Athletics, Theodor Siebert (1866-1961): A Life Amongst Bodybuilding, Life Reform and Esoterica.

[Der Athletenvater, Theodor Siebert (1866-1961): Eine Biographie zwischen Körperkultur, Lebensreform und Esoterik (Gottingen: Norbert Klatt Verlag, 1999) ISBN: 3-928312-08-1]



Bernd Wedemeyer

Translation and Introduction by David Chapman

In November 1950 readers of Ray Van Cleef's column in *Strength & Health* magazine were asked to help out a deserving pioneer of the iron game. They were told that "an opportunity awaits some good Samaritan to relieve the plight of Prof. Theodor Siebert of Germany." This innovative trainer, who had played a decisive role in advancing progressive weight training, had fallen on bad days after World War II and was in dire need of clothing for both himself and his daughter. It had been twelve years since the ill-fated octogenarian had last obtained a pair of shoes, and now the situation was desperate. Siebert would "appreciate any gifts of discarded or unused articles of clothing suitable for either himself or his daughter." Unfortunately, this pathetic appeal went largely unheeded, and a little less than a year later an even more urgent notice appeared in the magazine; this time Van Cleef asked his readers to send food since the Professor was close to starving.

These sad notices constituted the first time many American sportsmen had ever heard of Theodor Siebert, the extraordinary man who had been an important innovator in the field of weight training and physical culture. This man who had founded the first training school for athletics and

physical culture in Germany and who had produced a number of important books on the subject of weight training was still alive and struggling to exist. He was among the first to create a systematized approach to weight training. Regardless of these accomplishments, Siebert was destined to live in misery until he died in April of 1961. The East German government was either unable or unwilling to alleviate his suffering despite many requests and petitions.

It was little wonder that Siebert was unfamiliar to the English-speaking world, since he had done most of his work in an obscure little village far from the world's sporting centers. Perhaps if he had moved away from his provincial backwater, he might have made a bigger impression on the athletic world. Instead, he was content to let the major players in the weight training and wrestling world come to him. Yet there were many who had sought out this enigmatic man in order to learn from his experience and his analytical mind. In his heyday, Siebert had counted such men as George Hackenschmidt, George Lurich, Herman Goerner, and the Saxon brothers among his pupils. But Siebert remained a humble man, and he never enjoyed much luck at cashing in on his method, so when the great athletes no longer chose to make

the journey to Alsleben-an-der-Saale, Siebert had neither the will nor the means to pursue them. In the end, he was reduced to selling books and writing the occasional article for crackpot religio-spiritualist magazines.

Another more significant reason for his obscurity was that Siebert decided to remain an instructor all his life rather than embarking on the other career path that most other muscular men of the time chose: performing on stage as a professional strongman. Theodor Siebert lacked the show business acumen that would have made him known to larger numbers of people; instead, he preferred the unremunerative work of improving the physiques and lifting techniques of others. As noble as it was, this decision kept him out of the public eye and also meant that he was not nearly as famous as other less deserving contemporaries. It did, however, allow him to devise his theories in peace.

Fortunately, Siebert's memory was kept alive by a few scholars and sportsmen, and it was to these that biographer Bernd Wedemeyer turned when he began to write his book. I am proud to say that I played a small part in resurrecting the Professor's memory since I was able to connect the author of this biography, Dr. Bernd Wedemeyer, with one of his most important sources. In 1995 I met an extraordinary man, former weightlifting champion Albert Delaitte of Sprimont, Belgium. In the course of our meeting, I learned that Delaitte had known and corresponded with Theodor Siebert until the great man's death in 1961. Almost alone among all the athletes of the West, Delaitte had continued to show some interest in Siebert and his predicament.

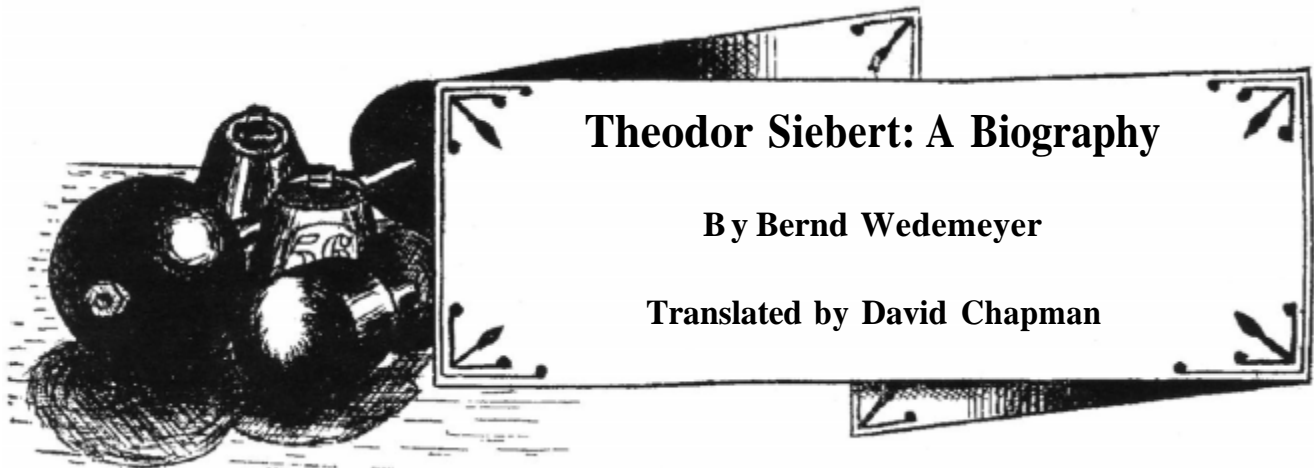
It was clear to the Belgian that Siebert was in dire straits. The Professor had written to Delaitte in 1953 that his pension was only 75 marks per month when 200-300 were necessary to live. If it were not for the food parcels that Delaitte and others sent him, Siebert would surely have died of starvation. Clearly, the appeals that were issuing from Ray Van Cleef

were not the only ones at this time. Finally in desperation, Siebert told his Belgian friend that he had an unpublished manuscript of a book that he had written on the lives and exploits of one hundred famous strongmen (many of whom Siebert had known personally). The book consisted of 140 type-written pages and 60 photographs, and he wanted to sell the manuscript and all future rights to it for 1,500 East German Marks, a ridiculously paltry sum even at that time. Delaitte attempted to broker the work to various publishers all over the world, but no one was interested. After his death, Siebert's daughter wrote to Delaitte saying that she had loaned the book to a student who was writing his thesis, and the work was never returned. There the trail ends. Neither Delaitte nor Wedemeyer was able to track down this priceless document. Like its author, the book was probably stuffed away in some forgotten corner and left to rot.

Fortunately, Albert Delaitte was able to send Siebert a few boxes of food and these helped keep body and soul together. After I met and understood how important Delaitte's link with Siebert was, I was able to connect him with Bernd Wedemeyer whom I knew was writing a book on the Germany pioneer. The rest, as they say, is history.

And what a history . . . The constraints of space have made it impossible to present here little more than a few tantalizing pages from Wedemeyer's excellent book. The author has revealed many hitherto unknown facts about Siebert, his techniques, and his times. As well as the German pioneer's work in muscle building and weightlifting, Wedemeyer has spent an appropriate amount of space exploring the other passion of Siebert's life, his credence in theosophy and the occult. Those who can read German are most heartily encouraged to read the entire book. It will be the standard work on Siebert for many years to come.

—David Chapman



Theodor Siebert: A Biography

By Bernd Wedemeyer

Translated by David Chapman

Adolf Eduard Theodor Friedrich Siebert was born on October 25, 1866 in Weißenfels on the River Saale and was baptized on November 16 in the Evangelical Church of St. Mary. His father was a tenant brewer and merchant named Christoph Gottlieb Siebert (died 1872). His mother's name was Amalie (née Weißhahn).

As was usual at this time, Christoph Siebert invited several godfathers to the baptism: Adolf Papian, a person of independent means from Merseburg, the landowner Eduard Weißhahn from Schaditz, the merchant Franz Arendt, and the homeowner Friedrich Siebert from Querfurt. And from these men Theodor got three of his first names. To judge from the professions and the familial relationships which they imply, the Sieberts were a relatively respectable and at the least an adequately prosperous family. Christoph Siebert was financially secure and had leased a brewery; a relative of his wife, perhaps her father, owned an estate.¹

The Siebert family moved relatively frequently: before they came to Weißenfels about 1865-66, they lived in Kreypau near Merseburg and in Wadendorf, the birthplace of Christoph Siebert's wife. Likewise, they remained in Weißenfels only a few years; soon after 1868 they had already left the place in order to return to Kreypau once more. However, Christoph Siebert died suddenly. According to his son, Theodor Siebert, his father's demise came about in the year 1872 "as a result

of a tragedy [involving] the collapse of a building." His mother apparently remarried after this, because Siebert mentions a stepfather.

Theodor was not Christoph and Amalie's only child. He had an older brother who, beginning around 1899, is reported to have lived in South America and in New Guinea, but as Theodor later reveals, he only had minimal contact with his sibling. A third Siebert child was born on March 18, 1868 but the infant died seven days after its birth.²

Hardly anything is known about Siebert's childhood. He himself wrote in 1898: "From my youth . . . I was frail and puny, and this did not aid in my great desire to learn how to develop my body effectively." In addition to twelve years in this condition, Siebert claimed that he also suffered from a "chronic catarrh of the upper lung" which handicapped him physically so much that at the age of 14 upon completion of his schooling in the year 1880, he weighed barely 41 kilograms (90 pounds).³ It should be noted, however that Siebert's remarks on his alleged physical disabilities during his childhood and youth are to be reviewed with caution; passages of this type appear in many autobiographies of later health reformers. These stories are usually mere stereotypes that are used as rhetorical devices in order to be able to present even more effectively the positive developments based on one's own self-designed health-restoration methods which occurred later.⁴

To judge from his statements, Siebert's school-days gave hints of what was to come, since he claims that his "unusual mania for reading" was formed primarily due to his "desire and love for physical exercises." In retrospect, Siebert lamented that because of the shortage of state trained gymnastics instructors and because of the extremely poor gymnastics instruction, he could pursue this passion no further. Thus, a few sporadic school gymnastics had to suffice for the time being.

In the year 1880 Siebert left the school and began an apprenticeship in commerce, but after one and a half years he switched to learning the trade of beer brewing on the advice of his stepfather. When he was eighteen, he took his "first trip to Berlin as a skilled worker." From 1885-86, he finally began his years of practical learning and traveling, when he went to Leipzig, Dresden and German-speaking Switzerland, and Pilsen. He wandered to Munich, Salzburg, Linz and all the way to Vienna. Siebert described the heavy work in the brewery as "bone crushing: sixteen-hour work days during the week with three one-hour breaks; Sundays only ten-hour days . . . for several weeks my bones trembled and I could not sleep."⁵

By 1886 Siebert was working in Vienna and Jedlersee as a brewer, and it was there that he had "his first impressions of strength sports" which were destined never to leave him. "We had many Bavarians there among the 130 brewers, and the best of them performed and showed off all kinds of strength stunts. . . . A fellow named Pongratz, who was only a moderate-sized man, hooked his middle finger into the wide leather work belts worn by two of the young men, and in this way he yanked them hither and yon. He pulled an empty beer wagon in the same way."⁶

These experiences give an authentic picture of the strongman scene as it was then: heavy athletics and feats of strength were especially popular about 1880-90 particularly among craftsmen, laborers and brewers, and it was precisely the brewing centers of Munich and Vienna that gradually became bastions of strength athletics.

Siebert's passport expired early in March of 1886 however, and since he would soon be inducted into the military anyway, he returned home. Impressed by his experiences in Jedlersee, Siebert assembled at home

his first set of barbells—which consisted of a wagon axle and two 50-pound-weights—and began weightlifting for the first time. His national service interrupted this activity, and in November 1887 Siebert was transferred to the 5th company of the 137th infantry regiment and was stationed in Strasbourg and in Alsace. His last year of military service ended in 1889-90.⁷

Siebert returned home after completion of his military duty. Shortly afterwards, as he later reported, "I got news of the loss of my father and his estate." His natural father had died in 1872, well before his stepfather. Thus in the year 1892, Siebert opened his own brewery and restaurant with the "profits from the paternal business," so with this enterprise he maintained the family tradition. The location of this first business is not known, although it had to have been in Kreypau or Merseburg.⁸

Up to this time, Siebert seems to have led a conventional life appropriate to his status. Siebert's eventual break with his solid, middle-class profession and his turn to writing, independent publishing and gymnasium ownership was quite unconventional for this time. Judging from his previous behavior, it would be difficult to foresee this switch although he had clearly broken away because of the unique events in his formerly conventional life. Siebert had begun to devote himself to theosophy and the occult. In the year 1898, he remarked in an informal note that he had become "aware in his 18th year . . . of the teachings of the vegetarians as well as spiritualism." Moreover, he declared in 1922 that as a young man he "had devoted nearly all his free time to the study of occult books." Siebert reported in a 1912 article in the occult magazine *Prana* that as a 21-year-old he had placed himself under the care of the hypnotist Albin Krause, who practiced as a medium in his hometown. In the year 1911, Siebert officially declared himself to be a theosophist.⁹ This now meant that as a lower-middle-class, small town resident, Siebert devoted himself to vegetarianism, spiritualism and theosophy, all of which in the early 1880's were still quite out of the ordinary.¹⁰

The first "Theosophical Society" was established in 1875 in America; starting in the late 1870's the first small groups had also formed in the German empire. It was not until 1884-1886 that the "Germania"

Theosophical Society came into existence in Elberfeld; Dr. Wilhelm Hübbe-Schleiden became its president. He then established the “German Theosophical Society” in Berlin in 1894. After a very short time however, the movement split and regional groups and individual lodges arose. For example, in 1897 the Society came under the control of Dr. Franz Hartmann (1838-1912) with the foundation in Munich of the *Internationalen Theosophischen Verbrüderung* (International Theosophical Brotherhood) or ITV, and this became an offshoot group from the original society. These so-called “Hartmannists” moved their headquarters to Leipzig in 1898 and then named themselves the “Theosophical Society of Germany.” From about 1900, the different lodges and branches which were connected in the European section tried to overcome their divisions and to establish a common German organization. In the course of this development, the formation of the “German section of the theosophical society” was begun in 1902; Dr. Rudolf Steiner became the Secretary-general.¹¹

It is unclear where Siebert aligned himself in these theosophical groups. If he had felt affiliated with the ITV, the headquarters in Leipzig would have been responsible for the city and district of Halle as well as Saxony. This information would have been held in the ITV’s “Central Theosophical Archives” but records no longer exist of this province, so it is impossible to make a statement about Siebert’s possible official membership.¹²

Around 1885, Siebert was also attracted to vegetarianism which was likewise absolutely unacceptable socially and was practiced by only a few people who functioned at the fringes of society.¹³ Thus the question arises, where and how was Siebert exposed to these various practices for the first time and how did he continue for as long as he did? Apart from some early encounters in his hometown, it seems likely that he experienced many such ideas starting about 1887 during his years of traveling in Berlin and Vienna. The answers to these questions are not insignificant in their implications, for despite the vagueness of his early, traditional values concerning his impressions of vegetarianism and spiritualism and the ways they are connected with physical culture, the reason for some of his later activities and theo-

ries are already discernable.

Sometime between 1892 and 1894—Siebert himself made contradictory statements—he once more began (and this time it was destined to last a long time) “to become active in strength sports and heavy athletics in a practical and theoretical way” and to become (as it was then termed) a “self-taught scholar.” Siebert wrote in 1926, that he met Josef Haupt (1865/66-1935), editor of the *Münchener Illustrierten Athletik-Zeitung* [*Munich Illustrated Athletic News*] in the year 1892. Haupt published his internationally renowned newspaper from 1891 to 1901; however, Siebert himself declared in 1936 (as well as in 1919) that he had written for a paper in the years 1892 and 1893. On the other hand, he had written in 1898, that it was only “through sheer coincidence that I became aware of the *Münchener Athleten-Zeitung* and of Mr. Haupt in the year 1894.” Siebert began writing for the athletic newspaper sometime between 1894 and 1895, so he certainly gained practical and theoretical experience for close to half a year prior the appearance of his early and profound articles. On the other hand, this gives evidence of his activities in his earliest years of strength training and shows the difference between his later years and his formative attempts. Possibly he wanted to illustrate his monopoly as well as his influence on the development of strength sports and thereby to make his contributions seem more than they actually were.¹⁴

Discussions about these minutiae are not mere “number crunching”; rather, they relate to the early development of weight training and its influences. The first club devoted to strength sports was established in 1879 in Hamburg and was called the “Wandsbecker Athletenklub.” In the 1880’s, a few more opened up, but not very many clubs were founded in the succeeding years. The first national organization for nonmilitary citizens, the *Deutscher Athleten-Verband* (DAV) [German Athletic Association], did not appear until 1891, the same year Haupt began his athletic newspaper in Munich.

These early attempts to build strength were still carried out in a relatively haphazard manner; they used primitive equipment and were conducted without knowledge of training methods or nutritional theories. On the basis of numerous empirical experiments on themselves,

athletes in the 1890's gradually began to develop their own training techniques. Siebert combined the earlier, empirically tested training observations done by himself and others together with scientifically sound anthropometric information from physiologists. With the appearance of his definitive work *The Catechism of Athletics* in 1898, Siebert published the first comprehensive technical training system based on practical experience. Because he started so early with his experiments, Siebert is therefore entitled to be considered a true pioneer.¹⁵

Virtually at the same time as his first inclusion in the *Illustrierten Athletik-Zeitung* and his acquaintance with Haupt (circa 1894), Siebert began to lift weights regularly once more: "In a lonely little village, cut off from all sporting life, I procured for myself two old 25 kg. (55 pound) weights and was glad when I could press the same, one in each hand; then after several months, I could go five or six times with both arms."¹⁶

Three significant events occurred for Siebert in the years 1893-95. On October 24, 1893—which was thus a day before his birthday—he married Alma Jenni Müller in Pleismar near Naumburg. Alma was born on October 8, 1865 in Werdau and would die on September 24, 1920 in Halle. It is not known how and under what circumstances Siebert met his wife, but in his occult autobiography in *Prana*, he wrote that around 1887 he had "seen my future bride [whom he would marry only six years later] in a hand-held mirror," during an "experiment with magical smoke." Their daughter Elsa Alma Helene Siebert—she was always called Else—came into the world on the January 4, 1895 and would remain his only child. She was also born in Pleismar near Naumburg.¹⁷

It is most remarkable however that in the year 1895 the Siebert family moved to Alsleben-on-the-Saale, a small town consisting of some two thousand inhabitants and which Siebert was not destined to leave until 1913. During this period, Siebert's most intense period of theoretical and practical activity related to weight training and *Lebensreform* undoubtedly declined.¹⁸ Returning to his first professional activity, Theodor Siebert purchased from A.T. Schieferdecker the brewery and bottling works in Alsleben which was located at number 2 Fischerstraße near the banks of the Saale. In 1891, the local newspaper in Alsleben, *Der*

Beobachter an der Saale (The Observer on the Saale) had called for the foundation of an athletic club, however it was only through Siebert's commitment that the "Gymnastics and Athletic Club of Alsleben-on-the-Saale" come into existence on November 5, 1896. It was located in "Siebert's Beer Hall." Siebert became its first chairman in 1897, and in 1898 he organized the first anniversary party of the young club.¹⁹ It was common at this time for weight-training clubs to be organized and run in beer halls or inns where both the meetings and the training could take place. Because of their strength, brewers were frequently among the best of the heavy lifters, anyway. There was sufficient room in restaurants for training. In addition, there was a great deal of wine and beer consumed, not only after, but also during training. Many club members retired to a tavern after their workouts, and there they fostered comradeship and good fellowship.

Under Siebert's management the gymnastics and athletics organization developed into a regional union which was quite successful, and to which large numbers of members belonged. In 1901 the weight training section of the club broke away and established an independent "strength sport club." Here, the disciplines typical of heavy training were pursued: weight-lifting, wrestling and feats of strength were all practiced. The athletes then demonstrated these activities at fairs or circuses. Thanks to these activities, Alsleben gradually developed into a regional center for professional wrestling; local wrestlers from Alsleben as well as nationally famous professionals also gathered there. Generally speaking, from approximately 1880 onward professional wrestling was one of the most constant, most lasting and most lucrative components of the entertainment industry, and thus found in Alsleben both assets and adherents.²⁰

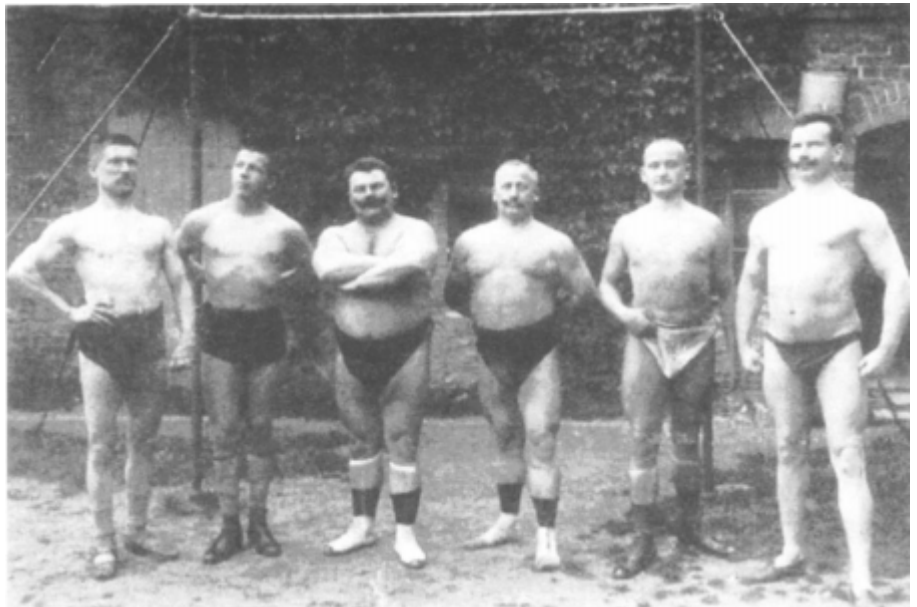
In 1910 the two Alsleben clubs split once more. A sporting club for working people broke away from the middle-class gymnastics club, and the heavy weight training club got lasting competition from the "Siegfried Workers Athletic Union." Siebert himself switched over to the workers athletic club "Siegfried," and he later became first chairperson of this organization in 1910, a fact which he reported in the minutes of the club's general meeting. Siebert remained connected to both mid-

dle-class sport as well as worker-sport in later years. He aligned himself continually on the side of his co-workers at the middle-class athletics magazines; however, he repeatedly wrote articles also for the other side which appeared in *Die Athletik*, the workers' athletic journal which was founded in 1921.²¹

In 1898 Siebert published his first book, *The Catechism of Athletics*, which became a standard work for the study of training in strength sports. In the same year, Siebert traveled to the sports exhibition in Vienna. Here he would meet two significant personalities which would change the rest of his life. The first was Dr. Vladislav von Krayevski, a physician and strength athlete from St. Petersburg (1841-1901) who owned and operated a famous private gymnasium in the Russian capital where he trained amateur weight lifters as well as professional wrestlers and circus strongmen. As a doctor, Krayevski was in a position to target and develop scientific training methods which were far superior to the self-taught attempts of many weight lifters of the time. His articles were also published by Joseph Haupt in his Munich sporting journal.

The other person that Siebert encountered was the Estonian professional wrestler, *Lebensreform* advocate and future esoteric writer George Hackenschmidt, with whom Siebert formed a lifelong friendship and with whom he would later develop training techniques, nutritional theories and *Lebensreform* methods. Thanks to his success in sport, Hackenschmidt became a millionaire. After completing his athletic career, he retired to London in the 1930's and from there authored several books on philosophy.²²

After the successful publication of Siebert's book, the number of sportsmen who appealed to him for advice about becoming strong increased; at this time, Siebert's book was the only sensible training instruction for strength athletes. He was also able to record his practical opinions on scientific training and *Lebensreform*;



Siebert, left, with five athletes at his training school.

soon however, Siebert's involvement in the Alsleben Athletic Organization no longer offered him a sufficient forum. So around the middle of the year 1901 he opened the "first training school for athletics and physical culture in Germany" at 2 Fischerstraße in Alsleben. This school was organized along commercial lines and in addition, patients could choose not only from full-care and training regimens, but exercise areas, sunbathing facilities, as well as lodging and meals were all available. Of course, such things as overnight lodgings and meals presented no problem to an innkeeper like Siebert. Thanks to this extensive array of training and rejuvenation, the school was consequently a typical—albeit early—example of a *Lebensreform* institution, at least as it was described again and again in theoretical writings at the turn of the century (but only rarely put into practice).²³

Virtually at the same time, Siebert initiated another enterprise, a "monthly magazine for physical culture and mental improvement" which he named *Siegfried*; however, it only lasted for two issues and ceased publication in 1902.²⁴

His publishing and literary ambitions automatically led Siebert to consider establishing his own publishing house. He had already started his magazine *Siegfried* in 1902 at his own expense and had it printed

by M. Schulze in Alsleben. In addition, he had announced officially that starting on March 4, 1904 he conducted a business in Alsleben selling sporting books and equipment in the office of his pub at 2 Fischerstraße. However, to judge from a report in the *Illustrierten Athletik-Sportzeitung*, he had already been selling self-published athletic postcards and books at least as early as 1902. Starting on November 15, 1910, the retail outlet of his bookstore was in a former bakery at 14 Fischerstraße. On June 1, 1904, Siebert finally established a publishing business which was listed under the name of “Theodor Siebert” in the directory of the German Book Dealers’ Association.²⁵ Thus, an extremely creative phase of literary activity began for Siebert during his time in Alsleben; besides numerous articles for various newspapers and magazines he also published such books and brochures as *Be strong!* (1905), *The Way to Strength*, (1906/07 and also 1910), *Strength-Sports* (1907), which was an enlarged edition of his *Catechism* as well as, *Under Which System Should I Train?* (1910).²⁶

However, after “a twelve-year sojourn,” as Siebert wrote in 1936, “unfortunately, in the autumn of 1913 I closed up my house and left Alsleben, the place that had become my second home.” Because of growing competition from other restaurants, he could no longer keep his beer-pub. The necessary auction occurred in 1913; his successor changed his bookstore into a summer-cafe with a garden.²⁷ Siebert left the city and moved to Bernburg for a short time. There, starting in December of 1913 he conducted a sort of physical culture correspondence school in which he offered to men, women and children “people’s courses,” but for professional athletes, he taught “individualized courses.” Apparently, it was also possible to take a class directly on the spot in Bernburg at his residence at 27 Market Street. However, Siebert remained only about half a year in the city, and he left in the early summer of 1914.²⁸

In 1914 Siebert moved to Halle where he remained until his death in the year 1961. At first his business was located at various transitory addresses: first he moved to Trothaerstraße 271 and then to Friedrichstraße 6—later August-Bebel-Platz 6—in a house that apparently belonged to the Sieberts them-

selves. His mail-order book and sports equipment business that between the years 1916 and 1923 had still been located in Viktor-Scheffel-Straße 4, were brought together in his ground floor apartment.²⁹ Theodor Siebert’s publishing house was established in Halle from June 4, 1914 under the name “E. Siebert”; Mrs. Alma Siebert née Müller is listed as the owner. The company name changed back to “Theodor Siebert” in 1920 after the death of his wife. Although the publishing business declined in the Thirties, Siebert still managed his bookstore up until the year 1952.³⁰

In the intervening time, Theodor Siebert indeed published more in his publishing house; from then on, however, he published his writings on strength sports with one exception outside the family business. *Should I Become a Professional Athlete or Wrestler?* was brought out in 1919 at “E. Siebert Publishers,” but his other works and brochures such as *Training Methods: Be Strong!* and *The New Strength Sports*, (both 1923) were published at Dr. Fritz Frommel’s athletic publishing house in Ludwigsburg. *The Healthy Body Movement* appeared in 1931; this was a book that Siebert wrote along with a doctor from Coburg, Dr. August Kühner, who (under the pseudonym of Henry Waldow) had written several manuals for healthy living.³¹ It appeared at the G.A. Publishing House in Dresden after an attempt to publish it with the renowned Eugen Diedrichs Verlag in Jena fell through.³²

Siebert produced only one book in his own publishing house: *Leaders of Practical Occultism*, which appeared in 1921. Although Siebert had earlier devoted much time to occult phenomena and had written about it in essays, he returned to this complex topic which, however, he dealt with just as skillfully as he did his other interests. Siebert also served as editor for two occult novels in addition to contributing two original introductions. Between 1919 and 1935, he published at Globus Publishers in Berlin, *The Secret of Hildburghausen*, by Albert Emil Brachvogel (1824-1878) and in 1925, he served as editor for the novel *Zanoni* by Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873). His bookstore specialized in sports, *Lebensreform* and self-improvement, but most of all in books on the occult.³³

At this point the question arises whether the reason for Siebert’s decisive turn to esoterica and occultism

was really a result of his failure to reach the goals in the area of strength sports (especially after 1945) which he envisaged for himself. Admittedly, he was gradually acknowledged as a leader in the profession (at least to a certain extent), yet this did not ultimately lead to financial security or even to an official position in the field of sports. In a 1936 interview in the *Halle Zeitung* Siebert referred to himself as, “an extremely unfortunate fellow”; his friends Karl Labbert and Edgar Müller (1898-1979) later remarked repeatedly that Siebert was regarded highly in the profession, but he had attained no material benefits from it.³⁴ So the self-educated Siebert increasingly retreated from active participation and concentrated more strongly after about 1920 on occult and esoteric fields.³⁵ This withdrawal from active reform to an isolated spirituality was typical of many contemporary reformers who retreated from disappointment over their lack of political success into esoteric introspection or self-absorbed philosophies. The former revolutionaries and Social reformers Georg von Langsdorff, Gustav Struve, Eduard Baltzer or Johannes Gutzzeit (1853-1935) may serve here as examples.³⁶

Siebert was the recipient of additional financial and personal difficulties after the takeover of the National Socialists. Klaus Schober reports that Else Siebert had told him in 1965 that during the Third Reich her father was denounced and forced to get rid of the books in his bookstore by “undesirable” authors, an occurrence that Else Siebert also mentions in her letters to Delaitte. Although Siebert described himself as “apolitical,” as Schober further reports, Siebert gave assistance to various opponents of the Nazis. Because of his beliefs he was denied an opportunity in 1935 to become an honorary official of Alsleben.³⁷

Even after 1945, Theodor Siebert continued to live in straitened circumstances. He was the sole support of his daughter Else, who was unmarried and still resided with him. Because of his advanced age, he also had to close his used book store in 1950, and in 1952 he gave up his book business entirely. After the closing, Siebert and his daughter survived on a small pension that covered only about one fourth of his living costs, and they lived on the revenues from Else Siebert’s dog breeding and from the rental of a room in their house. They were supported by old friends of the Sieberts like

Karl Labbert, who in the Fifties tried to persuade the East German Sports Authority to help Siebert financially because of his contributions in the past. Labbert’s involvement came to naught however. Theodor Siebert died while waiting for governmental assistance on April 12, 1961. He was blind and very weak physically. His daughter Else followed him on October 7, 1971.³⁸

Notes:

1. See the baptismal records of the Protestant parish church of St. Mary in Weißenfels, Jg. 1855, S. 285, Nr. 1.
2. See the admittedly occult-oriented but nevertheless essentially factual account of Siebert’s life in Th. S. Wirtimtal’s [i.e. Theodor Siebert], “Das zweite Gesicht: Merkwürdige Ereignisse aus meinem Leben.” In *Prana: Organ für angewandte Geheimwissenschaften*, 4 (3 Jg.) 1911/12, 137-139, 128; Theodor Siebert: “Dem Andenken August Bethmanns” in *Beobachter an der Saale* of November 7, 1906; See also the corresponding church registry from the parish of Weißenfels.
3. See Theodor Siebert, *Katechismus der Athletik*, Weißenfels 1898, 41; See also the autobiographical précis in Theodor Siebert, “Wie ich ‘Athletenvater’ wurde” in *Die Athletik: Illustrierte Monatsschrift für volkstümlichen Sport* 8 (2. Jg.) 1921/22, 63.
4. Compare, for instance, this statement by Eugen Sandow from *Kraft und wie man sie erlangt*, Berlin 1904, 112 ff. “So bleib ich bis zum 18ten Jahre zart.” Similar passages are in the work of the right-wing naturist writer Richard Ungewitter, *Die Eiweißtheorie*, Stuttgart, 1908, 210 (“ich als schwächlich veranlagter Knabe”), or as with the naturopath Adolf Just in *Die Heilerde*, Blankenburg 1919, 16, who claimed that he “äußerster Krankheitsnot, bei schweren Nervenleiden,” and that he found his salvation in cures from Mother Earth. Siebert’s unverifiable claims of sickness as a child were thus accepted uncritically by readers of similar works in the genre.
5. Theodor Siebert, “Wie ich ‘Athletenvater’ wurde”; A.A.F., Th. Sieberts’ sechzigster Geburtstag.; Th. S. Wirtimtal, “Das zwite Gesicht.”
6. Theodor Siebert, “Wie ich ‘Athletenvater’ wurde” (2nd installment) in *Die Athletik: Illustrierte Monatsschrift für volkstümlichen Sport* 9 (2. Jg.) 1921/22, 17; A.A.F., Th. Sieberts’ sechzigster Geburtstag.

7. See Theodor Siebert "Wie ich 'Athletenvater' wurde," (second installment); A.A.F., Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag, 74; Th. S. Wirtimtal, "Das Zweite Gesicht," 137ff; Theodore Siebert, *Katechismus*, 42; Ernst August Kampmann, *Aus der Geschichte des deutschen Kraftsports*, Kassel 1950, 58.
8. See A.A.F., "Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag," 74; Th.S. Wirtimtal, "Das zweite Gesicht," 137; Theodor Siebert, *Katechismus*, 42ff, v.G. [i.e. Adolf von Guretzki], "Theodor Siebert 88 Jahre," in *Athletik* 21 (7 Jg.) 1954, 16.
9. See Theodor Siebert, *Katechismus*, 42ff; Theodor Siebert, "Wie ich 'Athletenvater' wurde"; Th. S. Wirtimtal, "Das zweite Gesicht; Kürschners Deutscher Literatur-Kalender auf das Jahr 1911, Spalte 1999.
10. Compare to the general situation in the late nineteenth century in Helmut Möller and Ellic Howe, *Merlin Peregrinus: Vom Untergrund des Abendlandes*. Würzburg 1986., 11ff.
11. See Norbert Klan, *Theosophie und Anthroposophie*. Göttingen 1993, 61 ff.; Horst E. Miers, *Lexikon des Geheimwissens*, Munich, 1993, 617ff.
12. Information obtained through the kindness of Frank Reitemeyer, Theosophical Central Archives, Berlin (letter of November 17, 1998); see above all the more extensive 2.3.
13. See Hans Teuteberg, "Zur Sozialgeschichte des Vegetarismus" in *Vierteljahresschrift zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgechichte* 1, 1994, 33-63; Eva Barlösius, *Naturgemäße Lebensführung*. Frankfurt 1997.
14. See Theodor Siebert, "Meine Athletenschule in Alsleben an der Saale" in *Festbuch der Stadt Alsleben*, Alsleben, 1936, 59-60, 59; A.A.F., "Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag," 74; Theodor Siebert, *Katechismus*, 43; Theodor Siebert, *Wie werde ich Berufsathlet oder Ringer?* Halle, 1919, 3.
15. See the history of weightlifting as found for example in Hilmar Bürger/Klaus Weidt, *Kraftproben: Starke Männer einst und jetzt*, East Berlin, 1985; on the history of training techniques, see Bernd Wedemeyer, "Bodybuilding Training Systems: Historical Aspects" in Arnd Krüger/Angela Taja (eds.) *La Comune Eredità dello Sport in Europa*, Rome 1997, 130-133.
16. See Theodor Siebert, *Katechismus*, 43ff. The "lonely little village" might have been Bad Kösen near Naumburg; in July 1895 Siebert signed his series of articles "Körperliche Kraft und Ausdauer" with the name "Kösen."
17. See Th. S. Wirtimtal, "Das zweite Gesicht," 138; the death certificate for Alma Siebert (net Müller) dated September 24, 1920 and for Elsa Alma Helene Siebert dated October 7, 1971 (Registry office Halle, Saale) and the marriage certificate of Siebert and Alma Müller graciously supplied by the registry office in Bad Kösen on December 16, 1998.
18. The German *Lebensreform* or "Life Reform" Movement was a major social crusade that flourished in the early twentieth century. The movement attempted to get back to nature and the so-called genuine forces of life. Believers wanted to regenerate man and society through vegetarianism, anti-alcoholism, naturism, nature-healing, land-reform, and the advocacy of a more natural lifestyle in rural settlements. Cities were condemned as breeding grounds of immorality and moral sickness. Lebensreformers believed in the innate superiority of the countryside where people could indulge in fresh air, pure food, and wear clothing which contained little or no synthetic fibers—or better yet, no clothing whatsoever.
19. See Brigitte Haberland, *Chronik der Stadt Alsleben*, Alsleben 1997, 422-428 in addition to the club records in the *Illustrierte Deutsche Athleten-Zeitung*, 226 (vol. 6) 1897, 7, also 265, 268 (vol. 7) 1898, as well as 5 and 6; see also the annotated bibliography.
20. See Brigitte Haberland, *Chronik*, 422-428; on the history of professional wrestling, see Bernd Wedemeyer, "Jeder Griff erlaubt: Aspekte zur Geschichte des deutschen Berufsringkampfes und seiner Verbände" in *Sozial- und Zeitgeschichte des Sports* 3 (vol. 11) 1997, 7-28.
21. See Th. S. [i.e. Theodor Siebert], "Generalversammlung des Athletenclubs Siegfried" in *Illustrierte Sportzeitung* 8 (vol. 19) 1910, 188; also see the bibliography.
22. See Theodor Siebert, *Wie werde ich Berufsathlet*, 4; A.A.F. "Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag"; on Krayevski and Hackenschmidt see David Webster, *The Iron Game*, Irvine 1976, 48-54. A biography of the influential Hackenschmidt can be found in George Hackenschmidt, *Der Weg zur Kraft*, Leipzig, 1909; another work which contains biographical information is George Hackenschmidt *Entthronung des Hirns: Grundlagen für die Wiederherstellung der Einigkeit und des Friedens der Menschen und der Menschheit*, Leipzig 1932.
23. For further documentation, consult the chapter on Siebert's *Trainerschule* in the present work.
24. See *Siegfried: Monatsschrift für Körper- und Geistesveredelung* 1 and 2 (vol. 1) 1902. The issues date from

July 15 and August 15 of 1902; see also more below the section on Siebert's publishing house.

25. See the publication information in the journal *Siegfried*; also see the Alsleben city archives III/534/1892 (for this source I thank Brigitte Haberland, Alsleben). I got the information in the address books of the German Booksellers Association from Carola Staniek of the Deutschen Buch- und Schriftmuseum in Leipzig.

26. The publication dates of some brochures are uncertain since they were not available to the author. In addition, multiple editions probably existed according to all appearances, but this cannot now be confirmed. The publication date that appears in bibliographies was listed here in each case. The listings for Siebert in *Kürschners Literaturlexikon* were also listed; see above all the notations in the bibliography as well as the section about Siebert's publishing activity.

27. See Theodor Siebert, *Meine Athletenschule*, 60; Brigitte Haberland. "Athletenvater Theodor Siebert" (four-page unpublished, undated manuscript; copy in the author's possession). The history of the "Trainerschule" is dealt with extensively in chapter 3.1 of the present work.

28. See A.A.F., "Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag," as well as advertisements in the *Illustrierten Sportzeitung* for December 4, 1913, 49 (vol. 22) 1913, 1173, as well as in the 4-page prospectus, "Theodor Siebert, Schriftsteller und Lehrer für Körperkultur . . . Bernburg a. S., Markt 27" (from the collection of Albert Delaitte, copy in the author's possession); also see the bibliography in the appendix and especially the articles for the February and April issues of the magazine *Die Athletik* written by him and signed "Th. S., B" (the B stands for Bernburg).

29. See Brigitte Haberland, "Chronik"; A.A.F. "Th. Siebert's sechzigster Geburtstag."

30. The publishing and home addresses are found in Brigitte Haberland, "Athletenvater Theodor Siebert"; Halle city archives. *Adreßbuchbücher der Stadt Halle* (letter to the author dated November 8, 1997); Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum, Leipzig, *Adreßbuchbücher des Deutschen Buchhandels* (letter to the author dated November 4, 1998).

31. Neither Kühner's birth and death dates nor his dissertation were available.

32. Compare the bibliography to the one in the appendix as well as the section about his publishing activity. The vain

attempt to find accomodation at Diedrichs' is vividly depicted by Eugen Diederichs, *Der deutsche Buchhandel der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, Leipzig, 1927, 81; See also p. 182.

33. See more details in chapter 3.2 of the present book.

34. See the *Hallesche Zeitung* for October 26, 1936, 251; Karl Labbert, "Athletenvater Theodor Siebert zum Gruß" (undated manuscript, ca. 1957, in the Delaitte collection; copy in the author's possession); K.L. [i.e. Karl Labbert] "Die 'starken Männer' der Welt lernten bei ihm: Theodor Siebert zum 90. Geburtstag," in *Athletik*, 2 (vol. 10) 1957, 8; Edgar Müller, "Athletenvater Theodor Siebert mit 95 Jahren verstorben" in *Athletik* vol. 12713 814, 1961, 31.

35. It is no longer fashionable for sport historians to comment on Siebert's occult topics; see also the section on Siebert's publishing activity as well as the bibliography.

36. See Gunda Wegner on Georg von Langsdorff; Janos Frecot on Johann Friedrich Geist; and Diethart Kerbs on Fidus, 25 and 32 ff.

37. See Klaus Schober, *Die erste Trainerschule für Körperkultur in Deutschland*. (unpublished thesis, University of Halle, East Germany). Halle 1965, 61 ff.

38. See Klaus Schober, "Die erste Trainerschule," 61 ff; see Chapter 4 of the present volume for more information about the years after 1945.



The Jim Bradford Story

Artie Drechsler

Editors' Note: In 1999, Artie Drechsler was asked by President Vic Boff of the Oldetime Barbell and Strongman Association to introduce honoree Jim Bradford at the annual dinner. Everyone to whom we spoke agreed that Drechsler's speech was on of the best in the history of the Association. It captured a simpler, drug-free time when the iron game seemed somehow more pure, and also captured the character of a man who symbolized the essence of amateurism— big Jim Bradford

I want to begin by thanking Vic Boff and his entire organization for bringing us together once again. The significance of these gatherings is truly special for the honorees, but it is perhaps equally so for those of us who have what is often a once in a lifetime opportunity to meet our heroes and to show them our appreciation for their achievements.

Tonight I feel very fortunate that I have been asked to speak to all of you about a man who I believe was one of the greatest natural strongmen of our times, or any times, James Bradford.

Jim got into the Iron Game in a serious way at the age of 14, after purchasing a *Strength & Health* magazine with none other than the legendary John C. Grimek on its cover. His early training was done at a YMCA in the Washington DC area. He had been relocated to the Y after a dumbbell he was lifting in the second floor bedroom of his family's home fell from his bed onto he floor and sent plaster from the ceiling crashing down around his family.

This youngster managed to elevate 115 pounds in the press shortly after he began his training. After four more years of training and competing on a local level, he entered his first National event, the 1946 Jr. Nationals.

It was at this competition that he began to learn a little more about the lifting techniques weightlifters used in competitions (training himself, he had thus far relied on only the very crudest of techniques and pure strength to make his lifts). At that same event he also moved onto the "radar screens" of Bob Hoffman and John Terpak. They saw the potential of this young giant (Jim weighed 247 at the age of 14), a

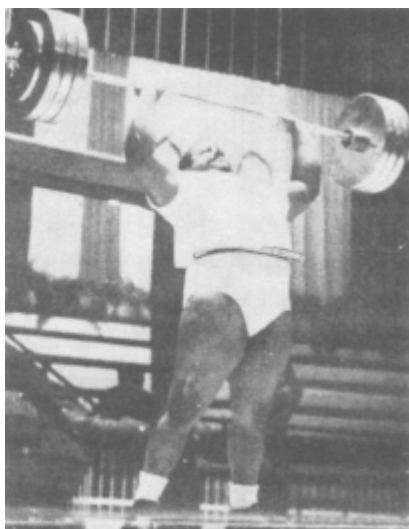
man who would provide such a great contributions to the victories of the US Weightlifting teams during the 1950's.

But success didn't come overnight to Jim. It wasn't until 1950, four years after his arrival on the National scene, that Jim finally won the Jr. Nationals. However, this event marked the beginning of a steady ascent to national and international success.

Jim placed third that same year at the Sr. National Championships, and, by 1951, he had not only moved up to second place at the Nationals, but he had earned himself a spot on the 1951 World Championship team.

During a career that spanned three decades, Jim won two US National Championships, earned a silver medal at four world championships and was a silver medalist at two Olympic Games (in 1952 and 1960). This is a fantastic medal winning spree by any standards, but by listing Jim's many official accomplishments we can only begin to appreciate the magnitude of his achievements. Why?

For one thing, much of Jim's great lifting was done with little or no training. For instance, he served his country in the Korean war from 1952 to 1954, coming out of the Army just before the 1954 World Championships. He had not been able to train during his tour of duty, yet when Bob Hoffman called upon him to replace the injured John Davis on the 1954 World Championship team, he jumped on a plane without hesitation and placed second, winning valuable points for the U.S. Similarly, during much of the next four years, Jim was able to lift only sporadically complet-



At the 1960 Olympics in Rome, Jim Bradford pressed 396 pounds with strict form.

ing his studies at legendary, rigorous Howard University. Yet he continued to win medals for the United States.

Consider another example of Jim's special accomplishments. Many lifters of Jim's day were employing the precursors of the very refined techniques that the Olympic lifters of today use. In contrast, Jim classifies himself as a throwback to the era of the old time strongmen and weightlifters, to a time when pure strength and power prevailed. This is because all of Jim's lifts were performed in a very high split style, in which he barely split his legs to catch the bar overhead in the snatch lift, or on the shoulders in the clean. And in the press, when other lifters were jerking their bodies, leaning way back and even bending their knees slightly to elevate great weights overhead. Jim executed his presses by merely setting his back in a slight incline and pushing the weight directly overhead. As Bob Hoffman often said, Jim Bradford came by his incredibly wide and muscular deltoids honestly.

So prodigious was Bradford's pressing power that many feel the 396 pound press he performed at the Rome Olympic Games in 1960 was the greatest demonstration of pressing strength in the history of the Olympics. Jim was surely the only lifter of his day who could challenge the immortal Paul Anderson in terms of pressing strength. [Ed note: And Doug Hepburn.]

In fact, the entire story of Jim's performance at the 1960 Olympics represents a dramatic depiction of the issues of strength versus technique and sportsmanship versus the effort to win at any cost.

By 1960, Jim had finished his formal education and was settled into a regular job that permitted him to train seriously for the Olympic Games. He was in the best shape of his life in Rome, ready to truly compete with Yuri Vlasov of the Soviet Union, a man who had just broken a number of Paul Anderson's world records.

Jim gained the lead on Vlasov during the press (or so everyone thought), and was ready to match the powerful Russian in the snatch. Then it would come down to whether Jim could hold the great Russian off in the clean and jerk (a lift in which Vlasov was clearly superior – in part due to his fine technique). But then something odd happened. The Russian delegation protested the disqualification of Vlasov's last press, which by most available accounts was improperly performed. The appeal was successful, and suddenly Jim's lead had evaporated.

Ultimately, Vlasov went on to win comfortably

what might have been one of the toughest competitions of his career. As Jim has said about this unfortunate event, the record books show the gold medal going to Vlasov, the silver going to Jim Bradford and the bronze medal going to Norbert Schemansky, but Yuri Vlasov knows what really happened that night, and so does Jim Bradford.

Somewhat embittered by his experience in Rome, but also ready to move on with his life, Jim won another Nationals in 1961 and then retired from the national and international scene. His education at Howard had prepared him well for his career, and he has devoted his life since retiring from lifting competition to research and learning, working for 52 years at the world famous U.S. Library of Congress, where he still serves as a librarian today. During those 52 years, Jim has earned the respect of so many of his fellow librarians that he was recently elected president of the local librarian's union.

Now that, in a very small nutshell, gives you some sense of the accomplishments of Jim Bradford's very rich career. But now I'd like to tell you the rest of the story....

In 1951, John Henry Davis stood at the lofty summit of the highest peak in the world of athletics. He reigned supreme, indeed uncontested, as the World's Strongest Man. He was undefeated in international competition since 1938 and there seemed to be no one who could challenge his dominance. But that same year, unbeknownst to many, John Davis had a major problem. He had been hampered in his training for the World Championships in Milan by a leg injury. So he began the competition in less than his normal superb condition. Yet so great was his margin of performance advantage over the rest of the world that no one on the American team was terribly troubled by the situation. John would win, as he had always done, since 1938.

But by the conclusion of the snatch lift everything had changed. Suddenly, John Davis was facing two of the most serious threats to his undefeated reign that he had ever confronted. One threat was in the form of an agonizing pain in his leg, which he had seriously reinjured during the snatch competition. The other threat came in the form of another competitor, who was performing better than had been expected, a competitor who was troubled by no physical pain of any kind, only the hunger that the young challenger feels when victory is imminent, when the momentum of youth is about to

overtake the status quo.

Davis lay in pain in the locker room while the American team physician and trainer worked feverishly over him to see if the leg could be revived. They were able to mitigate the pain somewhat, but they could not mitigate the truth—that John Davis was injured and, while he might be able to continue, it was a virtual impossibility that he could perform at the level needed to retain his world championship crown. Even the lion-hearted John Davis knew his undefeated string was very likely over. The king was dead. Or was he?

Standing in the same locker room was another American lifter, a man much lesser known than the great John Davis. It was in fact a man who had never set foot on a World Championship platform before this very evening. Yet, amazingly, despite his youth and relative inexperience, this man found himself with weightlifting history about to fall into his powerful hands. That youth was James Bradford.

Jim stood in second place after the snatch competition in Milan. He was right behind Davis and no one else was in sight. Had John been at his best, Jim would not have been ready for him on that day. But John was not at his best and Jim was at his, so the reality was that Jim appeared to be more than equal to the task of removing the king from his throne. It would be an incredible upset!

As the clean and jerk competition began, the arena was charged with the electricity that is generated only when an audience senses that it is about to witness history. Bradford made his first clean and jerk, and Davis did the same, but Davis was in terrible pain by the time he had finished his lift. Bradford answered with an easy second attempt clean and jerk that tied Davis, who as lighter man would have continued to lead. But Davis would not win in this way, so he took just enough weight on his second attempt to go into the lead over Bradford. Only John Davis knew what it cost him to make that lift.

As John struggled from the stage after his courageous lift, valiantly suppressing his pain, Jim still had one more clean and jerk and he was looking strong. As Bradford readied himself for this challenge, his mind was consumed by the kinds of thoughts and feelings that one would expect a young man in such a position to have.

A gold medal and the glory of winning a World Championship were within his grasp. He felt the once in a lifetime energy and excitement that one feels only when standing on the threshold of achieving a lifelong

goal. But then Jim looked at his friend and team mate John Davis. As Bradford studied this great champion, he realized that if he made his last lift, Davis would take still another clean and jerk attempt. Given the serious nature of Davis' injury, such an attempt, successful or not, might well have been enough to end John's career.

It was at that moment, in the fury, the drama and the finality of international competition, that the young Jim Bradford made up his mind about what he would do. He was the only man who could defeat John Davis, and, at the same time, he was the only man who could save Davis from a possible catastrophe. And Jim Bradford decided to do the latter. Shocking the world, in what has been heralded as one of the greatest acts of sportsmanship in the history of athletics, he declined his last lift. He gave up his chance to beat the great John Davis.

Yes, Jim wanted to beat John Davis. Yes, he wanted to be recognized as the Worlds Strongest Man. Yes, he wanted it more than anything he had ever wanted in his young life. But he would not do it this way. If he was to beat John Davis, Jim had decided, he would do it when John was at his best. So a great drama had ended with an even more dramatic gesture of respect for a great champion and for Jim's ideals of athletic competition.

History tells us that John Davis went on to win still another World title that day and to continue his unbeaten string. Perhaps as importantly, he recovered from his injury. In fact, he trained himself into the best shape of his career by the 1952 Olympics, where he won his second successive gold medal and his 8th consecutive world championship, establishing a victory string that has never been broken by any athlete in the history of weightlifting, and one that stands in little jeopardy from anyone competing in the sport even today.

Indeed today, weightlifting fans the world over know the story of John Davis' victory string, much as baseball fans know of Joe DiMaggio's 56 game hitting streak, as well they should. But now all of *you* know...the rest of story.

And while the world will long remember John Davis' achievement, relatively few know of, or remember, Jim Bradford's profound contribution to that achievement, a contribution that was quietly and respectfully made so many years ago, on a beautiful fall evening in city of Milan. But I thought that tonight would be a very fitting time to remember Jim's contribution. And, most importantly, to remember that the great strength of Jim Bradford's body is surpassed only by the great strength of his character.

THE VOYAGE OF A LIFETIME

Ben Weider, C.M., Ph.D.

Editors' note: As most readers know, Ben Weider is the longtime President of the International Federation of Bodybuilders, the largest bodybuilding federation in the world. Several years after the end of the Second World War, Weider visited Cairo, in Egypt. In the following article, he recounts that trip for *IGH* readers. As the article reveals, the trip had a profound impact on Ben. It also gave him an early taste of the very extensive travel he would undertake throughout the remaining fifty-three years of the twentieth century, as he crisscrossed the globe in an effort to make bodybuilders and the IFBB major players in the field of international sport.

I remember it like it was yesterday. The voyage to the land of enchantment. Cairo, Egypt. The year was 1947. The Second World War was over and I had just been honorably discharged from the Canadian Army. I had finished serving my country and life was full of only promise and possibilities.

One of those possibilities was the founding of something my brother Joe and I would call the International Federation of Bodybuilders. Yes, that was almost 54 years ago and how quickly time has passed.

During those formative years, the only countries that the IFBB could say were members were the United States and Canada. Like any new venture, it was a humble beginning, yet from day one, we believed in the message of bodybuilding and its power to change lives. Even from the start, something inside tugged at us to take the message to more countries and more people. We decided that the plan would be for me to travel to England, France, and South Africa to make them the

next members of the IFBB.

About this time, circa 1946, I became friends and pen pals with the Egyptian World heavyweight Champion, El Saied Nossier. Nossier, who lived in Cairo at the time, was hailed throughout Egypt as a hero. Ultimately, Nossier became Egypt's Minister of Sport and a trusted advisor to Egypt's King Farouk.

In one of my letters to El Saied Nossier, I told him that I was planning a brief visit to Cairo during a stopover on the way to Capetown, South Africa. He rushed his reply to me with the insistence that I spend several days in Cairo as his guest. How could a 23-year old young man refuse such an offer? "Of course, I'll accept!" was the message I sent back to him.

As a young boy, I was always amazed at the land of Egypt, its history and the pyramids, one of the sever wonders of the world. My dream was to someday go there and see with my own eyes the magnificence of this great land and its people. That day was about to come.

On the day of my arrival, the plane finally landed and what waited before me was my first taste of what it meant to be treated like a "VII?" More importantly, I was about to find out what the meaning of friendship truly was.

As the TWA Constellation taxied to a stop, even before the steps could be secured against the door of the aircraft, there, waiting on the tarmac, was none other than El Saied Nossier and a group of officials to greet me. As I stepped out of the plane, the hand of a muscular 6', 240 pound giant reached out to clasp mine. This massive man with such a huge frame was adorned by the traditional Turkish red "tarbush" worn by millions of Egyptians. Yes, I do remember that powerful grip, but

remember even more the soft, gentle smile that said, "Welcome, my friend."

As we walked off the tarmac, we entered the immigration section in the airport, which was filled with what must have been over two hundred people ahead of us, waiting to be cleared. I looked at Nossier and whispered, "It looks like we're going to be here for hours." Nossier looked at me and with his characteristic smile said, "Just follow me." I did. As we walked past the crowd of hundreds of people, we went through a special area and as we did, guards and immigration officials saluted us and would only stop us for 10 seconds before they whisked us by everyone who was still waiting. You can only imagine the looks and stares we got. The plan was that we could be taken by limousine to the Sheppard's Hotel in downtown Cairo--one of the most famous hotels in all the Middle East.

Upon arrival, Nossier told me to rest up because I would be needing it for the party he had planned later that same evening. Upon entering my beautiful suite, I had to pause for a moment and let it all soak in. Here I was, fresh out of the Army, just arrived in Egypt to a place I had always dreamed of going and I was being treated like royalty. For this 23-year old, life didn't get much better.

In 1947, Cairo was a very cosmopolitan city that included over 300,000 Greeks, 200,000 Jews, and 100,000 French and Italians. Even to this day, as I close my eyes, I so vividly remember the sights, the sounds, and the incredible aromas that filled the air.

That night, El Saied Nossier threw one fantastic party. Among the many guests were Egypt's most famous strongmen. Powerful weightlifters and world record holders like El Fayad, Khadr El Touni, and so many others whose faces I recall so clearly. It was a marvelous evening of "brotherhood," friendship, Egyptian music, and dance.

The next day, Nossier made certain that we ate at Cairo's most popular restaurant, Groppi's. Now, Groppi's was only a ten minute walk from the hotel, but it took an hour for us to get there. Seems that Nossier could only take a few steps before another group of people would want to talk to him. After watching this encounter, I became convinced that next to King Farouk, El Saied Nossier was Egypt's most popular person.

During our lunch and subsequent conversations,

I recall having numerous discussions about a wide variety of topics. During one of our talks, Nossier asked me a rather pointed question, "How do you feel about Bob Hoffman." At that time, Hoffman was President of the York Barbell Company and a very powerful figure in the International Weightlifting Federation. Hoffman had a reputation for developing magnificent weightlifters in the USA and was highly respected.

In any case, I told Nossier the truth, I told him that although I admired Hoffman for the work he was doing to promote weightlifting in America and for developing champion weightlifters, I could not condone nor appreciate how I felt he was exploiting bodybuilders just so he could attract more people to his weightlifting competitions.

The fact was, in those days weightlifting competitions attracted less people than bodybuilding competitions. However, in order to keep people at the weightlifting shows, Hoffman would purposely schedule the bodybuilding contests *after* the weightlifting. Many times, the bodybuilding competitions wouldn't start until after midnight and would go until two, three, or four o'clock in the morning! This wasn't right and I told Nossier just how I felt.

I was amazed at his reaction. Up to that point, Nossier had been extremely kind, forgiving, understanding, and compassionate to not only myself, but to anyone he met. But when the Hoffman subject was brought up, he turned to me and said, "I believe that he is the one who caused problems for the International Weightlifting Federation and I have cut all of my contacts with him."

I was quite surprised. Not so much at another negative story about Bob Hoffman, for it was no secret that we were having our own problems with him, but I didn't want to speak negatively about this since these were our own, private matters. Apparently, Nossier had had his own fair share of "experiences" with Hoffman.

Of course, taking in all the sights of Egypt was high on my wish list, but so was the iron game. While in Egypt, I wanted to know more about how the great champions trained and I asked Nossier about the techniques he used to produce so many world champions. He gave me two.

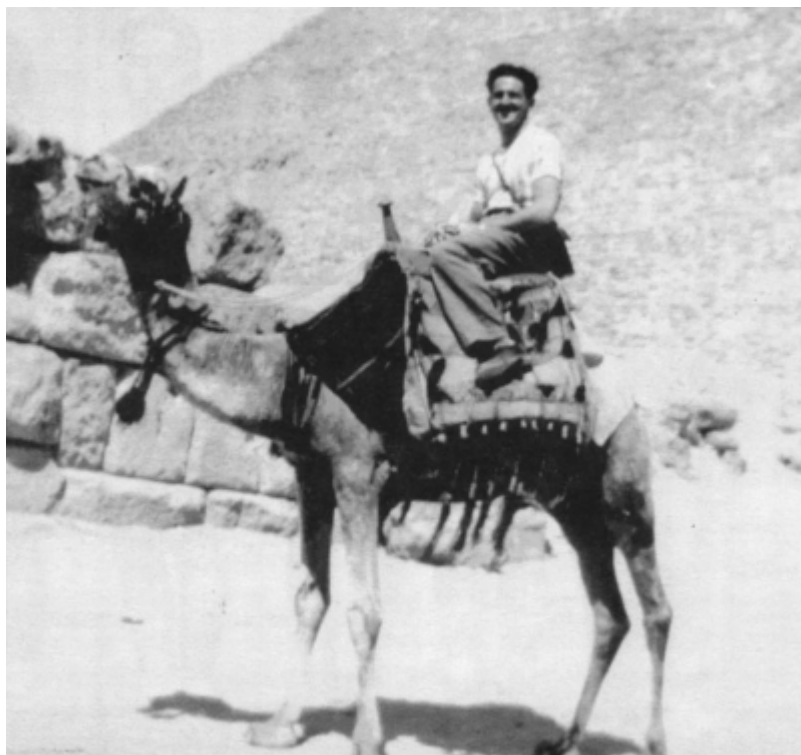
1) The first one taught each athlete bodybuilding principles, some of which had come from the pages of my brother Joe's *Your Physique*. Nossier felt that after each

athlete built his muscle size and strength through bodybuilding, he could then specialize on all the various techniques of weightlifting.

2) Nossier also described to me a new method of weightlifting he developed which he called the “Camel Method.” He explained that a camel, when seated, is usually on its knees. In this position, the heaviest loads could be placed on him and once loaded, the camel would stand by using a certain body position. First, the camel’s back legs would straighten up and when its back was completely up, it would then straighten out its front legs, thereby allowing a heavy load to be lifted and carried. By observing the camel, El Saied Nossier got the idea that to “snatch” or “clean” a weight to the shoulder, the best way to do it was to bend down completely to the lowest level, like the camel, then as he lifts the weight upward, he lunges forward with one foot and thereby continues the movement of lifting the weight up and overhead in one complete uninterrupted motion. He would then stand up, again, like the camel, and control the weight in place over his head. Nossier found so much success using this system that he also applied it to cleaning the weight to the shoulders for the military press with equally good results.

After hearing about his discovery, I asked Nossier to write a series of training articles fully detailing his “camel training” methods. The articles were well-received, and used by many coaches and lifters throughout the world.

My time in Egypt was passing quickly and with only a few days left, Nossier planned a trip to the pyramids and the Sphinx. The pyramids were unlike anything I had ever imagined. My immediate reaction upon arriving was to touch them and, of all things, climb them! I chose a pyramid called “Cheops” and decided that I’d make it to the very top. The pyramids were made up of huge blocks, approximately three feet high by three feet wide and weighing many thousands of pounds. The Cheops pyramid reached 450 feet into the air; and at the top was a large area where you could sit,



Twenty-three year old Ben Weider gets a lift at the pyramids in 1947.

Photo courtesy Ben Weider

relax, and soak in the sights and sounds of the city of Cairo and the surrounding desert below.

If you have never climbed a pyramid, there are two things to keep in mind: climb carefully and make sure you have enough energy and power to do it. Even for a healthy 23-year old, it wasn’t as easy as it first looked. Once I reached the top, I found an area where the tradition was to carve your name or initials, so I wrote in small letters, “Ben Weider, March 15, 1947.” When I next return to Egypt, I may have to climb Cheops once more to see if what I inscribed in stone is still there. I believe I can still do it.

One of the things that greatly impressed me, then and now, was the positive attitude and energy of the Egyptian weightlifters. Even though they had the most primitive of equipment—even by the standards of the late Forties—they trained and worked hard to produce outstanding results.

Among the other points of interest during my visit was a championship fencing match between Italy and Egypt, which was held at the Palace of King Farouk



El Saied Nossier (left) stands alongside some of Egypt's greatest weightlifters: Khadr El Touni, the 1936 Olympic champion, Ibrahim Shams, world record holder as a lightweight, El Fayad, Egyptian featherweight champion, and El Mahgoub.

and his wife, Fawzia. To say I had a magnificent evening would be an understatement, as I had the opportunity to speak with the King.

I also visited Misir Film Studios, where I was introduced to many famous Egyptian movie stars and singers as well. Just like Hollywood, these stars created huge crowds wherever they went, and the people loved them.

My last night in Cairo was a night dreams are made of. El Saied Nossier surprised me by holding a party under a large tent at the base of the pyramids. Not wanting to seem ungrateful, I told him that as much as I'd love to attend this gala, I didn't think it would be possible since my flight to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was leaving sharply at 10:00 PM. Nossier just looked at me with that characteristic smile and said, "Don't worry my friend. I have everything worked out."

So I went. Festivities got underway about 7:00 PM and after a delicious feast and enjoyable show, the time quickly became 9:00 PM and with that, I told Nossier that I had to leave or else I wouldn't catch my flight. Again, his words were, "Don't worry, take it

easy, relax and enjoy yourself and I'll get you to the airport on time." In what seemed like only ten minutes, I looked at my watch and it was 10:30 PM. Too late. I had missed my flight. Nossier saw my frustration, but made no mention of it as he chuckled and kept reassuring me that I would still catch my flight . . . even as we left for the airport at 11:15 PM!

Little did I know that I was in for still more surprises. As we arrived at the airport, we bypassed not only customs, but immigration. But that was only the beginning. El Saied Nossier drove onto the airport runway and stopped the car to let me out at the steps of the plane! He said that he found out earlier that the plane had an engine problem and that's why it hadn't yet departed.

As I walked into the plane and looked ahead of me, I saw that everyone was looking at me. As I took my seat, I heard two people behind me say, "Who is this man that they held this plane up for almost two hours?" It was then that I realized that El Saied Nossier had instructed the pilot and crew that the plane could not leave unless I was on board. Talk about having friends in high places.

As the plane took off into the night sky, I sat back and just tried to let it all soak in with all the wonderful experiences I had. One night wasn't enough. For it's taken my whole life to reflect back and think about just how meaningful my first trip to Egypt was, and the wonderful friends I made and all the people I met. Even today, Egypt remains one of my favorite destinations.

Egypt has come a long way since my first visit in 1947. Today, thanks to the hard work and commitment of Egyptian Bodybuilding Federation President, Dr. Eng. Adel Fahim Sayed, Egyptian bodybuilders are winning more medals than Egyptian athletes from years past. In the fine tradition set forth by El Saied Nossier, Dr. Sayed and Egyptian athletes continue, like their country, to be one of the great wonders of the world.



THE LAST GREAT BASH OF THE CENTURY

Dr. Ken "Leo" Rosa

Even though the century didn't really end until December 31 in the year 2000, the change to that big round number has certainly captured the public's imagination. On Saturday, 23 October 1999 the Association of Oldtime Barbell & Strongmen held its seventeenth annual reunion in New York City's famous Downtown Athletic Club. Vic Boff called it the Last Great Bash of the Century. I found it to be a most memorable evening of reflections. Experiences are what memories are made of and we gather every fall in the home of the Heisman Trophy searching for our youthful innocence, enthusiasm and a little bit of the long ago boundless vigor. It was a joy to be reunited with so many Iron Game buddies. Pete Marozas is a good friend with a wonderful zest for life. The richness of his young years at the York Barbell Company during its zenith, his worldwide travels and his current training all make for fascinating conversation. Al Thomas was looking like Captain Marvel, as usual. George Schumacher recalled the great workouts he used to have almost fifty years ago with future Mr. Puerto Rico, Roberto Santana, in Abe Goldberg's famous New York gym. Decades ago we used to read about Roy Hilligenn in the pages of *Strength & Health* and now here he was appearing quite fit and youthful at age seventy-six.

Recently I was looking through a training diary I kept when I first started working out in the Bronx Union YMCA under the guidance of Charlie Smith. Around that time I was a faithful reader of *Strength & Health*. Weren't we all? Those wonderful pages were always filled with the amazing exploits of our heroes. We wanted to grow up to be super men like Grimek, Stanko, and Bacon. Melvin Wells appeared on the cover of *Strength & Health*. Bob Hoffman commented that Wells looked so impressive that all he had to do was just

stand there to win any contest. I dreamed of becoming like that. We wanted to be a forever unbeatable weightlifting champion like John Davis. We read about the astonishing weightlifting accomplishments of Jim Bradford. Back then who was even thinking about the end of the twentieth century? Maybe those of us who read Buck Rogers. We were too engrossed in visions of how we would look after a year of hard training just in time to be sensational on the beach. Whether or not we had ever thought about it 50 years before, here we were now at the end of the twentieth century.

After a pleasant dinner and a lot of good fellowship it was time to pay tribute to our special people of the evening. In memory of Beatrice and Leo Murdock, Rosemary Miller made a distinguished presentation to the women who are the guiding light and strength of the Iron Game. Our first guest of honor was Harry Johnson who was the 1959 Mr. America. Joe Manion reminded me that I had actually entered that contest. It was true. I had trained for it with the sensational Arthur Harris. I had gotten myself into formidable shape but I became so disgusted with what I viewed as the inappropriate A.A.U. special requirements motivated by the blazing Hoffman/Weider feud I decided not to participate. So I didn't go. MC Steve Sadicario, The Mighty Stefan, introduced Fred Yale who spoke about the career highlights of Harry Johnson. Harry's background is indeed impressive. He was a high school middleweight champion boxer in Georgia before he was a bodybuilder. He was offered football scholarships to Notre Dame, Georgia, Georgia Tech, and South Carolina. Harry went into the armed service in 1943 and when he was discharged a couple of years later he was introduced to bodybuilding by his friend Harry Smith. In 1947 Harry Johnson was inspired by seeing John Grimek. After seeing Grimek, Harry trained harder, practiced his posing and won the "Mr. Atlanta" contest. In 1949, he placed third in the Jr. Mr. America. In 1950, he won "Mr. Georgia" followed in 1951 by "Mr. South." Harry was also a competing weightlifter; in 1952 he was named "Best Developed Weightlifter." In 1953 Harry again won "Mr. South" as well as "Mr. Southern U.S.A.." In 1954 he became "Junior Mr. America." In 1956 Harry was named Virginia Beach "Mr. Universe" in the short man's class. The most coveted title anywhere was still "Mr. America" and in 1959 it was awarded to the thirty-six year old Harry Johnson who was in the best shape of

his life. After an enthusiastic ovation Harry Johnson took the microphone and introduced his beautiful family. I had never seen the 1959 Mr. America before and I was most impressed by the fact that he is a really great family man which is more important than any physique title.

From where I sat at the dais I noticed the love of my life, the piano, to my left a few feet away. As in well-rehearsed plays, actors await cues but the cue I was waiting for was not forthcoming. More on that later.

Harry Johnson was awarded his Hall of Fame plaque by Vic Boff and the magnificent color painting of himself as Mr. America was presented by famed artist Jim Sanders.

Many of us had grown up reading about Jim Bradford in the pages of *Strength & Health* but had never actually seen him in person. Now there he was seated at the dais. A legend comes to life. The ever interesting Arthur Drechsler spoke to us about the achievements of gentleman Jim Bradford. [Ed note: Drechsler's comments can be read on page 15.] After

Drechsler's remarks, the very unassuming Jim Bradford took the microphone and after he told us, "I just lifted what Terpak asked me to lift," he accepted his plaque of honor from Vic Boff and a beautiful Jim Sanders painting. Another deserved ovation followed. And now it was showtime.

In this era of steroid monsters, natural bodybuilder Ross Testo's creative posing shows are always entertaining and well received. Russ has a pleasing physique that is a welcome change from some of the chemically produced grotesqueness so prevalent in contests today. Russ Testo is a believer in things that are of a far more permanent duration than are a person's very temporary youthful physical attributes. He conveys this in one of his routines. I thought his encore exhibition and music were particularly powerful. Russ Testo has entertained audiences all over the world. For fans of the symmetrical, muscular, natural physique displayed in a skillful, aesthetically pleasing manner with appropriate music, Russ Testo is the person to see.

Now it was time for Steve Jeck. I had read a lot

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about Steve in *Milo*. I also had Steve's book, written with Peter Martin, *Of Stones and Strength*, which had influenced me to include some stone lifting in my own training. Steve Jeck was born in New Jersey in 1964. He was outstanding in baseball, football and wrestling. He then moved south where he became the Florida State Champion in both the discus throw and the shot put. He won a track scholarship to Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. There he won the Southern Conference Championships in hammer throw and shot put, both indoor and outdoor. Steve competed as an amateur in the Scottish Highland Games where he was a two-time East Coast Champion. He became a professional in 1992 and has since had victories in Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Indiana. He has visited Scotland twice where he sought out and lifted many of the ancient testing stones. It was unusual to see huge and obviously very heavy stones on the show platform in New York City's Downtown Athletic Club. Steve Jeck was attired in a white short sleeved polo shirt and full length gym pants. He is big and clearly an immensely powerful man. His forearms are as big as the upper arms of some bodybuilders. His torso is wide enough for two average sized men to hide behind and thick enough to rival Gargantua. And it's all symmetrical. Impressive is an understatement. The Mighty Stefan handed the microphone to this strong man. In addition to everything else the man is articulate and has a good voice.

Ever since I had read about the Farmer's Walk at strongman contests I've been practicing it by carrying a 120-pound dumbbell in each hand while I walk around my basement gym. That's good enough for me I thought so imagine my astonishment when Steve Jeck to the amazement of everyone present performed the Farmer's Walk with two huge stones each weighing well over two hundred pounds. Not only were we blown away by the astounding weight of the stones but his enormous bulging deltoids and arms had me asking Arnold who? Steve shared his personal inspirational philosophy with us in a most captivating and eloquent manner. "Shoulder your responsibilities" postulated Steve Jeck. To illustrate he then lifted from the floor and placed on one shoulder a stone weighing 258 pounds! He repeated the movement by lifting another such stone and placing it on

his other shoulder to emphasize his point. Steve's obviously powerful neck was shown to good advantage as he performed a 225-pound neck lift with a head strap. Another Steve Jeck postulate was "Whatever you have to do, do it with all your might." After this statement Steve proceeded to wrap his huge, muscular arms in a bear hug around a smooth, very round concrete ball weighing 330 pounds, pull it to his body and lift it up and place it onto the top of an upright barrel the height of which appeared to be about chest level of a 5'9" man.

This brought the house down as Steve graciously bowed and waved to the crowd as he finished his unforgettable performance. Quite a man.

After Vic Boff presented the Hall of Fame plaques and Jim Sanders had bestowed his fine paintings we were all treated to some interesting videos of several really legendary Iron Game personalities. I was sill awaiting a cue that never came. That was supposed to have been a signal for me to sit at the piano and accompany Harry Johnson as he played his harmonica. Now that all of the scheduled events were over I couldn't resist scurrying over to the love of my life, the piano. As soon as I began to play the theme from Umbrellas of Cherbourg Harry Johnson, obviously surprised, ran over to me with his harmonica ready and eagerly asked, "Do you know Out of Nowhere?" Did Muhammad Ali know how to float like a butterfly and sting like a bee? Of course I knew it and anything else requested. We joyfully played together until the place began to dim the lights to let all those remaining know that we had to vacate the room.

Afterwards a few of us, Terry Todd, Pete Marozas, Al Thomas, Serafin Izquierdo, Paul Zuckerman, and I, hung around the Downtown Athletic Club lobby with its comfortable sofas and warm homey atmosphere. Terry had everyone's total attention as he recounted the astonishing tale of Weldon Bullock's most legendary lift. I don't think any of us was tempted to try it.

I found the evening to be a time for reflection. Most of us in attendance had lived through the greater part of the twentieth century and we now approached the start of the twenty-first. The videos we saw tonight allowed us to revisit the amazing champion John Davis, to see him clean and jerk the Apollon barbell and to thrill

to his surprisingly good singing voice. We saw Eugene Sandow actually going through a posing routine. We saw our recently departed John C. Grimek doing his own inexhaustible sequences of poses and muscle control. At this farewell to the twentieth century I found myself nostalgic for earlier, simpler times. Crossing the bridge connecting one century to another will be a new experience for all who were present tonight. Some of our Iron Game associates, gym comrades of yesteryear who were present for most of the Oldetime Barbell & Strongmen annual reunions did not quite reach the crossing of the bridge. And it's certain that none of those present will make the next crossing. However, I think we're all enjoying the trip and, as Vic Boff says, let's carry on.



Commemorating Bob Hoffman **John D. Fair** **Georgia College & State University**

Bob Hoffman, founder and president of York Barbell, frequently expressed his intention to reach the age of one hundred and to live in three centuries. He also liked to chart his progress towards the century mark (and promote "Muscle-town") by staging elaborate annual birthday celebrations on November 9. At the time of his seventy-fifth birthday in 1973, he seemed destined to realize his goals. He boasted (surely a rare occurrence for Bob!) that he enjoyed super health and felt no differently than he did as a teenager. This enabled him supposedly, at a bodyweight of 245, to go on regular five-mile runs while wearing a 15-pound weight belt and carrying 20-pound dumbbells. How many other 75-year-olds, he queried, could run with 300 pounds for that distance? [*Strength & Health*, January 1974] Unfortunately, over the next decade Bob, who liked to call himself the "world's healthiest man," suffered from a variety of serious illnesses. He died on July 18, 1985,

at age eighty-six, and was buried in Mount Rose Cemetery in east York.

His memory, however, lives on—and not only from the benefits accrued by countless Americans from his work as a physical culturist. His memory also lives on through a roadside marker recently erected just outside York Barbell Company by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The idea originated with the new management team at Susquehanna Capital in the fall of 1997 as a means to ensure proper acknowledgement of the company's roots and to pay tribute to its founder. In January 1998 York Barbell President Paul Stombaugh asked Barb Andreleczyk, the company's librarian/archivist, to nominate Bob Hoffman for a historical marker. The application had to follow strictly the guidelines of the commission for historicity, include an overview of Bob's life, and be subjected to the scrutiny of a panel of consultants from across the state. In March, York executives were notified that Bob's name had been approved, along with 13 other notables, to join the more than 1,600 people, events, and buildings which have been memorialized since the commission was founded in 1913. Bob is likely the only iron game figure to be so recognized anywhere in the United States.

Appropriately, the day set aside for the official unveiling was the hundredth anniversary of Bob's birthday. November 9 was a beautiful, sunny, and cool day, and nearly fifty of the seventy-five invited guests attended, mostly local personages who had benefited from Bob's generosity. Virtually no one from the old York gang or the iron game could be present. Among the notables attending the ceremony were Alda Ketterman, Bob's common law widow; York mayor Charlie Robertson; Congressman Bill Goodling; and long-time friend Harry McLaughlin. In his welcoming remarks, President Stombaugh stated that York Barbell had languished in recent years but was undergoing a resurgence. "We are much dedicated to building the company to the level I think Bob would have expected it to be," he said. Representing the Historical and Museum Commission, Dr. James Adovasio recalled that as a youth of seventeen the first set of weights that he used was manufactured by York Barbell. He called Hoffman a "pivotal" figure in the history of weightlifting, bodybuilding, and use of

nutritional supplements. Dick Smith recounted his long association (from 1937) with the original “York gang.” Thanks to Bob and York Barbell, he had the opportunity to serve as a coach, manager and trainer in various Olympics, world championships, and Pan American Games in thirty-five countries. Smitty praised Hoffman for his generous contributions to athletes, the city of York, and the youth of America for more than five decades.

The unveiling of the marker was then carried out by Stombaugh and Adovasio. Although Bob Hoffman never attained his goal of reaching 100 or living in three centuries, the erection of the historical marker stands as a permanent tribute to his many accomplishments and a fitting way to commemorate, albeit posthumously, his one hundredth birthday.



Alonzo James “Lon” Hanagan
1911-1999
 by David Chapman

Lon Hanagan, one of the greatest physique photographers from the golden age of American bodybuilding, died quietly in a New York hospital on December 4, 1999. He had been in failing health for a long time. Lon’s photographic work, however, will remain his most enduring legacy to the world of bodybuilding.

Alonzo Hanagan was born in 1911 and he spent most of his professional life in New York City. He was trained as a musician and for a time was an organist at Radio City Music Hall. It was physique photography, however, that increasingly came to occupy his creative powers. After John Grimek came to New York to have his picture taken, Lon’s photographic career took off with a shot [see “Immortalizing Grimek” in *Iron Game History*, Volume VI #1, April 1999]. Soon every major

physique star (and those who hoped to be) beat a path to his studio.

Along with the established stars, Lon enjoyed championing the cause of minority athletes. It was rare in the 1940’s to see Puerto Rican or Black men treated with the respect that they deserved, but when these bodybuilders came to Lon, they were photographed with care and consideration.

Lon’s most famous hallmark was his use of Greco-Roman motifs in his work. As he hearkened back to a classical past, Lon wanted to make these muscular men appear as beautiful as the statuary of the ancients. “You’re there because you’re an object of beauty,” he would often tell his models as they struck a pose. “You’re supposed to think, ‘I must be beautiful or I wouldn’t be standing here.’ Keep that in your mind, and it’ll come through in the pictures.” [interview in *The Village Voice*, Feb. 24, 1999] This was probably a message that few of his models had heard before, but it helped both subject and photographer create great pictures.

Many could not see the beauty, however. To some authorities Lon’s pictures of muscular men were merely examples of insidious smut that threatened to corrupt the youth of America. So because of advancing years and a particularly brutal police raid in the early 1960’s, Lon chose to give up photography.

Thanks to an exhibition of his photographs at an upscale New York photo gallery earlier this year, Lon had recently experienced a great upsurge of interest in his work. It is gratifying to think that despite the years of virtual neglect, he lived to see a renewed interest in his photography.



Editors' Note: We regret to inform our readers of the passing of two greats of the Iron Game: George Redpath (23/24 May 2000) and Eddie Silvestre (8 June 2000).



Commemorating Bob Hoffman
John D. Fair
Georgia College & State University

Bob Hoffman, founder and president of York Barbell, frequently expressed his intention to reach the age of one hundred and to live in three centuries. He also liked to chart his progress towards the century mark (and promote “MuscleTown”) by staging elaborate annual birthday celebrations on November 9. At the time of his seventy-fifth birthday in 1973, he seemed destined to realize his goals. He boasted (surely a rare occurrence for Bob!) that he enjoyed super health and felt no differently than he did as a teenager. This enabled him supposedly, at a bodyweight of 245, to go on regular five-mile runs while wearing a 15-pound weight belt and carrying 20-pound dumbbells. How many other 75-year-olds, he queried, could run with 300 pounds for that distance? [*Strength & Health*, January 1974] Unfortunately, over the next decade Bob, who liked to call himself the “world’s healthiest man,” suffered from a variety of serious illnesses. He died on July 18, 1985,

at age eighty-six, and was buried in Mount Rose Cemetery in east York.

His memory, however, lives on—and not only from the benefits accrued by countless Americans from his work as a physical culturist. His memory also lives on through a roadside marker recently erected just outside York Barbell Company by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The idea originated with the new management team at Susquehanna Capital in the fall of 1997 as a means to ensure proper acknowledgement of the company’s roots and to pay tribute to its founder. In January 1998 York Barbell President Paul Stombaugh asked Barb Andrelezyk, the company’s librarian/archivist, to nominate Bob Hoffman for a historical marker. The application had to follow strictly the guidelines of the commission for historicity, include an overview of Bob’s life, and be subjected to the scrutiny of a panel of consultants from across the state. In March, York executives were notified that Bob’s name had been approved, along with 13 other notables, to join the more than 1,600 people, events, and buildings which have been memorialized since the commission was founded in 1913. Bob is likely the only iron game figure to be so recognized anywhere in the United States.

Appropriately, the day set aside for the official unveiling was the hundredth anniversary of Bob’s birthday. November 9 was a beautiful, sunny, and cool day, and nearly fifty of the seventy-five invited guests attended, mostly local personages who had benefited from Bob’s generosity. Virtually no one from the old York gang or the iron game could be present. Among the notables attending the ceremony were Alda Ketterman, Bob’s common law widow; York mayor Charlie Robertson; Congressman Bill Goodling; and long-time friend Harry McLaughlin. In his welcoming remarks, President Stombaugh stated that York Barbell had languished in recent years but was undergoing a resurgence. “We are much dedicated to building the company to the level I think Bob would have expected it to be,” he said. Representing the Historical and Museum Commission, Dr. James Adovasio recalled that as a youth of seventeen the first set of weights that he used was manufactured by York Barbell. He called Hoffman a “pivotal” figure in the history of weightlifting, bodybuilding, and use of

nutritional supplements. Dick Smith recounted his long association (from 1937) with the original “York gang.” Thanks to Bob and York Barbell, he had the opportunity to serve as a coach, manager and trainer in various Olympics, world championships, and Pan American Games in thirty-five countries. Smitty praised Hoffman for his generous contributions to athletes, the city of York, and the youth of America for more than five decades.

The unveiling of the marker was then carried out by Stombaugh and Adovasio. Although Bob Hoffman never attained his goal of reaching 100 or living in three centuries, the erection of the historical marker stands as a permanent tribute to his many accomplishments and a fitting way to commemorate, albeit posthumously, his one hundredth birthday.



Alonzo James “Lon” Hanagan
1911-1999
 by David Chapman

Lon Hanagan, one of the greatest physique photographers from the golden age of American bodybuilding, died quietly in a New York hospital on December 4, 1999. He had been in failing health for a long time. Lon’s photographic work, however, will remain his most enduring legacy to the world of bodybuilding.

Alonzo Hanagan was born in 1911 and he spent most of his professional life in New York City. He was trained as a musician and for a time was an organist at Radio City Music Hall. It was physique photography, however, that increasingly came to occupy his creative powers. After John Grimek came to New York to have his picture taken, Lon’s photographic career took off with a shot [see “Immortalizing Grimek” in *Iron Game History*, Volume VI #1, April 1999]. Soon every major

physique star (and those who hoped to be) beat a path to his studio.

Along with the established stars, Lon enjoyed championing the cause of minority athletes. It was rare in the 1940’s to see Puerto Rican or Black men treated with the respect that they deserved, but when these bodybuilders came to Lon, they were photographed with care and consideration.

Lon’s most famous hallmark was his use of Greco-Roman motifs in his work. As he hearkened back to a classical past, Lon wanted to make these muscular men appear as beautiful as the statuary of the ancients. “You’re there because you’re an object of beauty,” he would often tell his models as they struck a pose. “You’re supposed to think, ‘I must be beautiful or I wouldn’t be standing here.’ Keep that in your mind, and it’ll come through in the pictures.” [interview in *The Village Voice*, Feb. 24, 1999] This was probably a message that few of his models had heard before, but it helped both subject and photographer create great pictures.

Many could not see the beauty, however. To some authorities Lon’s pictures of muscular men were merely examples of insidious smut that threatened to corrupt the youth of America. So because of advancing years and a particularly brutal police raid in the early 1960’s, Lon chose to give up photography.

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The Atlas & Vulcana Group of Society Athletes

David P. Webster, O.B.E.

All photos courtesy David P. Webster

Atlas was a small strongman with a very big ego who claimed to have exceeded Louis Cyr's record lift with 242 pounds. In the view of many, including the writer, to seriously consider this man with the massive Cyr would be ludicrous. For a start Atlas, or to give him his proper name, William Hedley Roberts, weighed only 56.5 kilograms (126 pounds). There is absolutely nothing in the way of genuine records to show he was in any way exceptional, apart from having a well presented act.

His claims to weightlifting records would have put Baron Munchausen to shame and leave the Baron amongst the also-rans in far-fetched stories. Atlas's exaggerated claims lost him credibility and popularity.

The lovely ladies accompanying Atlas were welcomed by audiences even although the ring weights used in the act were supposed to each weigh 112 pounds. The girls finished their turn by holding these in the crucifix position and the principals of the act would juggle



disdainfully with these same weights. Few, if any, believed the stated weights but few cared, for it was a good, entertaining act. Few cared, that is, until they appeared in Camberwell, where the little British champion W.A. Pullum reigned supreme.

There in south London a riot at the theatre was precipitated by the boastful arrogance of the 126-pound Atlas, who claimed to lift 190 pounds with one hand, twice nightly. He enhanced this lurid lie by placing the bar on the palm of his hand and while thus balanced military pressing it without any hint of difficulty. This he followed by announcing that in Australia he had lifted 320 pounds in a one hand clean, challenging Arthur Saxon who had supposedly fled England to escape exposure. So said Atlas, spoofer supreme.

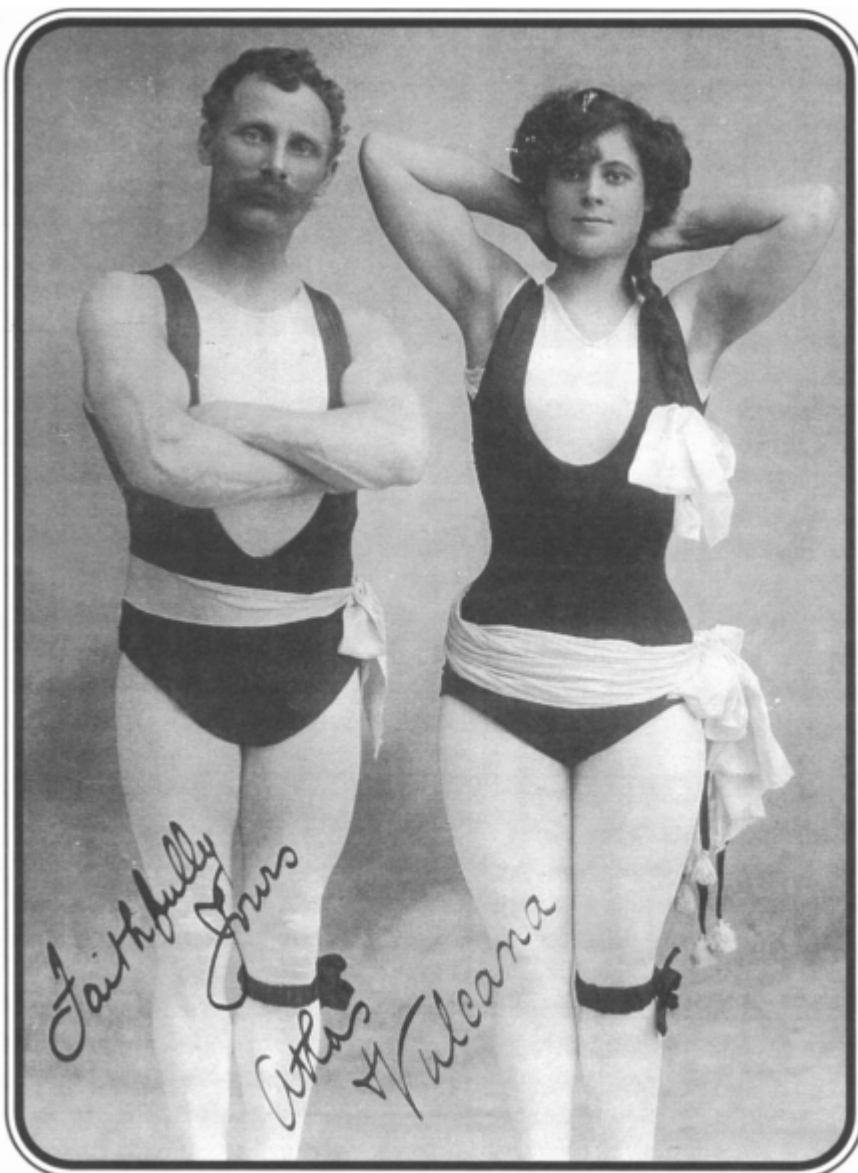
W.A. Pullum, who categorically denied that Vulcana could really lift 224 pounds overhead with one hand, demanded to test the weights. He was refused but

later in the week, when stagehands confirmed that the weight was specially increased, Pullum lifted this challenge barbell. Instead of being the claimed 224 pounds, Pullum estimated the weight at between 175 to 180 pounds. No member of the troupe would attempt it that evening. The lovely Vulcana had a few words with Bill Pullum and he aborted his plans to expose them. However his club members were not swayed and the following night there was a scene, which became the talk of Camberwell at the time. Representatives of London weightlifting clubs were there in force, including a member of the C.W./L.C. with a voice like a foghorn, protesting that the weights were faked. So vociferous were they that Atlas went berserk, rushing up and down the stage like one demented. He invited the hecklers up to the stage and no second bidding was necessary. They immediately rushed to the front only to find the way blocked by numerous attendants ready for such a demonstration. Their blood up, the invaders stormed the orchestra pit and young Stanley Pullum's foot went through the big drum as he and A.G. Davis led the way. The greatly perturbed manager called in the police who gradually restored order but not before Atlas was completely discredited.

This act largely depended on Vulcana, reported by many magazines and newspapers as being Atlas's sister. Although known as Kate Roberts her maiden name was Kate Williams. She was certainly strong for a woman and was given a medal by Prof. Desbonnet of France after he witnessed her lifts and checked the weights in a record-breaking session at l'Halterophile Club de France. She was very popular with French strength enthusiasts and I have an excellent cabinet photograph by Vulcana to Leon See. The Frenchman, Leon, won the British twelve stone championships of 1904 and is also well-known as the man-

ager who set Primo Camera on the road to World Championship boxing.

Vulcana is said to have bent pressed 124 1/2 pounds with her right hand and she also did an overhead lift with a 56-pound weight in each hand. Several authorities have also accepted another report, of a bent press with 145 pounds. Atlas claimed numerous other records for Vulcana but these have not been substantiated. This is a great pity as her performances in France and her frequently witnessed right arm bent press, with

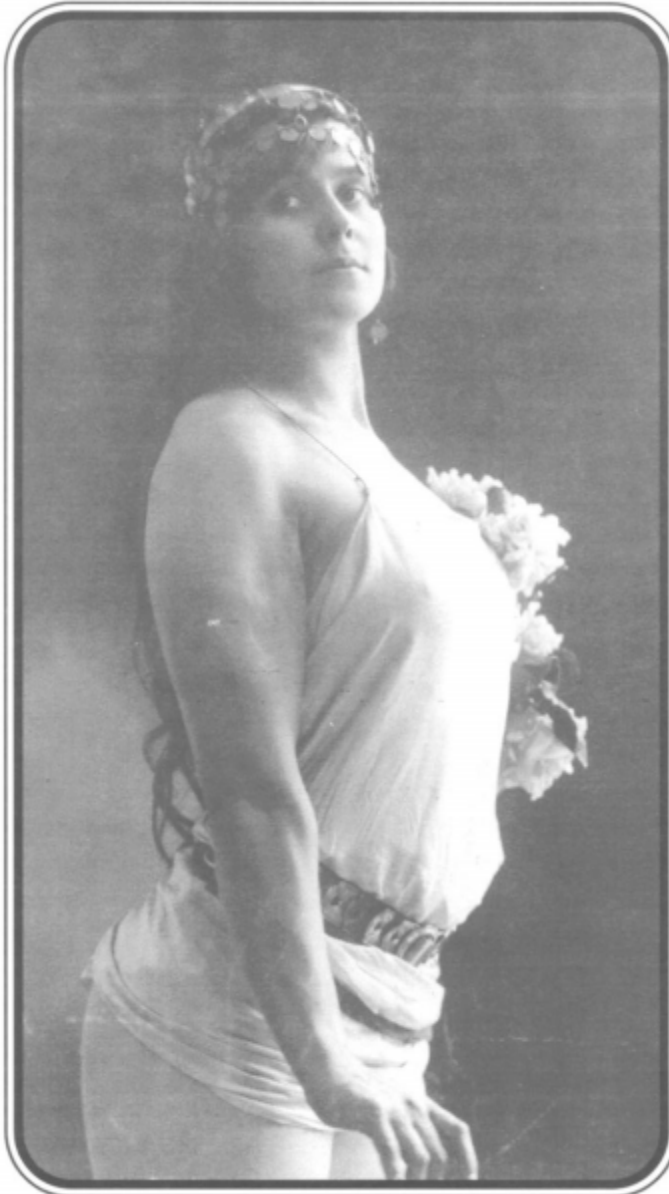


an adult male as the weight, shows without doubt that she was an unusually strong woman. The male assistant was said to be 12-stone (168 pounds.), but was most likely somewhat less.

Vulcana's publicity said she was born in 1883, although her great granddaughters, Sue and Jane, query this, based on the ages of her children. She was a fine young Welsh woman of medium height (she was 5'4" tall) and with a shapely figure. A reporter of the period noted that she had a good complexion, was very supple and of charming disposition. She came from an athletic family and her father was a popular preacher in Wales. He encouraged her into athletics at an early age, having noted her interest in strenuous physical activities, swinging on trees and showing her strength at school by shifting pianos and lifting heavy objects.

Fifteen year old Kate turned professional by a stroke of fate when Atlas organized a fete at Pontypool. One variety act failed to turn up so at the last minute Kate was deputized and was very well received. She enjoyed the experience and Atlas knew right away that he had a winner. His protege had already shown she was a most unusual young lady.

At thirteen years of age she demonstrated tremendous courage and more than a little strength and speed by stopping a runaway horse in Egerton Street,



Bristol, and in July 1901 at Abergavenay she dived into a river and saved a boy from drowning. According to one report this incident happened on the River Usk when two boys larking on a bridge fell into the water. The award she received was very much treasured by her at that time. She won well over one hundred medals, mainly for her strength feats, and one of her most prized awards was a medal from the Queen of Holland. This showed a cluster of barbells inset of a figure lifting a barbell. This was surrounded with a Royal crown.

In October 1901 Vulcana seized the opportunity to get some good publicity when a wagon got stuck in Maiden Lane, Strand, London. The wheels locked and she greatly surprised the wagoner, onlookers and a policeman standing by when she lifted one end of the wagon and allowed them to free the wheel that was causing the problem. They had not recognized her as Vulcana but she soon let them know and of course the story spread rapidly.

In contrast to this on 3 December 1909, there was a disturbance at the Kings Music Hall in Edinburg when there were protests about the fake weights used by the group. Atlas invited the rioters to come on stage and lift in competition against Vulcana, but after some ten

minutes encouragement there were still not any takers. At this time there were two other ladies, the Atlas Sisters, in the act along with Atlas and Vulcana. At least one of these is likely to have been related to Vulcana as in my collection I have photographs of Maude Atlas. Although this is obviously a stage name she wears an identical stage costume to and bears a decided facial resemblance to Kate. Since Mona, Kate's daughter, would only be nine years old at this time, it could well be a Vulcana's sister or cousin,

On 29 May 1913, at Hagggar's Theatre, Llanelly, Wales, the well-known professional strongwoman Athelda attempted to lift Vulcana's challenge bell. According to the *Llanelly Mercury* Athelda tried for fully twenty-five minutes without success. This is a very significant victory, and places Vulcana high in the estimation of strength historians. In a poll I conducted many years ago the top places were as follows.

Rank	Stage Name	Real Name	Native Country
1st	Sandwina	Katie Brumbach	Germany
2nd	Athleta	Mme. Van Huffelen	Belgium
3rd	Vulcana	Kate Williams	Wales
4th	Louista Leers	Frau L. Kluges	Germany
5th	Athelda	Frances Rheinlander	England

In her act Kate began with posing in what was called an "electric cabinet." The lights showed her physique to advantage, inspiring artists and would-be poets. After this followed the weightlifting part of her act. Judging by reports she was strongest around 1910.

Health and Strength magazine in 1904 said that Vulcana was "a veritable Venus in form." Soon to depart for Australia, Kate, the feature enthused, was as strong as she was beautiful but with none of that aggressive assertion of muscular development which leads many to believe that strength and maidenly modesty are an impossible combination. It may have been out of character that while shopping in London, Vulcana's strength was utilized to foil a thief. Looking in a shop window she saw in the reflection a pickpocket about to rob her. Whirling around instantly, she caught his arm with one hand and smashed him in the face with the other.

Vulcana and company appeared on stage until 4 June 1921 when they appeared at the Garrick Theater on Grove Street in Edinburgh. There was a fire at the theatre that night and Vulcana saved some terrified horses that were appearing in another act. She was badly burnt when her hair caught fire but she did not let that deter her and her bravery won her commendations and, I understand, an award. The troupe lost almost everything in the blaze. Their props and costumes were destroyed and without these they could not perform. I cannot find any reports of subsequent performances.

We do know that later in life they lived for some time at Gosforth Lodge in Fulham, London-and mention of a Lodge reminds me that Atlas became an enthusiastic Free Mason.

On 4 Nov. 1999 I had the pleasure of meeting two great granddaughters of Vulcana. Sue and Jane came to my very old home with a TV camera crew filming a program for the BBC. I am happy to say I was able to supply the ladies with numerous articles about their ancestors and they were delighted to see many photographs they had not seen before. They confirmed that Atlas and Vulcana were not brother and sister but were partners in life as well as in their stage act. Atlas and Vulcana's children included their eldest son Arthur who went to Australia, and Nora who may have been in the act as one of the Society Athletes. Neither Arthur nor Nora married so those parts of the line died out. The third child, Mona was brought into the act as soon as she had reached a suitable age and her stage name was Eve Atlas. Atlas became the middle name of her offspring. It was good to receive such information first hand. The recent visit by Vulcana's granddaughters and all my earlier investigations and inquiries lead me to believe that Vulcana, Kate Williams, was a very charming, spirited and liberated lady who lost nothing of her womanliness in pursuit of her profession.

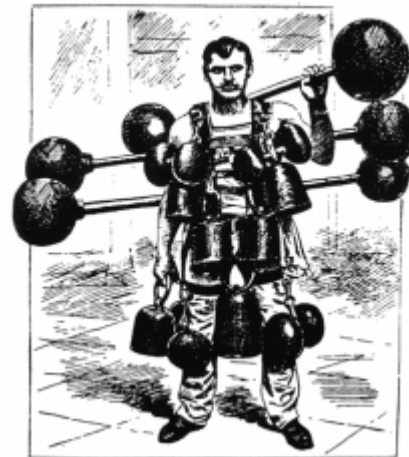
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Ironclad

Joe Roark

PAUL ANDERSON'S FAMOUS SAFE



It is among the few artifacts in lifting history to have a special meaning, being in the company of the Cyr dumbbell, the Inch dumbbell, and the Apollon railcar wheels, all items whose exact weights are known, and whose images have been published over the years in the muscle literature. But this item, the safe that Paul Anderson used for his heavy lifting, had until recently an uncertain weight, and a photo of it has, to my knowledge, never been published, until now. Accompanying this article is a photo of the safe that Olympic champion Paul Anderson used as a component for his famous claim of a 12 June 1957 backlift of 6,270 pounds.

Much has been written about the safe, in vague terms with no specific dimensions being revealed. It was variously said to have been made of iron, or steel, or lead, or manganese.¹ It was huge, or large, or big according to writers who in most cases had only a mental image to draw upon.² Keep in mind, Paul had only one safe for his training and strength demonstrations, so the widespread discrepancies spread by various writers to describe his safe cannot be explained by the presence of another safe. Nor can the careless switching from 2300 pounds to 3500 pounds with all sorts of matter hanging off the safe...to the safe itself weighing 3,500 pounds without such attachments.³

On 7 September 1995, Bryan Frederick and I were in route to Atlanta to attend the Mr. Olympia contest, when we made a side-trip to Vidalia, Georgia, to ascertain the measurements of the safe and to take some photos of it. After parking across the street from Paul's

former house, we asked for, and received permission from Paul's son-in-law, Ed Schaefer, the current resident, to examine the safe. As we rounded the corner of the house and got a good look at the safe, we were disappointed because we knew by looking at this piece of metal that—even if it had been solid with no cavity, as safes obviously require—it would still not weigh 3,500 pounds. As a matter of fact, it weighed less even than 2,500 pounds (based on calculations later performed). The measurements we took that day of the Paul Anderson safe were as follows. Note that the safe is round, not rectangular.

Diameter: 24"

Height 20.5" from ground, though probably it had sunk into the earth a couple of inches, because this type of safe stood taller.

Diameter of safe door opening: 16"

Wall thickness: 4"

Circumference 70"

It is an object that can be straddled by a person of normal size. It was not large, or huge, or even big, as writers (some of whom obviously hadn't seen it) had described it. It is approximately the height of a normal chair-seat.

Paul acquired the safe, commonly known as a "cannonball" safe, from a junkyard, and he used it in his hiplifts, and later in his backlifts. He explained that the back of the safe had been cut away at some point.⁴ Keep in mind that one of the reasons some cannonball safes were composed of manganese was that when manganese

bums (as when a thief tries to torch-cut through it) obnoxious, disabling, smoky fumes are produced. Also, ball-bearings were often inserted between the inner and outer walls of such safes so that in the event someone tried to drill into them the drill bit would—upon contact with the hardened, rounded bearings—undergo side-shank pressure and almost certainly break. The cannonball safe was used for valuable, small items, such as jewelry, and therefore a large cavity was not required. Further, because the space between the walls was partially filled with ball bearings and not manganese, the space affected therefore weighed less than had it been composed of solid manganese.

Based on conversations with several locksmiths, and the materials they have provided after seeing photos of Paul's safe and being informed of its dimensions, the following conclusions seem reasonable. The type of safe Paul used probably had a cavity no larger than 1.86 cubic feet, so obviously manganese at its weight of 475 pounds per cubic foot, in this case approximately 884 pounds, was being replaced by air inside the safe's cavity. If Paul had poured 1.86 cubic feet of concrete into the safe's cavity, he would be adding about 268 pounds to fill it, minus the space that the "weights" he also added to the cavity required (weights with a diameter smaller than the 16" opening of the safe's cavity) and minus the weight of the missing back wall of the safe.

Earle Liederman, Bless You

As is sometimes the case, the earliest reporting on an event is the most helpful. Liederman reported in *Muscle Power* magazine in February 1957—before Paul's June 1957 backlift attempt—about Paul's "...steel safe filled with cement which weighs 2300 lbs." Paul at this time was unaware of how much the table weighed because after interviewing him, Liederman wrote, "Since no one knows how much the heavy [backlift] platform weighs, the exact over-all weight remains guess work."⁵ And writers have guessed and guessed since then, even though many of the facts were available, at least in regard to the extant safe, which, unknown to



Bryan Frederick kneels beside Anderson's famous safe, holding a copy of Paul's autobiography, *A Greater Strength*, to provide additional scale.

Photo courtesy Joe Roark

Liederman, was composed of manganese, not steel. [Remember that Paul had written in his autobiography, *A Greater Strength*, "I worked with my father to build the platform and lifting table. We had to know exactly how much the lifting table weighed before the lift, so after we nailed it together, we took it apart and weighed it...The table itself weighed eighteen hundred pounds."⁶ [Do we not infer from this that very soon after the table was constructed it was then separated into pieces small enough to be weighed? If so, this weighing would have predated Liederman's interview with Paul.]

In a certified letter from Paul to me on 24 January 1990, he wrote about the safe. [Please notice that he claims the safe itself weighed 3,500 pounds; 1200 pounds more than the figure he gave to Liederman.] So, how much did it weigh when all those other "hangings" were added? Four thousand, seven hundred pounds? If that were the case, then the wooden platform used in the backlift could not have weighed more than 1,570 pounds for the total to end up as claimed. This would mean that nothing else was added to the table during the backlift attempt, yet Paul says things were added. So for every item added to the table, that much weight must be subtracted from the weight of the platform for the total to remain accurate, or at least consistent. As Paul's words to me are examined, keep in mind that he is describing the safe as it remains today.

“It weighed 3500 pounds. Someone had tried to break into it, or perhaps lost the combination, for the back was cut out, so I filled it full of weights to bring it up to a greater poundage. The walls on it were very thick, and I was surprised at how few weights I could get into it. I then poured in concrete to stabilize the weights and add a little more poundage. My Dad had built the platform for me, and it weighed well over a thousand pounds, and the other poundages were made up of official weights.”⁷ Does one assume “official weights” to refer to barbell plates? If so, where were all the chains, axles, transmissions and other assorted pieces? Paul does not mention them in the letter.

Another problem has to do with the platform. If something weighs more than 1800 pounds, for example, would a person not usually say so, rather than saying it weighs “more than a thousand pounds”? In Paul’s updated autobiography, the weight of the platform is given as “about 1800 pounds,” which, of course, is “more than a thousand,” but using this reasoning, if Paul had squatted with 1100 pounds, would he have described the amount as “more than 300,” since there would have been the same 800 pound difference?⁸ Language requires the use of gradations, and “generally speaking” should be within the boundary of the next gradation.

Please note that Paul put weights into the cavity first, then added concrete to stabilize the weights, and add “a little more poundage.” Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that most, or a large part, of the cavity was not filled with concrete, but with weights. Does Paul mean to imply (as he seems clearly to do) that the safe, before he added weights and concrete, weighed 3500 pounds? If so, what was the total weight after adding those items? Further, when John Little interviewed Paul for *Muscle & Fitness* regarding the backlift, Paul mentioned that his father built the platform, then described the small amount of material on the platform. “I had just about the platform and the safe, an old manganese safe that I used for the basic weight and that was just about it. I didn’t have to add many weights.”⁹ But Little’s piece refers to a “steel” safe full of lead placed on the lifting table and says that Paul “...then loaded the remaining surface of

the table with transmissions and other heavy auto parts before crawling under the table.”¹⁰

Again, if only the safe and the table were used, and Paul did not have to add many other weights, what is the origin of the claim that “the conglomeration of scrap on the table was beyond belief,” as Bob Hoffman supposedly told Judd Biasiotto?¹¹ And how can Paul’s other words be explained when in his autobiography, *The World’s Strongest Man*, he relates, [emphasis mine]: “It was an old safe. And it was heavy. *When I had filled it with every piece of junk I could find*, and after I welded it shut, and added slots for the belt connections, I found myself with 3,500 pounds to struggle against.”¹² [So the safe did not weigh 3500 before adding concrete and weights.]

In his updated autobiography, *A Greater Strength*, Paul mentions inserting only weights and concrete, with the same 3,500-pound result.¹³ Compare this to the early report by Liederman, who though erroneously referring to the safe as being made of steel, accurately gives its total, loaded weight as 2300 pounds.

However, in March 1956 Larry Lawson asserted in *Ironman* that for a hiplift Paul used “an old safe filled with concrete—3500 lbs. For two reps using a ‘half-harness’.” Later in the same article he writes, “The combined weight of safe and weights was calculated with a high degree of accuracy at 3500 pounds.”¹⁴

So any lift, by anyone, (including Paul doing his hiplifting) using this safe involves approximately a 1,200 pound error if the weight of the safe by itself was figured (as Paul sometimes figured it) to be 3500 pounds, instead of the actual 2300 pounds.

In a very interesting development, Paul’s daughter, Paula Schaefer, perhaps weary of the guesswork about how much that thing in her backyard actually weighed, decided to have the safe weighed. Hello science, goodbye guessing! Randall Strossen, in his book *Paul Anderson: The Mightiest Minister*, does not include a photo of the safe, but does mention that Paul’s daughter had it weighed. There was no photo of that historic happening, no mention of the type of scale used—except that a wrecker was employed—and no date as to when it

was weighed. What's more, no explanation was given as to why the first weighing was recorded at 2375 pounds, and the second was 2240 pounds, a discrepancy of 135 pounds. Strossen settled on a middle figure of 2307.5 pounds, which he describes as ". . . too close to the 2,300 pound reference point to be a mere coincidence." He also mentions the weight of the 180-pound stand-base for the safe, though not even Paul ever mentioned this as having been part of the lift—either hip or back. (This type safe could be purchased with or without a base, because the height of the safe itself would require a person opening it to kneel to turn the combination tumblers. Some customers may have had a ledge upon which to place the cannonball safe, or may have placed it atop another safe.) In any case, the safe resting on a base would certainly have been "top-heavy," particularly if used in the hiplift.

Interestingly, Strossen was against weighing the safe. "Why not weight the thing, and be done with it, you might wonder. Simply because weighing the safe would prove virtually nothing about the lift since the exact configuration of both the safe and the other items on the table is not known." Continuing, Strossen adds, "It also seemed to me . . . that weighing the safe, under these conditions was disrespectful, and would be as undignified a ceremony as having a loved one autopsied in public."¹⁵ It seems strange that Strossen urged Paula to not have her father's safe weighed, arguing that it would serve no useful purpose, while at the same time wishing the platform were still around so *it* could be weighed. Obviously, the whole is equal to the sum of its parts, so the more parts we have, and weigh, the more closely we approach the total weight involved in Paul's backlift. One suspects that the weighing of the actual safe, while supporting those who have suspected its weight was much lower than the 3500 pounds usually claimed, surely had the opposite effect on those who have steadfastly held to the 3500 pound figure, and who now are in the position of either accepting reality or continuing to assert that the June 12, 1957 backlift of 6,270 pounds somehow still is accurate in spite of the overwhelming evidence that the poundage must now be reduced by approximate-

ly 1200 pounds, down to around 5,070 pounds.

Notes:

¹ "Paul officially backlifted a table with a lead safe and auto parts which weighed 6,270 pounds." Pete Vuono, "Pioneers of Power: Paul Anderson," *Powerlifting USA* (March 1984): 68; "For the centerpiece he used an old iron safe, filled with cement." Julius Johnson, *The Toccoa Record* (6 October 1994): 2-C; "On that day, Anderson placed a steel safe full of lead. . ." John Little, "Paul Anderson: The Strongest Man Ever?" *Muscle & Fitness* (May 1993): 149.

² See, for instance, Judd Biasiotto and Amy Ferrando, "The Greatest Athlete of All," *Powerlifting USA* (November 1988): 33, which describes the safe as both large and huge. "In a state of complete confusion, Anderson removed the large safe which weighed approximately 250 [sic] pounds from the table." In a letter to me dated 24 January 1990 [line 244] Paul Anderson used the word "big" to describe the safe.

³ Larry Lawson tells one of the earliest versions of how Anderson added extra weight to the safe in 1956. Lawson writes, "One day he fastened as many weights as he could to an old steel safe filled with concrete. The combined weight of safe and weights was calculated with a high degree of accuracy at 3500 pounds." Larry Lawson, "Paul Anderson Modern Superman—and how He Trains," *Ironman* (March 1956): 13.

⁴ Letter from Paul Anderson to Joe Roark, 24 January 1990.

⁵ Earle Liederman, "The Stupendous Strength of Paul Anderson," *Muscle Power* (February 1957): 57.

⁶ Paul Anderson with Jerry B. Jenkins and James R. Adair, *A Greater Strength*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1990) 78-79.

⁷ Letter from Paul Anderson to Joe Roark, 24 January 1990.

⁸ Anderson, *Greater Strength*, 78.

⁹ Little, "Paul Anderson," 149.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Biasiotto and Ferrando, "Greatest Athlete," 33.

¹² Paul Anderson, *World's Strongest Man* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1975). 34.

¹³ Anderson, *Greater Strength*, 78.

¹⁴ Lawson, "Paul Anderson," 10.

¹⁵ Randall Strossen, Ph.D. *Paul Anderson: The Mightiest Minister* (Nevada City, CA: Ironmind Enterprises, 1999), 98.

WHO POSED FOR THE STATUE OF PROMETHEUS?

Martha Deal

Editors' Note: Ray Van Cleef was a central figure in the iron game from the 1930s until his untimely death in 1964. He was an early student of Sig Klein, a widely used artists' model, a fine handbalancer, an avid collector, a managing editor of *Strength & Health* magazine, a gym owner, and a tireless correspondent with a worldwide circle of friends. We asked his daughter, Martha Deal, to explain a recent controversy in the often-interrelated fields of art and physical culture.

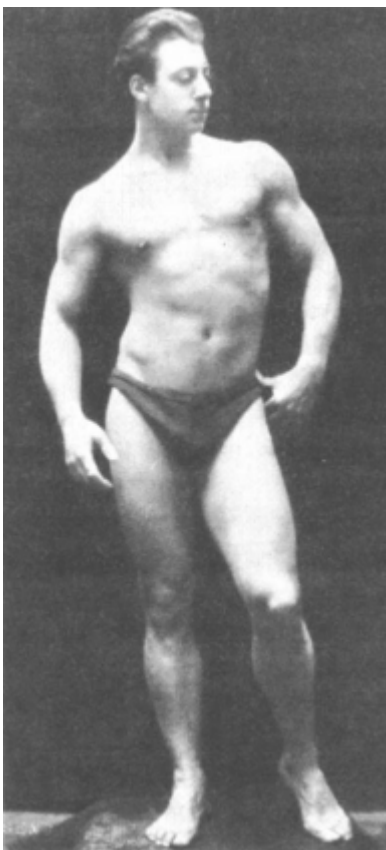
As one of physical culturist Ray Van Cleef's two daughters, I grew up being told that part of my family history was that my father had been the artist's model who had posed for the famous statue of Prometheus in Rockefeller Center in New York City. Imagine my surprise on March 2, 1998 as I watched the "Today" show on NBC and saw a tribute to Leonardo Nole, who had just passed away, and was being given credit for having been the model for Prometheus! On that day, I began an interesting and challenging journey into the past.

As you may know, my father, Raymond Van Cleef, played an instrumental role in the history of physical culture and led a unique life. He died suddenly of a heart attack on May 26, 1964, in San Jose, CA, just before his 54th birthday. While my father was still alive, our family made several trips from San Jose, CA to New York City and, while there, we always visited

Rockefeller Center and took photos of the Prometheus statue, being told our father had been the model. In a 1933 booklet by David P. Willoughby, "The Truth About Physical Training," the statement was made that Raymond Van Cleef was the model for the central figure in the huge fountain design by Paul Manship then being erected in Radio City. Other articles also said something similar, such as the article in *Health and Strength* magazine, dated Feb. 22, 1936, titled "Strength Superb!" in which one of Ray's accomplishments was given as being the model for Prometheus.

What's more, the July-August, 1948 issue of *The Body Builder* magazine included the following in an article entitled "Ray Van Cleef, Ambassador of Good-Will": "Thousands of words have been written about Ray's success as an athlete, an artists' model, physical therapist and physical educator, but none of the stories of Ray's career seemed to touch upon his innate qualities of character, his adherence to fair play and acts of friendship and help to those in need of assistance." The article also includes the following statement: "Ray had been one of America's foremost models. He posed for the famous statue of Prometheus in the center of the fountain at Radio City, New York."

As I attempted to do research into the past, I learned that there were few people still living who knew my father in the early 1930's and had personal knowledge of his work as a model. I was privileged to enjoy several phone conversations with John



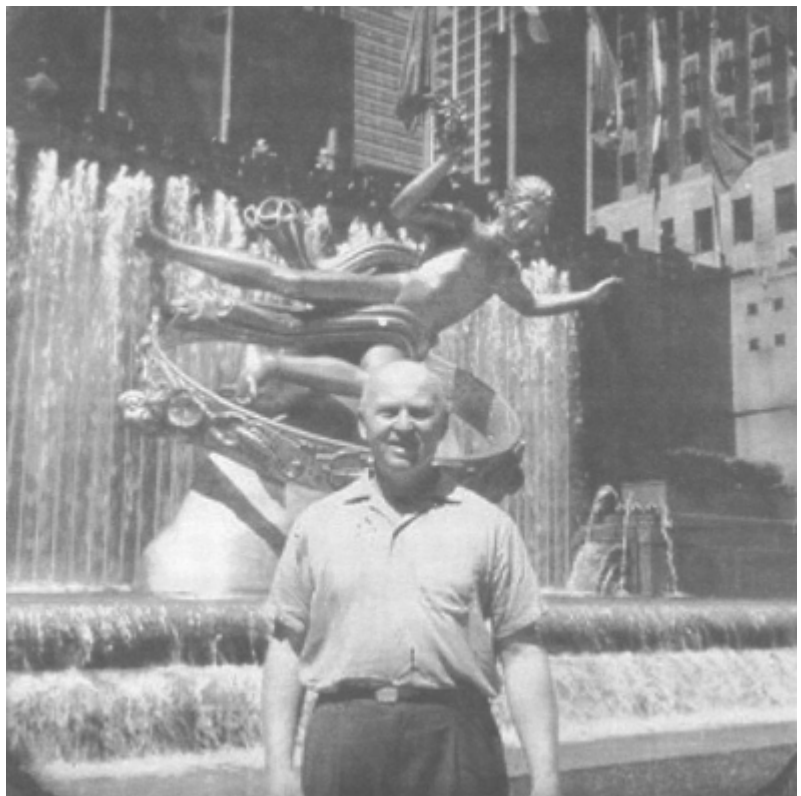
Leon Nole in 1931, from the cover of Klein's Bell.

Grimek in York, PA in the twilight of his life, since he died later that year, 1998. John Grimek and my father were close friends at the time my father was an artists' model. John sent me a letter dated April 6, 1998 in which he said, "I remember your dad telling me many times how the work (Prometheus) was coming along and that he was getting the big share of the work."

I also learned from John Grimek that my father and Leonardo (Leon) Nole knew each other and both worked out at Sigmund Klein's gym in New York City. In my pursuit of additional information, I contacted Leonardo Nole's nephew, Leonard Nole, and learned more about his uncle. I learned that, like my father, Leonardo had been active in the physical culture field as a young man and had worked as an artists' model. Later in life Leonardo worked for the United States Postal Service in Sacramento, CA before he retired. He died at the age of 91 on February 22, 1998. His nephew and I had several phone conversations and exchanged letters and information. From everything I learned, it seems clear that Leonardo Nole did indeed have a part in posing for the statue of Prometheus.

My detective work led me to a book in the library titled *Paul Manship*, which was written by his son, John Manship and published in 1989 by Abbeyville Press Publishers, NY. The elaborate 216-page book on the work of sculptor Paul Manship gives much detail about the story behind Prometheus and the process used in the creation of the sculpture. Apparently, after the work was commissioned in 1933, Mr. Manship initially prepared a twenty-four-inch-long model of the statue. The finished work was to be two-and-a-half times life-size. He and his assistants used a pantograph to make the full-size plaster copy directly from this model. Apparently, the assistants, Henry Kreis and Angelo Columbo, completed the finishing detail work on the sculpture.

I talked by phone with John Manship, who is also an artist, at his home in Gloucester, Massachusetts, and learned that his father, Paul Manship, never kept records of the names of the models who posed for him. At the library, I was able to get copies of articles from the *New York Times* newspaper about the commissioning



Ray Van Cleef poses in front of the Prometheus statue at Rockefeller Center in New York City.

Photo Courtesy Martha Deal

of the statue and, later, the dedication. Neither of these articles gave the names of the models.

There does not seem to be a way to definitively establish the precise history as to who posed for the statue of Prometheus. My educated guess, however, is that my father, Ray Van Cleef, was the artist's model who posed for the original small scale rendering of Prometheus, and then Leonardo Nole was the model who posed for the finishing detail work. Paul Manship's son, John Manship, agreed with me that this was a likely scenario. It is my conclusion that both Ray Van Cleef and Leonardo Nole deserve credit for their part in posing for one of the most famous statues in the world!

I've enjoyed the process of doing research and trying to put together the pieces of the puzzle. Even so, I wish I had asked my father more questions about his days as an artists' model. My father was never one to boast about his accomplishments. Even though I grew up knowing he had been the model for the statue of Prometheus, I never knew much about that period of my father's life. This research project has helped me to appreciate my father's life and accomplishments even more.