



LETTERS

This issue we are again using the space that will usually be taken by the "Grapevine" to bring you more of the wonderful, newsfilled letters we've been receiving. As we said last issue, we intend to have a modest "Letters" section in every *IGH*, along with a "Grapevine." We invite your comments.

A Fellowship Subscriber

Heartfelt thanks for the copy of your new journal, and good luck with it. It fills a real void and does it superbly well.

Enclosed please find a check to cover a McLean Fellowship subscription.

All our best to you and Jan. We look forward to seeing your library when the opportunity presents itself.

Jack C. Long, M.D.
Plainview, TX

Dr. Long and his wife, another Dr. Long, have practiced medicine for approximately a half century up in the panhandle of Texas. In his salad years, Jack Long was an outstanding student of Sig Klein and his photograph appears in an issue of the short-lived magazine, Klein's Bell.

A Reminiscence About Lou Riecke

I've just finished reading and enjoying almost all of your first issue of *Iron Game History*.

IGH has a professional look and is extremely well edited. Appealing to both the academic and non-academic reader may be difficult, but if anyone can pull it off, it's you and Jan, with all your energy. I commend you for your first effort, wish you well, and enclose my subscription as an indication of my support.

The two parts of the first issue that I enjoyed the most were your statement of purpose and "The Iron Grapevine". The statement of purpose because I wanted to know what *IGH* was about, and "The Iron Grapevine" because I am interested in knowing what people that I have known or read about in the past are currently doing. I was especially grateful to be brought up to date on Lou Riecke. I first saw Lou when my dad took me to Dallas to compete in an Olympic lift meet in the '50s. I well remember seeing Lou for the first time at the weigh- in. He

was hying to make my weight class, and I remember confiding to my father that he would be sorry if he succeeded. Well, as you can imagine, he did succeed and he was not sorry. My dad and I laughed about that for years as we followed Lou in person and in the magazines making one record after another. Lou Riecke has always been one of my very favorite Olympic lifters.

Clarence Bass
Albuquerque, NM

*Clarence is too kind, particularly about our energy. We remember stopping to visit him last summer at his home at the base of a large mountain. Clarence, who has about as much bodyfat on his entire body as I have on my right forearm, told us enthusiastically about his practice of running up the mountain, and even invited us to join him in a run. Fortunately, it was late in the day and I managed to change the subject until nightfall saved me. Many readers will be familiar with his excellent books and his column in *Muscle & Fitness*.*

IGH Needed

Enjoyed the first issue of *IGH* very much. Enclosed is a check for a two-year subscription. Interestingly enough, I had written to both John Grimek and Vic Boff within the last year about starting a magazine. With the demise of *Strength & Health* there is need for a magazine that covers topics like you are covering in *IGH*. I still feel there would be a market for a magazine catering to the non-professional, non-drug using physical culturist. Well, maybe someday.

By the way, did you ever hear any more about Eric Pedersen's present whereabouts? Hope all is going well with you.

Paul Niemi
Fitchburg, MA

Does anyone know Pedersen's whereabouts?

Ronald Walker Deserves Credit

Thanks for the copy of the new magazine. Looks interesting enough to invest in a subscription, so put me on your list.

One lifter who has never been accorded his rightful fame was Ronald Walker. In the '30s he was outlifting everybody in the world and was no behemoth, but a trim super strong man...attested by his one arm clean of 320. I think an article on him, if enough information is available, and photographs, would be in order. Some information on him (as I remember) was in the January '37 issue of *Strength & Health*. That was the issue that introduced me to lifting. I remember I was flat on my back with pneumonia at the time, but decided that lifting would be the answer to my exercise requirements.

I met John Y. Smith back in '38 when another fellow and I took the subway from Harvard to the Boston Y.M.C.A. for a workout. Smith had just come in to watch the boys in the

weight room, and we were told that he had been the strongest man in the world. He was 72 at the time, and his lifting interests were confined only to watching.

And 72 is what I am now, and I now can understand that muscle quality degenerates with time. I could clean press 300 until I was 51 and clean jerk it for a couple more years, but now I find that I can lift about 40% to 60% of my best..depending on the lifts. From a maximum bwt. of 250, I'm down to 185, same as in college, but the contractile tissue only puts out 60% to 70% pound for pound.

Nathaniel Heard
Sarasota, FL

Pete George Heads to Bulgaria

Congratulations on the birth of *Iron Game History*. May he grow to be a powerful world-wide force in the Iron Game. And, as we all hope for our progeny, may he have a long, healthy life, outliving all who preceded him.

Being a realist, I am aware that the publishing game, whether played for profit or nonprofit, most often ends up as a financial loss for its organizers. I hope *Iron Game History* proves to be an exception and that the Iron Game community will offer enough support to allow it not only to survive but to grow and thrive. In that spirit, I am sending \$100 for a McLean Fellowship Patron's Subscription.

Every group of people, whether they be a nation, profession or sport, should be aware of and take pride in their past, and the Iron Game has matured to the point where the advent of *Iron Game History* was due. Your challenge as editors will be to maintain *Iron Game History* as an authoritative scholarly journal and as an appealing popular magazine.

Although I am delighted with the arrival of *Iron Game History*, I am saddened by the departure of *Strength & Health* and the transformation of *Iron Man*. I particularly lament the ill health of the Iron Game in the USA today. In Olympic lifting during the late 1940s and the 1950s we would not take a man on the world championship team unless he had a chance to win a medal. Now, we are elated when one of our lifters places in the top ten in his class. I realize this is not the subject of *Iron Game History*, but perhaps present day lifters may receive inspiration from reading about our past.

I must admit I was offended by your suggestion that I mutilate my copy of Vol. 1, No. 1 of *Iron Game History* by tearing out the last page. I hope that future collectors will highly prize this issue as the first of a long established journal that spread so much enlightenment.

I plan to go to Bulgaria next month. I will attend the Varna International Weightlifting Competition on the 13th to the 16th of April. I will then visit cousins in Plovdiv and Sofia. My parents were ethnic Bulgarians born in Macedonia, and my first language was Bulgarian. The facts that I have an Olympic gold medal in weightlifting and that the Bulgarians have been the first or second team in the world in the same sport for the last 10-15 years is purely coincidental. There were no lifters

of note in Bulgaria when I started lifting, and my father, who had a strong work ethic, thought it was ridiculous to do heavy labor "for no constructive purpose or pay". He forbid me to train, so I had to sneak after school to Larry Barnholth's garage (better known as the American College of Modern Weight Lifting). After I started to win national, world and Olympic titles my father thought it was OK for me to lift, but only if I continued to get A's and B's in school and maintained a part time job.

While in Sofia I will present a lecture at the medical school on obstructive sleep apnea and snoring. I have invented a device that prevents both, and I have published reports on my work in the *New England Journal of Medicine, Archives of Otolaryngology* and other medical journals. I have lectured on this subject in Sweden, Korea, Japan, and mainland China.

I will be interested to see if the random steroid testing program will have any effect on the amounts lifted in Varna.

Best wishes for many years of success with *Iron Game History*.

Peter T. George, D.D.S.
Honolulu, Hawaii

A Question of Gender

Excellent! In a word, that is my opinion of *IGH*.

I do have one small suggestion regarding the possible enhancement of *IGH*. As both men and women have contributed to the history of our iron game, I would suggest that both genders be represented on the *IGH* masthead. One way to do this, of course, would be like *The Body Builder* did in earlier years. That is, with an illustration of both Mr. America (e.g. Steve Reeves) and Ms. America (e.g. Abbye Stockton) as shown on the enclosed magazine covers.

In any case, keep up the good work!

Grover Porter, Ph.D.

Professor, Dept. of Acct. & Bus. Legal Studies
University of Alabama, Huntsville

We basically agree with Dr. Porter's suggestion but have yet to find a suitable classical engraving of a female athlete. The problem is to find a woman's figure with the detailed power of the version we used of the Farnese Hercules. But we're still looking. Any suggestions?

Love of Iron Game Eternal

It is enlightening to see something being offered to those of us who appreciate some form of diversity in what we are given in today's PC magazines.

Times change—the war, the draft—oddities and strangeness of the late '60s. Life sidetracks you at times. But some things always return and the love for the sport lives eternal. The backward thinking thrown at you [in the old days] by the uninformed and ill-mannered only fueled you on to do what you felt was right. Hell!—it felt good to do it—and you looked great to boot. If one endured the horrors of becoming

-in no particular order—musclebound, uncoordinated and—my all time favorite, “queer”—then one had to wonder what the early patrons of the sport contended with.

Roger Gelman
Forest Hills, NY

Last of a Generation

I would be delighted to receive future copies of *Iron Game History*.

For many years now I have opened *Ironman* and my first interest has been to read how my contemporaries are getting on. Alas, Willoughby, Klein, Steinborn, Paschall, Berry, Sansone (Tony), Jowett, Liederman, Podolak, and many others have died. When Hackenschmidt died it was almost the last of that generation which would include Pullum, Inch, Aston, Peglar, Sandow, Calvert, etc, many of whom I knew personally.

Wishing you and Jan health and happiness,
Joseph E. Assirati
London, England

We visited Joe Assirati in London back in the early '80s and, to us, he epitomized Physical Culture. He was very knowledgeable about all aspects of the game and he had been a real allrounder in his competitive years. Although he was approximately 80 years of age when we visited, he was wonderfully active, and every morning he would go for a walk interspersed with vigorous calisthenics, walking, as he said, at his “tallest and broadest.” His cousin, the professional wrestler, Bert Assirati, was one of the strongest men in the world in the 1930s '40s and '50s and he is still exercising with heavy dumbbells. Joe's brother, Charles, who died recently at 78, was England's version of Tony Sansone, modeling for the artists who produced some of London's most famous public statues.

Muscle Beach Newsletter

Thanks for your note and copy of *Iron Game History*. Although my main effort for the Muscle Beach Alumni Association has been the Gymnastic and Acrobatic History of Muscle Beach, the lifters and bodybuilders were all a part of that em.

I have been doing a lot of traveling of late for my *International Gymnastics* magazine and my involvement with the US Sports Acrobatics Federation and have got behind in the production of the MBAA Newsletter, but hope to get an edition out in the near future.

I wish you well with your *IGH*...Both Vic Boff and Joe Roark have given you a good base to work from as you carry the torch forward. I will send some MBAA data on to you when possible. However, most of my efforts have been pictorial and I know your space is limited for photos. . . A mention of the MBAA would be appreciated from time to time. . . Thanks.

Glenn M. Sundby
P.O. Box 7, Santa Monica, CA. 90406

Glenn Sundby has played a big role in bringing many of the old muscle beach boys (and girls) together and anyone interested in his publication can reach him at the above address.

Casey's Big Bench

It was good hearing from you.

I try to visit Pearl in Oregon a couple of times a year. He is a great man and a true friend. He is really amazing. He works out at 3:30 AM every morning except Sunday. He is now 59 but looks about 45. I really hit some great workouts with him. Was up there Thanksgiving and Christmas.

As for my current status, I retired from police work in 1982. Had about 14 years (all on the street) and retired on a medical—ulcer, blood pressure and arthritis. My knees and right elbow got banged up pretty bad while in a pursuit. Crashed the police unit. Was divorced in 1981. Raised my son by myself. He is now 22. For the most part I just kickback and take it easy on the 32 acres I own in Lucerne Valley.

I was impressed with your journal. Enclosed is a money order for a subscription. As for breaking the 600 I really can't give you much information that already has not been printed. I did cut back on my workouts and increased my bodyweight before the contest. The 620 I did was very easy and I felt that I could have done three reps with it. I felt I was good for about 650-660. The AAU officials said that a 4th attempt wouldn't count as a record so I saved my energy for the squat.

Pat Casey
Lucerne Valley, Ca

Pat Casey was, as most readers know, the first man to officially bench press both 500 and 600 pounds.

Liederman's Other Side

Your new publication is interesting—a sub is enclosed. Perhaps this book [Liederman's *The Unfinished Song of Achmed Mohammed*] would be of interest. Earle Liederman had writing talent as you will note, aside from his iron game efforts. He did a radio show also. This was after the wipe-out depression which closed his mail-order biz. The radio work was a program for lonely women and Earle wrote all his material

Mr. George Redpath
San Diego, Ca

George Redpath has been active in the game in a variety of ways for many, many years and we do appreciate Liederman's unusual book of verse. It is an interesting and rare addition to the Collection.

Words From An Historian

Thanks for your letter and for the very welcome copy of *Iron Game History*. I wish you much success! I certainly like the looks of Vol. I, No 1. I know that the amount of work it takes to put it out must be daunting, but I am equally sure that you are equal to the task. After all, if you don't do it, who will?

How often have we sung that refrain?

David Chapman
Los Angeles, California

*Dave Chapman has proven over the last several years to be a valuable addition to the ranks of iron game historians. He is an avid collector and his articles about past lifters and bodybuilders in **Iron Man** are always well researched.*

Word About Sipes

I spoke with you on the phone the night I received my first issue of **Iron Game History** and I promised you two things: the first was a "Where Are They Now" about Chuck Sipes. That is enclosed along with a picture book I thought you might enjoy. The quality is not the best, but I think those forearms still come through. The second item was a video tape of the first two Mr Olympia contests. I'm still working on that; so consider it forthcoming.

As I told you on the phone, I truly believe you are filling a much needed gap in the iron game. I wish you the best of luck and certainly hope the response is every bit as overwhelming as it deserves.

As an aside. I began my Institute as a consulting firm to combat the advertising hype and over exaggeration that the uninformed person is confronted with today. FREE WEIGHTS FOREVER!!!!!!!!!!!!

Norm Komich
Beverly, Mass.

We hope to include the article about Chuck Sipes in a future issue.

Bill Clark On The Road

I'm ashamed to be so slow in writing and sending a check. As you may have noted, weightlifting has taken a back seat the past two years with me. The loss of my life's savings in a gym didn't help matters and moving to the Braves and new responsibilities has consumed lots of time.

I enjoyed your initial **IGH**. If I have missed No. 2 by being so slow, please get it to me. I save 'em all. Spend far too much for such things. Between lifting publications and omithological journals, I'm always broke. Hang in there.

Bill Clark
Columbia, Missouri

Almost 80 And Still Posing

Received my second issue of **IGH**. So glad I subscribed, it brings back memories of people I spent time with and even trained with years ago.

In about one year I will be an octogenarian and am still posing at contests in Atlantic City, Showboats, Atlantics,

Resorts International, Trump, Valley Forge Convention Center, etc.; just to show youths what can be done by sensible training and good nutrition. I usually give a short talk about physical training and bring out how it helps to make life worth while.

I realize there are still some youths that don't regard old people as old fogeys so let us old-timers help them in every way we can.

Hope to see you again at the old-timers annual dinner and reunion Sept. 22 in New York.

Ted Keppler
Beverly, New Jersey

Another Fellowship Subscriber

Enclosed is a money order for fifty (50) dollars in support of this wonderful undertaking. I would suppose you found me through my subscription with Joe Roark. Nice that people of like mind can cooperate in such a venture. My background is relevant to interest in this field. Never an athlete of note, I did attain modest goals of above average strength & physique. I was even praised by Russ Warner for a frame similar to (Ahem)! Steve Reeves. The similarity extends to being born in 1947, the year Reeves won Mr. A. Further along my junior college track coach was a student teacher and coach of Reeves at Castlewort H.S. in Oakland in 1944. This contact led me to people like Paul Martin, Pacific Coast heavyweight champion in 1930; and mentor to Ed Yarick. As you well know the Oakland Community has been fertile ground for strength sport. The aforementioned Steve Reeves, Clarence Ross, Jack Delinger, Roy Hilligen (for a while), Jack LaLanne, Tommy Kono, Art Walge, Joe Corsi, Norman Marks, and more recently Mike Dayton.

Kevin O'Rourke
Oakland, California

Eiferman Speaks

Many thanks for your new magazine. I toured America from 1948 to 1975 doing over 15,000 schools in 49 states (not Alaska due to transportation). It was all prearranged & scheduled so I could visit schools. In each school I'd lecture and do human feats of strength and then have 15 minutes of music with trumpet and harmonica. And in the Elementary Schools, puppets and more music. There was no money in it because road expenses and lodging and traveling often were so high that nothing was left and I had to work in Health Clubs in the summer in Beverly Hills to get by. I loved it so much. I cared nothing about money at that time as I was single and had no responsibilities.

I hope you let me know if you folks get to Vegas. I sold my gym about 11/2 years ago and just do youth and senior citizen programs.

George Eiferman

We hope to devote an entire article in the future about the remarkable career of George Eiferman.

Suggestions and Corrections

The *IGH* newsletter format is well done, the pale yellow paper is a relaxing tone, the type size can be made a bit smaller for better space utilization but just a bit.

I saw Lou Riecke make his World's Record 325 lbs. snatch in 1964 at the Los Angeles YMCA. It was perfection of movement. I think this was the 1964 National YMCA Championships. After Riecke made the 181 lb. class record he seemed unsure what to do. Norbert Schemansky who also lifted at the meet grabbed Lou Riecke by one arm and led him to the weigh-in area for bodyweight and barbell weight verification. 'Ski' made sure Lou Riecke would get official recognition for his great lift. As you folks at *IGH* know many Weight-lifting and Power-lifting records of the past have been sloppily recorded and often sent in too late for official acceptance, etc.

Vol. I No. 1 *IGH* report on the Muscle Beach Weight Club Reunion should read "Santa Monica, Calif." instead of "Venice Beach, Calif." The "Dungeon" mentioned in the same article was the former Vic Tanny (4th and Broadway, Santa Monica, Calif.) gymnasium located in the basement at that corner for many years. That corner is now inhabited by a new red brick bank building. Oldtimers may remember the wall paintings of various sports which covered most walls in the "Dungeon" during the Vic Tanny days.

Henry L. Duval
Santa Monica, California

Oerter the Nonpareil

I have always been a naturally strong and quick person which I realized as a kid just 'horsin' around with buddies. It seemed that I could always throw harder, run faster and lift more easily than anyone else. This led me to jobs on 'bull' gangs that would unload heavy equipment off trucks or carry heavier than normal loads of construction materials as the floors of various skyscrapers were being poured.

With these abilities or perhaps 'instincts' it was natural to start lifting with a few friends in my father's garage in the early 50's. I was fortunate in that two of my friends of German descent had fathers who had lifted in competitive events back in the old country as kids and still had the 'weights' in their cellars. To this day I can still feel the finely machined Olympic bars and well balanced plates. My weights in the garage consisted of two York 110 lb. starter sets plus some homemade benches, pulleys, squat racks etc.

At about the same time I started going into Queens, New York where Lou Degni had a gym. It was the old sweat box type with plenty of weight, homemade racks that did not break, poor light, lousy showers, few mirrors, solid dumbbells and plenty of folks who worked their butts off. No one was there to impress anyone else and to this day I prefer that

environment. New York has always had a tradition of lifting clubs because the basis for such things came from Europe. Queens and Long Island in particular have always been a good place for weight gyms.

I guess what I'm saying is that it was quite natural for me to incorporate lifting into my training regimen for the weight throws. The Northeast has always had a tradition of throwing and weight lifting events and the two have been fused together since the latter part of the last century. With this regional background and the weight throwing tradition of the club I competed for (New York Athletic Club), I found the attitude that lifting for athletics being a big negative to be nonsense. The coaches at Kansas University in 1954 thought that an athlete would become bound' or in some mysterious way lose his athletic ability by lifting. They did manage to scrape up a few hundred pounds of weights to satisfy my requests but it was a reluctant agreement on their part. It wasn't until I returned home summers or graduated that I was able to get back to full lifting and have my distances move out to where they should be.

Well that's the early days. I have always stressed a heavy overall body building program. An athlete allows too many weak links to exist if the lifting becomes specific to the event. By working all things with speed and good weight, the breaking points are minimized and an athlete can maintain his event for decades.

Al Oerter
West Islip, New York

*We asked Al to provide some information about his early days of lifting and this letter only touches the surface of what we hope to bring to the pages of *IGH* in the future.*