



Dear *Iron Game History*:

I should hate to miss a copy of the magazine which I consider excellent. I've enjoyed all the information imparted so far. However with regard to the Roark Report and the listing of significant dates in issue 4 & 5, he gives three alternative years for the birth of Steve Reeves, i.e. 1926 or 27 or 28. It has been well documented that Reeves was the youngest Mr. A winner in 1947 at 21 years of age. Presto, he must have been born in 1926. Also, the Roark Report dates in issue No 6 for 1932 had Lud Shusterich being born. I am sure I have seen a picture of the 1940 Mr. America contest with Lud as a contestant. I believe he was 17 years old at the time, making his year of birth 1923. It could be a simple transposition of the numbers 3 and 2. Anyway, all great stuff to all of us iron game fans of the years before the steroid era started to bite. Good luck in all your endeavors.

Doug Ewington
Staffordshire, England

You're right. The year of Shusterich's birth was 1923, and the error was that the last two numbers were transposed. As for Reeves, Roark was simply relating the various dates given over the years for Reeves' birth as a way to illustrate the often inaccurate information published in our field.



Dear *Iron Game History* :

Iron Game History is an excellent journal! I look forward to reading *IGH* more than any other bodybuilding publication. I read with special interest the article on "Reflections on Muscledbinding" in a recent issue of *IGH* (April 1992), because of experiences during my high school days (1947-51) similar to those of the author. Our coach told the players, "I'll drop anyone from the team that I find drinking booze, smoking cigarettes, or lifting weights!" After being converted to weight training by a cover photo of and comments on Steve Reeves in *Muscle Power* (October 1947), I had to train in secret in order to continue playing high school sports. Today, however, high school, college, and professional athletes all participate in weight training programs.

I do have a bone to pick with Dr. Al Thomas, however, regarding some comments in his otherwise fine article. I believe it was inappropriate for him to state that "cheerleaders" or one religious

denomination are more sexually promiscuous than members of other religious denominations. A search of the relevant literature reveals no credible research finding to support his "cheerleaders" hypothesis. In the future, therefore, I suggest that Dr. Thomas and other authors stick to reporting facts that can be documented.

Keep up the great work on the history of the iron game!

Grover L. Porter, Ph.D.
University of Alabama, Huntsville

A careful reading of Al Thomas' editorial about "muscledbinding" reveals that his mention of "protestant cheerleaders" was not intended to single them out in any way other than to note the particular role one or two of them played in that particular school at that particular time.



Dear *Iron Game History*:

I recently read with great interest your article in *Muscle & Fitness* entitled "Hermann Goerner." I have tried to locate Edgar Mueller's book *Goerner the Mighty* (1951), but with no success. A top local bookstore ran various computer searches and told me it is out of print. The local university library does not have a copy. Do you have any suggestions on how I might obtain a copy? Your help would greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Ray Moeller
Prospect, Kentucky

Perhaps a reader might have an extra copy for sale. Good luck. It's a wonderful book.

Dear *Iron Game History*:



Just a note to commend you on your interesting article on "The Origins of Weight Training for Female Athletes in North America" in the current *Iron Game History*. It has much to say to female athletes, and to all ladies interested in staying healthy.

John C. Long, M.D.
Longview, Texas

Dear *Iron Game History*:

Joe Assirati got in touch with me about George Hackenschmidt and asked me to get in touch with you. Excuse the delay, but as I am in my 86th year I can be excused.

The reason I took up wrestling when I was around nine years old was because George was a great hero in my eyes. He was a moving

force in wrestling. Many competitors over the years have told me how impressed they were by him.

I started my career about 1914 or 1915 when I joined the boy scouts. My tutor was S. V. Bacon, one of the first Olympic Champions. He had two brothers. He started me on Cumberland and Westmoreland wrestling which I was not much taken with as it was a restricted style of wrestling and meant taking a back hold. I soon progressed to Freestyle and over the years have won seven national wrestling titles and many international titles. I represented Great Britain at the 1948 Olympic Games. I was also the coach and team manager at other Olympic Games and Commonwealth Games. During my life I was a 2nd Dan Judo and was captain of a winning team against Germany. I was also second in the Montreal Provincial Judo Championships. During the last war I was the close combat instructor at the CBTC, Inverness shire, Scotland.

Briefly the above gives you a little of my background. I was, of course, in the A.P.T.C. with Joe.

Now for George! I first met him around 1947 when he came to my practice nights at Peel House. This was where I worked and at this time he used to work out and do his double jumps over a rope string across the backs of two chairs. He could do this at the age of 70 years. I then lost sight of him for a few years. Then he turned up at Elliott House where the police trained two nights a week. This was off the Edgware Road. He carried on coming along about once a week. I last heard of him around 1954 and visited him and Rachel at his home in South Norwood in 1955. I retired from the Met Police and went to Canada. In Montreal I was a Director of P.T. at the YWHA in Montreal. I stayed for four years and then returned to England. It was in Montreal that I saw George and Rachel and we had lunch with them. Both were in good health but as to understanding George's philosophy of life, I am afraid it was too deep for me!

I next saw him and Rachel at their home in South Norwood. I last visited him (I believe) in East Dulwich Infirmary where he subsequently died. Rachel gave me a large photo of George when he was 19 years old. This I finally gave to Bert Jacob for a museum of the English Olympic Wrestling Association in St. Manchester.

I kept occasionally visiting Rachel and finally lost touch about ten years ago. Her memory was vague.

I am afraid I have not told you much. As one gets older everything gets very much more clouded. I hope you can get something out of this.

Stan Bissell
Codford St. Mary, England



Dear *Iron Game History*,

I thought that the enclosed copy of a review I wrote for *Powerlifting USA* might interest you. I say this because some of what I say was inspired by what I read in some of your reports on old time strongwomen in *Iron Game History*. It seems to me that the great strongwomen in the past were exhibited like oddities in circuses,

vaudeville and side shows. I can recall in my own childhood seeing one of the last of the classic strong women of the stage, Joan Rhodes, perform at a state fair. She bent iron bars, tore telephone books in half and—most impressive of all—she lifted the heaviest men in the audience. She was not accepted as an authentic athlete, but like Sandwina, Vulcana, Ivy Russell, Josephine Blatt, etc., was viewed as a curiosity, an oddity to draw in money. When I see women of today accepted and respected in lifting meets, I am reminded of how much they owe these early female strength performers, who paid the price of being “exhibited.” I think, too, of the early women athletes who first used heavy weight training for betterment in their chosen athletic endeavors, women like diver Pat McCormick (who trained with the musclemen at Muscle Beach in California), tennis player Christine Truman, Cindy Wyatt of track and field, etc. I especially think of my dear friend, Lurline Hamilton Struppeck. While at LSU, strength coach Alvin Roy refused to even see or speak to her; she was often shunned in the weight room, and not being able to come to New Orleans on a regular basis as a struggling student to work with the fair-minded Bob Samuels, read everything about and by Paul Anderson as her inspiration! Lurline was recently inducted into the L.S.U. Athletic Hall of Fame (the first woman so honored), and I was doubly proud of her knowing what she went through to get there!

Unfortunately I missed your article on Josephine Blatt. I find her fascinating because her harness and back lifts were near the top, even as compared with men lifters. She must have been extraordinary. I hope you get to Ivy Russell one of these issues. Joan Rhodes must be around somewhere still lifting hefty men and seeking out telephone directories to destroy (oddly enough, Joan is best remembered for failing at a feat of strength on worldwide television: dropping Bob Hope on the back of his head while trying to put him over her head, leaving him with a headache for a week!). Paula Mollerup of the WPC club and her dream of an island for modern amazon women must be around somewhere amongst the living.

Allen Smith
New Orleans, La.