



**Dear IGH:**

As the years pass, I realize more and more how valuable David P. Willoughby has been to those of us who love strongmen and bodybuilding. This realization led me to provide the following information for those who may not fully understand Dave's value to us all.

One of the most profound chapters in the history of the Iron Game ended on January 20, 1983 with the passing of David P. Willoughby. He was eighty-one years old. Greatness may be measured by the survival, over time, of a man's efforts. Without any doubt, David P. Willoughby's contributions as a writer, theorist, and historian in the field of physical culture are without equal and we are still very much in his debt. In his day, Willoughby was the world's foremost historian of the Iron Game.

Willoughby's knowledge of anatomy in relation to physical development was unmatched. He had a lifelong association with the world of academics, and he earned his living as an anthropometrist and illustrator for medical and paleontology textbooks. Although he worked full-time, he used his spare-time to investigate, catalogue, and present an immense store of information. He was both reliable and indefatigable as he chronicled the history of musclebuilding and strength.

Willoughby compiled a list of over three thousand weightlifting records from all nations, from 1880 to the end of his life. He either took or carefully estimated the bodily measurements of thousands of strongmen weightlifters, bodybuilders, and athletes the world over. The interpretations and conclusions of this vast research was prepared with painstaking exactness and can only be appreciated by studying his many published articles and books over five decades. His writings and drawings have appeared in medical journals and physical culture magazines throughout the world.

Probably the greatest series of articles ever published in Bernarr Macfadden's *Physical Culture* magazine was authored by Willoughby. It was a complete course in bodybuilding, strength, and development and it featured the anthropometrical statistics and measurements along with the feats of many Iron Game personalities. The series ran through ten installments from January-October, 1930, and in it Dave projected the best roads to symmetrical development and simplified the whole field of physical culture.

Another of Willoughby's classics appeared in the *Raders' Iron Man* magazine from 1956 to 1963 under the title "The Kings of Strength" (twenty-two chapters). This series is certainly one of the most complete treatments of the subject ever published. In 1933,

Dave entered the home study or correspondence field with *The Willoughby Method of Home Physical Training* – a masterpiece of well illustrated instruction. The financial depression of that era prevented Dave's work from becoming a successful venture.

Not only was Dave Willoughby the historian of the Iron Game, he extended his genius and writing skills into the fields of natural history and paleontology. His *Empire of Equus*, for instance, which required fourteen years of painstaking research and drawing, was a definitive work on the natural history of the horse. The same can be said about his great work, *All About Gorillas* (1978). Another book dealt with elephants, but was never published.

Dave's last and perhaps greatest book, *The Super Athletes*, published in 1970, is a truly encyclopedic work which applies a scientific yardstick to man's athletic achievements from the beginning of recorded performances, not only for the weightlifting or strongman enthusiast but for every sports fan and devotee. It is a complete survey of athletic excellence in almost every sports field, and it is done in a manner unique in sports literature.

Dave was born March 17, 1901, in New Orleans, Louisiana, of Irish and English-French parents. He resided in California, principally Los Angeles, after 1912. He commenced barbell exercising in 1918, and regular weightlifting a year or so later. He became a member of the weightlifting team of the Los Angeles Athletic Club in 1921, and won the A.A.U. championship of Southern California in 1923-24-25-26. In 1924, he won the A.A.U. National Championship. As Dr. John Fair has written in these pages, Dave was a pioneer in the organizing of a weightlifting association recognized by and affiliated with the A.A.U., this being the California Amateur Weightlifters' Association, founded in 1925. He was also the first, with Ottley Coulter and George F. Jowett, to introduce and define for American lifters a full list of lifts, rules, and regulations, this being done in connection

with the American Continental Weight Lifters' Association (ACWLA) in 1924.

Willoughby's measurements and weightlifting records are as follows: Height 6' 1-1/2"; weight 188-194 lbs. Best lifts (all made prior to 1939) – Left Hand Snatch, 162-1/2 lbs.; Right Hand Swing, 163 lbs.; Right Hand Clean and Jerk, 195-1/2 lbs.; Two Hands Swing, 164 lbs.; Two Hands Snatch, 214 lbs.; Two Hands Clean and Jerk, 274 lbs.; Two Hands Slow Curl, 150 lbs.; Rectangular Fix, 140-1/2 lbs.; Pullover at Arms' Length 117-1/2 lbs.; Abdominal Raise, 92 lbs.; Hip Lift, 2000 lbs. He practiced over sixty different lifts and feats, and — outside of 'pressing' — made respectable records in all of them. He turned professional in December 1926, and conducted a private gymnasium for two years thereafter.

David P. Willoughby's standards of accuracy and integrity were beyond reproach, and I am proud to have had him as a personal friend. His passing was a great loss to his dear wife Carol, to his family and many friends, and to me physical culture world.

**Vic Boff  
Coral Gables, FL**

