



Dear IGH:

If you had Vic Boff as a friend, you were a most fortunate person. I was one of those lucky ones, as he was my pal. Everyone in the fitness and health foods community knew Vic through his articles in health publications and, of course, as the Iceberg King of Coney Island.

I first became friendly with Vic in the seventies when he would come into my gym in Manhattan and we'd chat. We traveled together to different events like upstate New York for Tom Ciola's competitions, and Worcester, Massachusetts for Cliff Sawyer's events. We also made two memorable trips—one to York, Pennsylvania for the 90th birthday party for Milo Steinborn and the other to a surprise retirement party for Ed Jubinville in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Vic's friends will appreciate this short tale. It was at the end of November in 1985 and my wife and I were with Vic in Atlantic City to help out at a physique competition. There was a late night meeting at the Sands, which ended about one in the morning. We were all staying at the Showboat so after being indoors all evening, we went out on the boardwalk where the strong and cold winds greeted us as we started walking back to our hotel. Eleanore and I were shivering from the cold as we walked past the strong waves that were breaking on the shore. Meanwhile, Vic looked like he was in Miami, Florida—this was his environment . . . cold! As we walked, Vic looked out at the ocean and said, "I knew it, I knew it." My jaws were almost locked tight from the cold and wind, but I was able to ask him, "Vic, what did you know?" Still looking out at the ocean and with that robust complexion of his, he said, in all seriousness, "I should have brought my bathing trunks." That was my pal Vic.

When I first met him I knew that a special man had entered my life. Vic became my counselor. If I needed answers, I went to Vic. He most always had all the answers for me, and if he didn't he wouldn't rest until he did. Today everyone is on the computer for their answers, but Vic Boff was my Internet. His advice and suggestions came from his heart.

One of his many accomplishments was the

founding of the Association of Oldtime Barbell and Strongmen. This wonderful man created a home for several hundred people in the Iron Game community. From all over the United States and Europe members received their bulletins and became up to date on events. With interesting articles and news, Vic Boff did a marvelous thing—he kept the past alive.

The annual dinners and honoring of past members was an event that all who could attend looked forward to with enthusiasm. For the most part, the AOBS was run by one man—Vic. His own ideology of physical culture was built into the foundation of the AOBS.

After selling my gym, I relocated to Fort Meyers, Florida. I was soon thrilled to find out that Vic and his wife Ann had sold their store and were moving to Cape Coral, which is only minutes away from my area. In Florida, we had over ten years of close friendship. At the many lunches we had together he talked of the old-timers, especially George Jowett, with whom he had been in business. He also knew Macfadden and so many more. He was a walking history book of the Iron Game and the health foods industry, of which he was one of the early pioneers.

Vic would never find fault with anyone, and would talk only of the good that people did. A number of times I told him what I thought of some individuals and he would immediately tell me what he knew about the good they had done.

In my friendship with Vic I have learned much—not only about the Iron Game but also about life and living it. There were many times I needed his counsel and he was always there for me. I learned that the moral strength of this man was unquestionable. He could never hurt or deceive anyone, and he always went out of his way to help people. I know that over the years he helped many. In the last ten years we had confided in one another. I can tell you that Vic's desire to help not only his friends but total strangers, too, came from his heart. The idea of receiving any monetary rewards for his efforts never came to mind. He just wanted to help his fellow man.

Vic was the most understanding person I ever knew. He was able to feel your pain and your joy. If you knew Vic, you had to love him; I did, and I know I'm a better person for having known him. How fortunate it was to have lived in his time. My pal, Vic—what a man.

**Tom Minichiello
Fort Meyers, FL**

Dear IGH:

I just received news from Leo Robert that Ed Theriault had passed away. I thought that you would want to know. He did a lot for Joe Weider.

David Chapman
Seattle, WA

**Dear IGH:**

You may know that Rudy Sablo died recently. He worked with the Tuskegee Airmen in WWII. I am currently writing a book similar to Bill Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, tentatively entitled *The Book of Sport Virtues*, to be published by Human Kinetics. It is a book about the "good side" of sports, as opposed to all that we read in the sports pages. I want to include a short section on Sablo there.

Attached is a copy of his obituary.

Dr. Bill Mallon
Via Email

***Rudy Sablo, Weightlifter And U.S. Olympic Team
Official, Dies at 84
February 16, 2003
By Frank Litzky***

Rudy Sablo, a leading athlete, coach and administrator in American weightlifting and other sports for more than 60 years, died Feb. 4 in his home in Manhattan. He was 84. Competing at 170 pounds, Sablo lifted 335 pounds in the clean and jerk and 270 pounds in the snatch. His lifting career was interrupted by World War II, in which he became a physical instructor for the Tuskegee Airmen.

After the war, he spent 20 years as a New York City firefighter. After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the 83-year-old Sablo put on his old firefighter's uniform, appeared at the site of the World Trade Center, and offered help. The firefighters were so inspired by his regard and counseling that they asked for and received his uniform for their museum. Sablo became the chairman of the Amateur Athletic Union's national weightlifting committee and rewrote its rulebook. He also insisted that an athletes' representative be on the committee, a concept adopted and expanded years later in every Olympic sport. He ran the A.A.U.'s metropolitan area office for 20 years and helped found the Empire State

Games, an annual statewide Olympic-type competition. He was the manager of the United States weightlifting teams in the 1972 and 1976 Olympics and served on the United States Olympic Committee's board. He was elected to the United States Weightlifting Hall of Fame, and the U.S.O.C. honored him with its Olympic Shield award. He married Eudine Gumbs, who was known as Deen, in 1957. She died in 1990, and he left no immediate survivors.

**Dear IGH:**

Enjoyed Jan's story in the last *IGH*—"As Men Do Walk a Mile—Women Should Talk an Hour—Tis their Exercise." My club has booked me on a lecture tour of ladies clubs in Los Angeles, so now I can add to my talks some more great knowledge—from her great article. I usually tell the ladies that I feel that the greatest athlete of all time was a lady—Mildred "Babe" Didrikson—who started her career at 16 as a top female basketball player in Texas. She was an All American in track and field, and a one woman track team, smashing records in field events and hurdles and sprints.

She won many medals in the Olympic Games, and she also swam, shot, rode, rowed, tumbled, boxed, wrestled, played tennis, golf, soccer, field hockey, football, baseball, polo and billiards. In golf, she was one of the greatest. Her husband, the wrestler George Zaharias, once told me she trained with barbells and dumbbells. George worked out at Bothner's Gym in New York when he came to the city. Unfortunately, Babe died of cancer at 42. But in her time she was the greatest, and she's the greatest still. In fact, Socrates once told a friend that, "ladies have the same talents as men." Your article will be used in all my seminars. Thank you.

Terry Robinson
Los Angeles, CA

**Dear IGH:**

Hi. A great pleasure to open the "Me and Paul" issue of *IGH* and find my name alongside those of Dave Draper, Walt Marcyan, the Stocktons, Frank Stranahan, Joe Weider, Harold Zinkin, et al.

I still browse the muscle mags, but Ronnie Coleman and the others have gone to "wretched excess," as did Tom Platz a few years back. I read about the death of the Mentzer brothers recently. Where have you gone,

Tony Sansone?

I have Pat O'Shea's *Quantum Strength Fitness* and Clarence Bass's latest two books. Marathons are not their "cup of tea." For years I neglected iron in place of running, but I have started back in my home gym with Olympic set and power rack, age 76. Still drinking beer regularly.

Keep training.

Wladyslaw Kucharczyk, aka Les Longshore
Birmingham, AL

Wladyslaw, we recommend that you continue with both the iron and the beer. As you may remember, "Malt does more than Milton can, to justify God's ways to man."



Dear IGH:

I noticed that is time to renew my subscription to *IGH*. Please accept my renewal in the form of a McLean Fellowship Subscription (\$55 Enclosed). I really enjoyed the last issue (Vol. 7 No. 2&3, July 2002), especially your "The Arnold Strength Summit" article. A great article!

I recently returned from Las Vegas where, for the fourth consecutive year, I attended the Mr. Olympia contests and trade expo. For the past three years I have video taped the press conference that has taken place the Thursday before the Saturday event. At the conference the participants, organizers, officials, some magazine writers, and fans asked questions, answered questions, expressed opinions, etc. It is quite interesting and sometimes entertaining. Keep up the great work with *IGH*.

John Corlett
Davis, CA



Dear IGH:

I have been lifting weights, working out, and reading muscle mags for over 50 years. For many years various authors have expressed doubts that Apollon ever lifted his own wagon wheel barbell. These doubts were fortified by the fact that few men of recent times could lift this weight. You rightly pointed out in *IGH* that Rigulot, Davis, and Schemansky (who did lift Apollon's Wheels overhead) were all at least 100 lbs. lighter than the competitors in Columbus. Yet only one man (Mark Henry) could clean and jerk this weight. We assume that

because modern strongmen are bigger, they must be stronger. Today's lifters are stronger in some ways but are also more specialized. They are also less versatile in odd lifting feats.

Now about Paul Anderson and his backlift. I really enjoyed the various authors' accounts of his lifting. Most of the discrepancies seem to be in the various reports by different authors, as to what he did. Also Paul certainly did not help himself by trying to clear up all the errors.

Could Paul have backlifted the 6000+ lbs.? I think so. I don't see anyone out there with more hip and upper thigh strength than Paul. He also was a 600 lb. bench presser, which would also help in the backlift. Has Greg Ernst or any other backlifter shown more strength in feats that we know Paul did?

In another *IGH* you had a great article on Mark Henry lifting the Inch DB, but you also have a remark saying that Inch could not lift his own DB overhead. David Home, a British strength fan and author says that Inch could lift this DB overhead with one arm. Reg Park could possibly shed some light on the truth of this matter, as he owned the weight for a while but failed to lift it. He must have had conversations with Inch about this. What's next? That Goerner could not lift his 330 pound challenge barbell?

Just wanted to get that off my chest. Please find my check enclosed for my subscription renewal.

Larry Davis
Princeton, IN

We agree that the great strongmen of the past—Louis Cyr, Apollon, etc.—had more all-round strength than many modern lifting champions in powerlifting and weightlifting. The men who currently participate in strongman competitions, however, have some of that old-time strength because they have to do such a broad range of events. Training is very specific. When I was in Bulgaria 20 years ago to write an article about the teenaged phenomenon then known as Naim Suleimanov, I was told by one of the coaches (who had been a national weightlifting champion about 20 years earlier) that the man he was coaching could lift much more in the two competition lifts than the coach had done 20 years before but that the modern lifter didn't have as much overall strength as he, himself, had once had. He explained that back when he was a champion, the Bulgarian system required him to use 27 different exercises at some point in a year's training cycle, and that now the system only

used five main exercises—the snatch, clean and jerk, front squat, back squat, and high pull. He said the coaches had learned that by narrowing the focus of training it was possible to push the competition lifts to a higher level than by doing more generalized training.

Regarding Paul Anderson and the backlift, Greg Ernst never lifted as much as Paul Anderson did in the bench press and the squat, but he did spend 20 years specializing in maximizing his strength in the backlift—something Paul never did. This is why Greg—and not Paul—holds the record for the heaviest backlift ever made. I might add, just for your consideration, that quite a few modern powerlifters (Don Reinhoudt, John Kuc, Jim Williams, Anthony Clark, Bill Kazmaier, Gary Frank, etc.) each have a combined, official best in the squat and the bench press that exceeds the best lifts Paul ever made in public—the low 900s in the squat and the mid-500s in the bench. That being the case, we could follow your logic and say that these men all could have bested Paul in the backlift—an assertion I'm sure you wouldn't want to make. Absent an official or at least a publicly done, verifiable lift of any sort we have to simply dismiss the many claims that have been made as to how much someone lifted or could have lifted. In much the same way, the business about Thomas Inch and his 172 pound dumbbell is very interesting, and we direct you to the extensive and careful work Joe Roark has done in this area. It appears that although Inch was probably able to raise his heaviest dumbbell (he had three that looked very much alike) off the floor with one hand and also lift it from his shoulder overhead with one hand using a bent press technique, he was unable to clean it with one hand. He did claim to have done so, but David P. Willoughby, David P. Webster, Joe Roark, and other people who have looked into the matter with care are unwilling to accept his claim. Additional evidence of the unlikelihood of Inch having cleaned the 172 pound dumbbell is available these days as so many hundreds of large and powerful men have tried and failed to even budge one of the Inch replica dumbbells off the floor.



Dear IGH:

You will find herewith a copy of my book *Europa, Mitteleuropa, Waste Land*, that is dedicated to all continental weightlifting championships from 1886 to 1914. Chapter seven analyzes Heavy Athletics. I hope it could be useful in the library of the Todd- McLean Collection.

I am collecting material for a book dedicated to Heavy Athletics in its Golden Age (1880-1914). In this case, I would approach also physical culture, fitness and to find out women's role in this context. I was intrigued by Jan's article on strongwomen. Up to now, I have found further references to the circuses that toured England and the Continent in the first years of the twentieth century.

Very kindly, David Chapman offered his help and he has opened new horizons for continuing my research. May I ask you, in a future time, for some assistance, please?

In any case, thank you for your attention. Your articles in *Iron Game History* were very helpful. I have the hope of drafting some contributions for later issues.

Gherardo Bonini
Firenze, Italy

We would be grateful for any submissions.



Dear IGH:

It was with great pleasure that I received *Iron Game History* Volume 7, Numbers 2 & 3. Reading Jan's article on the history of women's exercise, I was amazed at the amount of research she must have done.

I stay indoors most of the time now and still have wine with my main meal, as I have most of my life. Dave Webster gave me a copy of his new book on Donald Dinnie, which I enjoyed very much. David Gentle also stopped by recently and brought strongman Lee Morrison to meet me. He's from Southampton. They both took away items from my memorabilia.

I read with great interest, too, Terry's article on finding the strongest man at the Arnold Classic. All best wishes,

Joe Assirati
London, England

Joe Assirati, cousin of the legendary lifter/pro wrestler Bert Assirati, is—at 98—our oldest subscriber. He was a close, boyhood friend of Charles A. Smith, and he toured our library in the 1980s. We have also visited with him and his wonderful family in London on several occasions, and are eternally grateful to him for the gift of his collection and for the assistance he provided in our acquisition of the personal scrapbooks of George Hackenschmidt. Joe Assirati is a true gentleman of the Iron Game and we treasure his friendship and support.

Dear IGH:

Hope all is good with both of you. I enjoyed seeing you two at Vic's dinner, and was it not a good one? It was sad to hear of Vic's passing—he had a wonderful life, though, and fulfilling from what I know.

I had a lot of good phone conversations with Vic over the years; we would talk about collecting items pertaining to physical culture. He had learned of my interest in that area and he shared with me stories of items that he had or did have at one time. I guess at one time or another he had about any book or course worth having. He was always interested in what I had come across and what I was looking for.

He had great stories about John Grimek, Bob Hoffman—the *Strength & Health* picnics, George Jowett, etc. He would tell me how they [York] wanted him to be involved with *Strength & Health* magazine. He would always speak well of Bob Hoffman, and all he did to further Olympic lifting in this country. I tend to agree with him—Hoffman was a dynamic character and regardless of how he is sometimes portrayed, he was a person of many positive contributions in the history of weightlifting, fitness, and physical culture in our country.

Back to Vic—he would speak ill of no one that I know of; a trait that is not used enough today. Vic was a link from the days of George Jowett and Warren Travis to the present time. He had great knowledge of health and nutrition, and of course I furthered what I knew from speaking to him. I spoke to him after the 2002 dinner a couple of times. The first time he was not feeling well, then of course I did not know what was the matter but I knew he was not the same. I called a week or so later to see if he was feeling better and I don't think he was, but he took the time to speak to me and I am so glad I called!

Howard Havener
Manassas, VA

**Dear IGH:**

Well, I looked at some of the *Iron Game History* issues and the AAFLA site and liked them. I was especially interested in Terry's story about the PGA Tour trailer. But he left out one pro golfer who lifted weights a lot—me! I played the PGA Tour from 1975-1979. I went to Duke (1969-73) on golf scholarship and the knock on me as a junior golfer was that I wasn't a long enough driver of the ball to progress to the next levels.

I'm only about 5-9. So I started reading about Frank Stranahan and Gary Player and began to lift weights at Duke and got pretty strong and fairly long for my size—probably in the top 25% on tour while I played.

Frank Jobe and I are now close friends, since after my golf career ended, I went back to medical school, and now do primarily shoulder surgery. Frank and I gave a symposium last fall, along with Jimmy Andrews, on shoulder injuries in golfers.

I hope I get to visit you guys in Austin some time and see the library and your collection. I was there three years ago for the American Shoulder and Elbow Society. Terry may remember that I first spoke to him when I was assisting *National Geographic* on a pre-1996 Olympics/sports issue and I told them to call the Todds to track down some rare old photos.

Bill Mallon, M.D.

Via Email

The "AAFLA site" referred to by Dr. Mallon is the website of the Paul Ziffren Sports Resource Center, a part of the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles. The Ziffren library has undertaken the conversion of a number of journals (including IGH) and Olympic documents into digital files that can be downloaded for free. Simply go to: <http://www.aafla.org/search/search.htm> and enter a search topic to find earlier IGH articles.

**Dear IGH:**

I've just received *IGH* Vol. 7 No. 4. It is (as the others are) an absolute gem; the Al Thomas tribute to Vic Boff with his insightful observations on the history of the Iron Game, your own beautifully written, most excellent bio on Pat O'Shea (an extraordinary individual indeed), the Dubshin and Chapman bio on Eliseev (Beyond belief—a world champion lifter able to exceed 300 lbs in the clean and jerk at well under 200 lbs, and also able to survive the most tumultuous of times). The references, the end notes, the very literate style.

Terry, Jan . . . *IGH* is a reader-engaging masterpiece of solid historical significance, wrought with rigorous scholarship and journalistic credibility. All issues have, and will have, an honored place on my library shelf. I treasure them.

Richard Abbott
Santa Paula, CA