

Lee, Mabel. *A History of Physical Education and Sports in the U.S.A.* New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1983. Pp. xiv, 399, Appendix, notes, index, photographs. \$24.95 (cloth)

Mabel Lee, the grand matriarch of physical education at age 97, continues to astonish physical educators and sport historians with her literary productivity. Her latest work is an updated version of the segment she had written for *A Brief History of Physical Education* (fifth edition, 1965). Her purposes for revising her earlier work are four-fold. She intends it to be a textbook for history of physical education classes, a refresher for established professional physical educators, a resource for scholars of physical education history, and a reference for anyone interested in the development of American physical education. As a general overview of the course of physical education in the United States, this book fulfills those purposes.

A History of Physical Education and Sports in the U.S.A. is basically a book about physical education. The appearance of the term "sports" in the title is slightly misleading because the author considers "sports" to be a subdivision of physical education. And as such, she has relegated them to an ancillary role. Following a brief introductory chapter on physical education's ancient and medieval heritage, Ms. Lee traces the evolution and development of physical education in American from colonial times to the 1980s. Most of the emphasis-five of the book's six sections-is justifiably devoted to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The text is largely descriptive, loaded with facts, figures, and lists. The author realized this herself and justified the necessity of factual information mid-way through her work. "If there seems to be a surfeit of dates and statistics it must be realized that only by dates can an item be placed in its niche in history and only by figures can one grasp the extent of its growth" (p. 173). Descriptive history has its purpose. It is a necessary prerequisite for the subsequent stages of interpretive and analytical history. Hopefully, Mabel Lee's work will stimulate the types of physical education histories that John Betts's seminal research has triggered in the history of sport.

Ms. Lee's work, however, is not without interpretation. The author's position on athletics is clear. For more than six decades, she has opposed inter-institutional competition. She has chastized everyone who has promoted it, particularly those who have tried to inject it into women's programs during the 1920s and 30s. The competitive element, she feared, would adulterate women's sports, infesting them with the same shortcomings that debased men's athletics during the twenties. Having wrestled with those issues during her professional career, Ms. Lee presents the reader with eyewitness accounts. Her first-hand experiences have not only been helpful for depicting the condition of athletics some sixty years ago, but have also been a font of information for developments in related areas. They have enabled her to construct an authentic picture of the emergence and growth of physical education's various professional organizations. In addition, the author's concise biographical sketches of eighteen prominent physical educators, most of whom she has known personally, contribute to the book's usefulness.

A History of Physical Education and Sports in the U.S.A. has several shortcomings, but they are more the responsibility of the publisher than the author. In places the text is redundant, inconsistent, and inaccurate. The reader does not have to be told on four separate occasions that the Turners attempted to open a normal school at Rochester, New York before the Civil War (pp. 40, 84, 98, 105). In a similar vein, the results of the same survey appearing on consecutive pages is unnecessary (p. 257-58). Among the most glaring inconsistencies are the contradictory statements about volleyball. The author writes that volleyball was not known to America before the turn of the century (p. 92), then later reveals it was invented at a Massachusetts YMCA in 1895 (p. 106). She also ladens her volume with an incessant plethora of firsts. Nearly every page contains someone or something that was a first. This passage on page 88 demonstrates the author's penchant for firsts:

In 1876 Princeton organized the *first college* athletic association and the University of Chicago in 1893 became the *first* to set up a faculty committee to administer intercollegiate sports. Of the private coeducational colleges, Oberlin was the *first* to establish a department of physical education (1885). . . . Amos Alonzo Stagg was the *first* head of a three-fold department, which encompassed physical education for men, physical education for women and athletics, possibly the *first* such tie-up in the American college world. . . . Of the state universities the University of Wisconsin offered the first classes in physical education (1870). . . . (emphasis supplied)

While some of this information is important, a number of trivial firsts would best have been omitted: for instance, the revelation that the first indoor swimming pool above basement level was at the 23rd Street YMCA in New York City. Those problems and a number of others are minor and could easily have been corrected by careful proofreading and editing by a judicious publisher. What is inexcusable, however, are the many typographical errors and misspellings that the publisher has allowed to mar this book. Moreover, the publisher's own dust jacket leaves out material that not only loses, but confuses, the reader in turning from the front flap to the back.

Perhaps the gravest mistake the publisher made was using an outdated photograph of Mabel Lee on the back of the dust cover. To live as long as Ms. Lee has is remarkable. Even more remarkable is her ability and motivation to conduct research and to publish at her age. By not using a recent photograph of Ms. Lee, the publisher missed a splendid opportunity to promote the work of one of America's golden agers and, at the same time, dispel some of the stereotypes often associated with older Americans.

This text, though it has its place in the historical literature of physical education, does not represent the best of Mabel Lee. She is far more exciting when she reminisces about times gone by as she has done *so* well in *Memories of a Bloomer Girl* (1977) and *Memories Beyond Bloomers* (1978). Her anecdotes and colorful descriptions of her experience in these works make for delightful reading.

Mabel Lee is a unique person. She has devoted more than eighty years to the cause of physical education in America. She has given the profession leadership, direction, and tradition. She is a tireless worker who has accomplished more since her retirement than most physical educators can hope to accomplish during an entire professional career. She is a great inspiration to all. In 1931 she became the first woman president of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (known then as the American Physical Education Association). Now she is the first nonagenarian to write a history of the profession. That achievement alone is ample justification for this book.

William Paterson College

J. Thomas Jable