

March 21, 1988

Paul Anderson  
1603 McIntosh Street  
Vidalia, GA 30474-0525

Dear Paul:

Thank you so much for your letter of March 2, and for all of the materials that you sent. The letters and some of the articles were new to me, and they made for interesting reading.

In accordance with your request, I have enclosed a copy of my first draft of your profile that I have written for my book on strongmen. There will undoubtedly be some subsequent changes in the lead-in material when I start trying to mesh together the individual profiles, but the factual matter that I have written should remain constant (assuming that there are no errors).

I am trying to write the book in a style that will be suitable for the general public, so there is a deliberate attempt to minimize the amount of weightlifting jargon.

I understand your concern regarding errors in articles and books that are written about you. I have detected a number of errors in such articles, and, yes, there were some errors in the articles that you sent me. In fact, I recently discovered an error of which you may not be aware, and I have enclosed a copy of the relevant pages. The author of this book on the Olympics obviously assumed that any athlete who would lose a considerable amount of weight before an important competition would be doing so voluntarily.

In some instances it has been very difficult for me to determine what the facts are. Therefore, I am glad that you are willing to read my rough draft, and to correct any errors.

In particular, I want to draw your attention to the following.

(1) Your height

It seems that half of the writers have listed you at 5-9, the other half at 5-10, and I see where Jeff Everson has you listed at 5-8. Is 5-9 correct?

(2) The back lift record that you broke

For many years I have believed that the record was 4,235 by Jack Walsh. (And I see from one of the newspaper articles you sent me that you also believed that to be the record.) But now I'm inclined to accept 4,638 since Willoughby's book gives the date, place, and composition of the weight.

(3) Your best full squat

Every writer seems to use a different number. I used 1,230 as that figure was given in one of the articles that you and Todd wrote for MD.

(4) Push press of 600 for 3 reps?

I obtained this from Bob Hise's article about you in IOL. I had previously assumed that your best was 565. Is 600 correct? And for 3 reps???

(5) Side press of 380?

I also obtained this from Hise's article, and it is another number that I had not seen before. I don't doubt that you were capable of that, however, as 11 (or 12) reps with 300 would certainly equate to a single with more than 350.

(6) Notice my footnote on page 3. I have guessed that this is the correct explanation, as I have never read it anywhere.

(7) The current number of Paul Anderson Youth Homes was not apparent from what I read. If I had the number I would have used it.

I have obtained, on approval, the photo of you lifting the two gymnasts that you mentioned in your letter. I might use it, but I am really looking for something that is a bit more impromptu and casual. The photo of you lifting the two secretaries would probably be more suitable, but I am having some difficulty in obtaining it.

Of the photos that you sent, I will probably use the one of you speaking in church, and possibly the lifting photo (with barbell). Concerning the latter, I can't tell for sure how much weight is on the bar. My guess would be 445 or 465. Do you recall the weight and also your bodyweight and the year the photo was taken?

I appreciate your offer regarding information about other lifters. I am writing the book by decades, from the present time back to 1900, and I expect to encounter some difficulty in obtaining the mailing addresses of certain lifters who are no longer active, and who have faded from view. In particular, if you by chance have the mailing addresses of Jack Walsh and Doug Hepburn that would be quite helpful.

I have enclosed a check for \$25 (in part to cover the cost of the materials that you sent). While I'm thinking about it, you can have your people put me back on the (Youth Home) mailing list, as they

(3)

seem to have lost track of me over the past few years.

Best regards,

*Tom Ryan*

Tom Ryan

enclosures

# PAUL ANDERSON YOUTH HOME, INC.

POST OFFICE BOX 525  
VIDALIA, GEORGIA 30474

(912) 537-7237



April 1, 1988

Mr. Tom Ryan

Dear Tom,

I will do my very best in answering your letter concerning the article you are writing for your book. Some things I may be vague about, because I either do not know or I am very hesitant to make a statement concerning someone else when I do not actually know all the facts in the case.

Your first question was my height. I do not believe I have ever been five foot ten, and I don't think I have ever measured my height, but many people have just guessed at how tall I am. Some experts say that through the years we lose height because of the deterioration of our joints, and you know with all of the arthritis I have inherited and received through the automobile accident, this could be the case with me. I believe something like five foot eight or nine would be in the ballpark.

Your second question had to do with the backlift. This is also difficult for me to answer because I had never heard of the Jack Walch lift until later years. I never read Willoughby's books, so this could be the answer. The two books that were shown to me in the mid-50's concerning the world record in the backlift gave credit to Louis Cyr. These two books were the Guinness Book of World Records and Superlatives. Both read just about the same and described his lift and naturally did not have a picture. The books would be brought to me, and the people approaching me with them would say something like, "If you're the strongest man in the world, why has this French Canadian, Louis Cyr, lifted more weight than you?" In response to this, I decided to have a platform constructed to do a backlift, but first had to determine just how high I wanted to lift the weight and in what position I would be. I noticed that the back porch of our home, which was not underpinned, looked about the right height. I proceeded to get under the porch and place my hands on a large tool chest that was there. The position felt exactly to my liking, and just for the fun of it, I started pushing. I found that this backlift stance was so

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sturdy that I continued to push and raised the entire porch from its foundation. I actually believe it was heavier than the official weight I eventually lifted.

To continue, we weighed the platform that I was going to use for the official lift and added enough plates, both exercise and Olympic, to make up what finally weighed 6,270 pounds. Unfortunately, a good picture could not be made of the lift. For convenience sake, this was all done outside of my gym in my back yard at Toccoa, Georgia, and the shade trees disallowed any good shots. Another thing I would like to add here is that I understand a lift can be official if a piece of paper is pulled out from under all legs simultaneously. With me this was not necessary. In my prime I was, and still am, strictly a muscle lifter and did not depend on my joints to make short distance movements. I lifted the weight some three to four inches. I had officials there and what you would have to call a small audience. At the time, documented letters were written to the officials of the Guinness Book of World Records by the certified judges and newspapermen who were present. As you probably have noticed in past issues, the Guinness Book of World Records used a picture of me as they described my backlift. This was a shot of me doing a deadlift, which is completely unrelated to the backlift, as you know. I imagine they just wanted something to use as a lifting shot. The McWhirter brothers, who founded and edited the Guinness Book of World Records, have always been very particular about what they used in print. They did a full investigation in our case. I realize that the book holds everything from the ridiculous to the sublime, but whatever it is, we can count on it being accurate. My suggestion is that if you would like to double check on any of the people you are writing about, or their records, John Grimek is a good source. He has retired now and has a great deal of time; his address is Post Office Box 1321, York, Pennsylvania, 17405. He is seventy-six years old and has been in the weightlifting sport for many, many years and is a totally honest and sincere gentleman.

Your third question was concerning my deep knee bend. I must be perfectly honest with you; the twelve hundred pounds was strictly face value. I believe that Terry Todd assumed that the twelve hundred pounds plus the bar that I was using would have weighed at least twelve hundred and thirty, if not more. Personally, I must say twelve hundred, because this was what it read from face value. However, I have a friend in Texas who said that when he was helping to load the bar for one of these lifts (I did this poundage more than one time), he added another ten pounds to make sure that we were over the twelve hundred mark.

Your number four question about the push press can be pretty accurate. I well remember this lift; I did two reps holding the

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weight overhead for two seconds; the third one I never controlled at the very top, because I had to take a step to overcome the vertigo I was developing by looking up at a clear blue sky. I was not accustomed to lifting outside, but I always focused my eyes on some object in a building. I'm sure you understand this situation. As far as strength is concerned, I would say that I did three reps.

Question number five was about the side press. I cannot remember what my last letter said to you. I remember writing, but I am doing this particular dictation without the benefit of my files, because our office is closed. The side press got to be very popular with me when I was traveling and living in motels. I had a bar and a solid dumbbell attached to it, that weighed something like 265. I hope if I quoted these figures to you before that I am somewhere in the neighborhood of the same numbers. The heavy dumbbell was attached to a bar because I dropped it one time, and it broke. I then had it drilled out, a bar put through, and the weights welded on, leaving about three feet on one end and two feet on the other. The reason for this was so I could practice using the weight by rocking it up on the high end and placing it on my shoulder from there. This would eliminate cleaning it and save my energy for the press, if I did it in exhibition. I could load as much weight on either end as I wanted, and always liked the fact that the long bar was in front of me because I have a tendency to push with the lower end of my hand just beneath the little finger. If the weight is equal, the front will go up and throw me off balance. Anyway, I got very good at this lift, as I did it everyday and could do 300 or more for as many reps as I desired, within reason. Please do not take this as a boast, but I could just keep pushing the weight up. Ray Vancleef counted a great many of these one day, when I was in San Jose for a while. He used to tell how many I did, but I cannot remember the amount. If I told you in another letter, it was probably more accurate than what I would say today, since I am writing this letter after a full day's work and not feeling well at all physically. My wild guess would be his figure was somewhere around twenty repetitions. I have no idea what I could have done for a single and never had a reason to try, because I was far above the world record that was printed in the old English professional record book. Just for your information, and probably entertainment, when I was doing all the repetitions with this weight that weighed basically 265, I had a man who weighed about 150 or 155 to do a bent press with it. It was one of the scariest things I have ever seen. When I did my side presses, naturally I leaned over to compensate and secure a good position, but this man went all the way down to the ground. He was a hod carrier and one of the most amazing specimens I have ever witnessed for his size.

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You asked about the picture of me lifting the girls. I went all over the country, as I told you before, and was posted in a lot of windows. As you probably remember, there was a day when the latest news pictures were put in various store windows to draw attention. On the other hand, you might check with Delta and Pan American Airlines for their files in the 50's. There were numerous pictures taken of me lifting their stewardesses, especially Pan Am. The LONDON TIMES also made one of me lifting two girls on the street in London in 1964. One was a black girl and the other a white girl, which may give you a little better description of this shot.

I personally never heard of Jack Walch until later years. To qualify this, let me say that in the weightlifting world, I never heard of him. In all due respect, it seems that he had a circus act or something of that sort and never competed in lifting. Please don't quote me on this, because honestly I'm just not sure. The mailing address of Doug Hepburn is 38 East 4th Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, V5T 1E8, Canada. You might want to call Doug if you can. I have found him to be a poor writer; that is, he doesn't answer his correspondence right away, because he probably does not have a secretary and is handicapped in taking care of his mail. He is a great guy and has one of the most marvelous minds that I have ever encountered. His memory is phenomenal; he has a photographic ability to glance over any material and repeat it back to you. I always thought it was a shame that he had such a hard time growing up and was deprived of the option of higher education.

I am getting a little ahead of myself, so let me go back to your sixth question. You are very correct in your footnote there. No one would believe that I pressed the 400 pounds in High Point. It weighed 402 pounds, and there were recognized officials present. I just imagine at that time someone decided that it couldn't be done.

Your seventh question has to do with the number of our Youth Homes in existence. Let me explain this for a moment, and then you can edit it the way you like. The Paul Anderson Youth Home in Vidalia, Georgia, is the Paul Anderson Youth Home. We had an idea of going national, but we found that even though we had hundreds of invitations and wonderful people offering to finance and help operate the homes, there would be no way we could check on what was really happening in these particular institutions. I don't like the word "institution," but use it for emphasis. We found that as we tried to start others, there would be individuals who were well-meaning and dedicated, but thought they could run things in a different manner. Because of this, we were leery of putting

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our names on other homes that we could not fully control. Our hopes and desires, and especially our prayers, are to use the Home here to work with as many young people as we are capable in an avant-garde situation and innovate our educational system as much as possible. Do not get me wrong. We are not experimenting with young lives: they are too valuable for such actions. We are seeing what they can learn in the easiest, most joyful manner attainable. We have made great progress in this area, and instead of trying to establish Paul Anderson Youth Homes throughout the country, we are open to all those who want to come in, serve apprenticeships to learn what we are doing, and then go back to their areas to start similar homes, thereby spreading our way of working with young people and also teaching them the formal portion of their education. In years to come, we also dream of the public school system using our programs. We do not feel that it is necessary for a child to be bored for one minute in a classroom.

Thanks for the contribution, and please forgive us for not having you on the mailing list. We had a fire that destroyed all of our files on the boys and our entire mailing list. We have been very fortunate in putting much of this back together, but I am sorry that your name was not included. We were lucky that our financial records were at the auditors at the time of the fire.

After reading your article, I must say that you have done a tremendous amount of research. There are things that I know were not in the material I sent you, and I appreciate your thoroughness.

You are very correct in challenging the printed article you sent me about losing weight to get into shape for the Olympics. The bug that plagued me so terribly in Australia was not a stranger and had been around for a couple of months before I went to the games. I would like to have weighed about 375 pounds for my actual competition in Australia. The author of the article in Penguin books was misinformed, but I certainly appreciate his last sentence stating that I am a devout Christian.

If I can be of any further help to you, please let me know. I hope that I have answered your questions on a straightforward, sound basis, and I assure you any time I was a little vague, it was sincere.

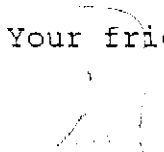
Thank you for being a supporter of the Home and for your dedication to lifting. I notice that you later mentioned Grimek after I had told you he would be a good source. He has no ax to grind in



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any way and certainly would serve well in this capacity, if you need his opinions.

Your friend in Christ,



Paul Anderson

PA/vw

P.S. I just thought of something that I have heard Bob Hoffman say many times. I don't know what you have in your book concerning Steve Stanko. Bob always said that the greatest feat of strength was Steve Stanko clean and jerking 380 pounds ten times within a few minutes during one afternoon. I can't tell you how many minutes these were, but this is something that you may contemplate, since Steve pulled his weights almost all the way up in a power clean with only a shallow split. Once again, let me apologize for not reading the first letter I wrote you. If I deviated anywhere, it was not intentional, and if I did not mention the lifting of the porch in the first letter but only the truck lift, I am just trying to add a little more human interest.