

## **Unjustly Curious?**

[ simple questions remaining unsatisfied regarding Paul Anderson's claimed back lift ]  
by Joe Roark

*For those who cherish ironhistory as I do, it is not disrespectful to double check the claims of lifters. Otherwise when Vasily Aleexev cleaned and jerked over 600 lbs to become the first human to do so, as a news-paper in Urbana, Illinois reported in 1970, the typo (which should have mentioned over 500 lbs) might still be believed by those who do not carefully follow the iron game. Aleexev, at the time, was the most famous weightlifter in the world.*

*Thirteen years before that typo, the most famous lifter in the world was the American Paul Anderson, who had won Gold at the 1956 Olympics in weightlifting for the USA. The following year, having started a pro career, he claimed a back lift of 6,270 lbs. It is also not disrespectful to examine that claim. If the lift happened, what is the harm is scrutinizing it? If it did not happen, are we dealing with another simple typo, or a situation not at all simple?*

## **BEWILDERING CONDITIONS**

On May 17, 2017 I drove my wife, and my mother, to Quincy, Illinois to visit my sister Sue, who was in the hospital following spinal surgery. On the return trip eastbound on Interstate 72 we encountered about a dozen sporadic high wind dry plains dust storms. Most allowed enough visibility so that we could see for a quarter mile forward. But one in particular was, once entered, increasingly worse, until visibility became actually zero. I could not see the hood of my car! Surrounded by darkness, we crept the car forward for about five seconds, and then clearing skies emerged.

The back lift attributed to, and claimed by, Paul Anderson was similar to my driving experience that day except that no clearing occurs. Indeed the more we enter the search for details, the darker and less transparent that information becomes- a virtual storm of details.

## **60th ANNIVERSARY**

Sixty years ago, on Wednesday, June 12, 1957 tucked into the backyard of Paul Anderson's home in Toccoa, Georgia, we are told, stood two trestles atop which was a flat platform about the size of a large household door, and enough other weight to total 6,270 pounds, under which 24-year old Paul Anderson positioned himself, bent over enough so that he had to straighten his legs only inches, to elevate the load with his flat back, with hands braced on something unnamed, to the temporary relief of the twin trestles and the weightlifting record books, which then, after about 60 years could move on from Louis Cyr's former record, perhaps itself mistakenly recorded as about 4,133 lbs, by adding slightly more than another ton to that back lift attributed to Cyr.

1957 was the year that I began lifting weights at age 14, and in June that year Paul was to have married Gail Taylor, but the marriage did not take place. Instead, Paul married Glenda Garland in September 1959, twenty seven months after the back lift. Neither Paula, his daughter, nor Glenda ever saw the platform. That platform was gone by the time Glenda and Paul married, and Paula was not born until 1966. We do not know for certain when the platform was built, but probably sometime in late 1956 or early 1957.

### **WHY THE BACK LIFT?**

Paul had encountered the following question circa 1956: If you are the strongest man alive, why is the French Canadian strongman Louis Cyr reported to still hold the record in the back lift? The question found its source in the following:

#### **THE GUINNESS BOOK OF SUPERLATIVES: 1956**

"The greatest weight ever raised by a human being is 4,133 lbs (1.84 tons) by the 350 lb. French-Canadian, Louis Cyr (1863-1912) in Chicago in 1896 in a back-lift (weight raised off trestles). Cyr had a 60 1/2 inch chest and 22 inch biceps."

### **DOES THE BACK LIFT HAVE A LEG TO STAND ON?**

Please notice- the lift by Cyr was also elevated off trestles- the trestles were supports, not part of the lift- the same was true of Anderson's later attempt. So any written mention of four table legs leaving the earth upward signifies the author did not know how the lift was performed.

Was Cyr able to lift 4,133 lbs in the back lift? His other reported back lift of about 4,300 lbs consisted of each of the 18 men stating his own body weight plus an estimated platform weight of 500 lbs ( which was a generous amount for a back lift platform, strength historian David Willoughby asserted) thus meaning each man needed to weigh an average of 211 lbs. That was in Boston on May 27, 1896 (some sources say 1895). Four months later strongman Warren Lincoln Travis witnessed Cyr perform a back lift, and estimated his max would be, interestingly specific, 3,970 lbs. Another strongman, Horace Barre thought Cyr's limit would be 3,900-4,000 lbs.

There were other back lifts performed by Cyr, but if we settle on the round number of 4,000 lbs for him, we have a point of comparison for our purpose here to Anderson's lift of an additional 2,270 lbs., or, 50% more than Cyr managed. Did Cyr ever go for a record in the back lift, or simply demonstrate his ability in public venues? We do not know.

What other lifts would lead us to believe that Anderson was 50% stronger than Cyr in feats that both men performed? An interesting question, but a diversion regarding the back lift. The fact that Cyr was stronger in grip strength is not relevant to the back lift. Cyr is mentioned only to show the target poundage that Paul needed to eclipse to enter Guinness. Paul no doubt had a greater hip strength than Cyr based on Paul's squats.

So, Paul decided to try for a record in the back lift, hoping to eclipse Cyr's Book of Superlatives record. To this point in his career he had not ever performed a witnessed back lift of more than perhaps one ton, or less, consisting of four to six men sitting on a 200 lb table, which indeed had attached legs under which Paul positioned himself. On one occasion, the table was not constructed as Paul's specs had indicated in a diagram sent ahead to the venue, and Paul was unable to back lift the few men- no doubt not from lack of strength but perhaps a board pressing against his spine- but he did not specify the reason. The legs of this table, built according to specs he always had sent ahead for public performances, were attached to the tabletop. So it appears that about one ton in the back lift, was a figure Paul could manage with some regularity at his appearances.

Here are the weather conditions for Toccoa, Georgia, site of the attempt, for the days surrounding June 12, 1957 on Tugalo Street where Paul lived.

date:	precip:	high:	low:	
Mon Jun 10, 1957	0.00	70	61	
Tues Jun 11, 1957	0.02	82	64	
Wed Jun 12, 1957	0.00	95	68	date of back lift
Thur Jun 13, 1957	0.03	95	64	
Fri Jun 14, 1957	0.04	90	66	

The dust clouds are ahead, so let's clarify some points before we proceed.

### **HELLO, IT'S ME**

I will be writing some in the first person because I have been the person criticized for daring to question the back lift as having even taken place- being as I am, dependent on facts, and not one to mimic the meanderings of some other writers who, in turn, have adopted the unexamined words of others.

### **CANNONBALL, EXPRESS YOURSELF**

Paul bought an old cannonball safe in the early 1950s from a junkyard in Tennessee and used this safe in some of his strength performances such as when Charles Mapes (owner of the Mapes Hotel in Reno, Nevada) first witnessed Paul lifting the safe in California 'in a hole in the ground', where Paul would lift the safe (partially) out of that hole. Keep in mind that Paul told me he never used or owned a second safe.

So, some words about cannonball safes. These safes, flat on top and on bottom, had extremely thick walls surrounding their circular middle (hence, cannonball)- in some cases with the large cannonballs, the wall thickness could be more than a foot. These safes, according to my conversation with a locksmith with much experience in repairing cannonballs, and chats with other locksmiths, plus other research I have done led me to these conclusions:

1. A larger cannonball safe which may approach 4,000 lbs had a cavity, once the safe door was closed, large enough to contain the volume of, if not the shape of a watermelon.
2. The cannonball safe that Paul used in his lifting, about 2,300 lbs had a cavity which could hold perhaps the space of a large loaf of bread. Usually there were shallow shelves along the rear wall of the safe (opposite where the door closed) perhaps four inches deep. On these shelves containers of jewelry or stacks of cash could be placed. So, only the rear wall had any storage capacity.
3. Recall that when Paul bought his safe from a junkyard in Tennessee in the early 1950s, he said someone had cut away the back of the safe, so he filled it with (take your pick) weights and concrete, or every piece of junk he could find. He offered both explanations. How much concrete can be poured into an opening the size of a loaf of bread? What size barbells plates (if that was what was meant by 'weights' ) would fit into such a space *with* the concrete? How many pieces of junk are required to fill up the area of a bread sack?
4. After Paul first acquired the safe, Earle Liederman wrote about Paul and mentioned that the safe weighed about 2,300 lbs. This was *after* Paul had filled it- it weighed 2,300 lbs, not 3,500 lbs. There is no element on earth the size of a bread sack that weighs 1,200 lbs.

At any rate, when the safe was filled and welded shut, with lifting loops attached, Paul said he had an object of about 3,500 lbs. So the error started early. In fact, he had an object weighing 2,300 lbs. We will learn that the weight of the safe never changed.

Paul used a sort of harness as he stood on a platform over the safe in California, so that bending his legs, attaching the harness to the safe through a hole in the platform above the safe, he would then stand erect and the safe would emerge or at least begin to emerge from the hole wherein it sat. This is the technique he had used in his back yard in Tennessee when he lifted the safe to build strength, although there the safe sat atop the earth, not in a hole. He could *not* have done a full squat harness lift with the safe because it weighed about 2,300 lbs, as Earle Liederman reported, and no human can fully squat so much weight.

### **BRYAN AND I VISIT TOCCOA**

Until my friend Bryan Frederick and I stopped by Tugalo Street on September 7, 1995 to get measurements of the safe I had never seen a photo of it, and to my knowledge, no

photo of it had ever been published- including in either of Paul's own biographies, and not in the biography later written by Randy Strossen, although I had sent Randy a photo of the safe when I returned home after taking photos. I did not know that Randy was writing a biography about Paul when I alerted him that there was no way the safe weighed 3,500 lbs, that it weighed probably in the neighborhood of 2,300 lbs. I had come to this conclusion after checking with several locksmiths, calling a safe company, checking the Internet for Cannonball type safes, and doing some math. Never again would the safe be referred to, by Paul, as weighing only 2,300 lbs. And never did Paul mention that he later reopened the safe to *remove* the concrete and barbell plates, or the pieces of junk, so whatever it weighed after the back lift of June 12, 1957 was what it had weighed since Paul altered it in the early 1950s.

Why then, some years later, after the safe had fallen through the rotting platform upon which it sat for the 1957 back lift and crashed to the yard below, just beyond Paul's driveway, and Paul's daughter, Paula, later apparently became curious as to what in fact the safe weighed, did it again weigh only close to 2,300 lbs? What happened to those other 1,200 lbs that had been added, indeed welded shut inside the safe? By the way, why did his daughter want the safe to be weighed? Was she being disrespectful, or justly curious? She was born about nine years after the back lift took place, and the platform was gone by then, only the safe remained.

We will never know if anything was inserted unless the safe is opened and examined. My guess is that this will never be allowed. But the answers it would yield! In fact, Strossen acknowledges that he tried to dissuade Paula from weighing the safe itself, asserting that it would prove nothing. Then he bemoaned the fact that the platform is no longer extant to be weighed! At any rate, the weight of the safe before any additions was about 2,300 lbs. The current weight of the safe is about 2,300 lbs. In my opinion no weight was ever added to the cavity, UNLESS it was added to bring the weight up to 2,300 lbs- this would explain why the weight remained constant [in reality] after the first report. It would not explain the 3,500 figure.

But, the dust cloud is denser now. Although in fact the weight probably never changed, it continued to be referred to as weighing 3,500 lbs. And this figure was used as part of the 6,270 pound total- so we have an immediate over calculation of about 1,200 lbs yielding a back lift of 5,070 lbs instead of 6,270 lbs.

Paul said that his father built a platform that weighed about 1,800 lbs. Using Paul's own figures, then adding 1,800 lbs and 3,500 lbs, we arrive at 5,300 lbs. How then do we explain references that Paul had previously back lifted only 5,000 lbs? Perhaps another platform was used, or the safe was not on the platform for those attempts? In a personal letter to me dated January 24, 1990 Paul said the platform weighed 'well over a thousand pounds'. Now, of course, 1,800 lbs is indeed well over 1,000 lbs, but usually most readers would assume that well over 1,000 means shy of 1,100- the next logical reference point. If I mention that a current lifter can squat well over 1,000 lbs, do you assume he squatted 1,800?

Paul asserted that when the safe was on the platform and he had added other weights and junk onto the platform, the materials on and including the platform were removed and weighed and the total was precisely 6, 270 lbs. Later, in a letter to me responding to my request for some information about the back lift, Paul mentioned that the total weight was in fact a couple hundred pounds more (so, 6,470 lbs?). Why was this not mentioned in any biography or story that Paul himself, or others, wrote?

### **SIZING UP THE SAFE**

Dimensions of Paul's safe :   Diameter: 24"  
  Height 20.5 " from ground, though probably had sunk into  
  the earth a couple of inches, over the years.  
  Diameter of safe's door opening: 16 "  
  Wall Width: unknown but likely 4-6 inches  
  Circumference 70"

So, here was an object one could straddle during a bowlegged walk. It was not big, large, or huge, as writers had described it. It could easily be sat upon by any adult near it. But sticking with the famous number reported by Guinness for several years (but not in the immediate decade after the back lift record was claimed)- that is, 6, 270 lbs, about 970 lbs would have needed to be added to the platform using Paul's numbers of 1,800 and 3,500 to reach 6,270 lbs.

But using the actual numbers, 2,300 + 1,800 (more than triple the weight of the platform that Cyr used), we have 4,100 lbs- about the amount that some credit Cyr lifting. If the total was in fact 4,100 lbs, then 2,170 lbs would need to be added to reach 6,270 lbs. All of this on a platform which Paul's brother-in-law referred to as being the size of a large household door. In round figures seven feet by three feet? The safe is about two feet wide, and if the safe were placed dead center (for balance), that would leave about 30 inches on either side lengthwise for additional weights, and about six inches widthwise on either side of the safe. Not much room to add 2,170 lbs.

Of course, Paul could have straddled the table by placing loaded Olympic barbells perpendicular to the table, but he does not mention this.

### **WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 12, 1957**

Paul mentions he invited witnesses to that Wednesday back lift attempt. Different accounts indicate different numbers of witnesses. Keeping in mind that the purpose for Paul attempting this back lift was so that his name would be in Guinness, one would assume that the witnesses were there to verify and testify on the record and place Paul into the pages of that record book, presumably the next available printing. So why do we have no printed record of any of the witnesses so indicating? Paul offers: "A newspaper man was there, who came through our request, and as I have already said, my brother-in-law was also there".

[Paul had only one brother-in-law, Julius Johnson, who told me he was NOT there] Karo Whitfield at whose gym Paul had sometimes trained, said to be present, with some of his business friends, never wrote about it. Nor did any of the several others, including one man Paul described in his letter to me this way "One was a man by the name of Foster, who lived in Oregon and represented the GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS, at one time, or at least was a contributor". There is not a single word of testimony from any of the people named as present.

Indeed, Guinness officials, many years later, when asked about what evidence prompted Paul's back lift inclusion, found that evidence insufficient, and removed the entry.

### **PAUL ANDERSON PASSES**

Paul died August 15, 1994 at age 61. Bryan Frederick and I were on our way to the Mr. Olympia in Atlanta, Georgia on September 10, that year when we stopped on September 7 to see the safe in Toccoa, Georgia. I had thought this was an opportune time to see the safe to take the measurements and write a tribute about Paul lifting it as part of his famous back lift.

### **MY HEART SINKS IN SADNESS**

After we parked the car across the street from the house, we began walking up the driveway. I knocked on the door to ask permission to go to the backyard to look at the safe. Permission was granted. As Bryan and I walked toward the safe, we were struck with its small size. I *knew* that even if the safe were solid manganese, with no cavity, it would not weigh anything close to 3,500 lbs. It was a sad moment of realization for me, and for Bryan. I had read that the safe was huge, or big, or large, but it stood only two feet tall, as short as our hopes of now believing that the safe could weigh as much as had been claimed for it.

### **MY MOTIVE IS MANGLED**

After returning home, I began researching cannonball safes with the dimensions I had recorded for Paul's safe, and later, when I first wrote about the back lift some people thought it disrespectful, since Paul had died, that I would even check into the matter. Here's what prompted me to investigate: I began writing about the lift- *assuming* it was a fact, based on the published material about the feat. Recall, I had never seen the safe or any photo of it, so I was anticipating a safe into which a grown man might be able to fit. My intent was to write a story of praise. But those dust clouds continued to darken, and now that I had actually seen and measured the safe, the supposed facts vanished.

## **DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHERE YOU ARE, JOE?**

I made an error in an earlier story saying that the back lift had taken place in Vidalia, Georgia instead of where it really was reported, Toccoa. I made this mistake, how, escapes me, but I did. I named the wrong town. But then, so did Paul, and no one criticized him! Here is what that means: Paul said that his brother-in-law Julius Johnson, who owned a fine camera was present on June 12, 1957 in Toccoa, Georgia, and tried to take some photos, but because of the tremendous shade (not dust clouds) cast by some trees the photos did not develop well enough to use. In his letter to me Paul wrote about Julius, "He had a highly sophisticated camera which would usually take anything you could see with the naked eye, without using lights. The only thing he got was the platform and a darkness underneath. You cannot even see my outline." Paul also mentions regarding those present, 'Every person that I have mentioned, and there were many more that I cannot remember, are scattered to the winds.' He further states, that with the exception of his brother-in-law, all who were present that he had mentioned, "are now dead". How he is aware of people he cannot remember now being deceased, he did not indicate. So, I assume what he meant was only those he had mentioned by name.

## **WHERE WAS JULIUS JOHNSON ON JUNE 12, 1957?**

So, I called Julius Johnson, a man of honor. I say this because when asked about the photo story he said he was not present in Toccoa that day (so obviously did not take photos there) and that he heard about the back lift later. I mentioned that Paul had said that Julius was present. He replied, 'I was not there'. I asked how much later he had heard about the back lift. He said 'much later'. So Paul named one witness who disagrees that he was there, or that he took pictures there, and who was unaware the lift was even scheduled for that day.

When Julius Johnson wrote a tribute to Paul in The Toccoa Record on October 6, 1994, some details are mentioned that, to my knowledge are not presented elsewhere:

1. The lift took place in the *afternoon* of June 12, 1957 (he does not mention the fact that the temperature that day in Toccoa was 95 degrees). It may not have been 95 degrees wherever Julius was that day.
2. There was apparently no plan to set a back lift record that day, Paul was simply working out. [ so why did Paul summon people for the purpose of setting a record, including a Guinness representative for that specific date ]
3. Several people were watching him work out. and Karo Whitfield mentioned that the greatest back lift ever was 'something over 4,000 pounds', and Paul thought he could beat that.
4. So Paul loaded up his 'stout wooden platform'. Julius continues 'Many people saw him use that kind of platform to lift several people at one time.' Is this the 200 pound table



that Paul used in his public demonstrations? Is this why Julius mentions that 'everyone could clearly see that all four legs were off the ground'? What happened to the trestles? Anyway, they filled it up with weights and that safe which Julius recalled weighed 'something over 3,000 pounds'.

5. Paul lifted the total of 6,270 pounds and that total was checked 'again and again'. Karo and Maurice Payne, a newspaper man decided to notify Guinness.

[ If this is so, why did the Guinness entry for 1962 assert only 6,000 lbs, and as late as 1968 mention that Paul was 'reputed to have once lifted 6,200 lbs' (notice, not 6,270) and each amount was ascribed to June 12, 1957.. I have not seen the 1969 entry, but 1970 lists the 6,270- this is 13 years after the lift] And how did Julius know what everyone saw if he was not present? And what details, checked again and again did Whitfield and Payne supply to Guinness?

6. Paul mentioned privately to Julius that he had lifted 'over 7,000 pounds' but that since there were no witnesses he kept that figure to himself. Was this 7,000 lbs before or after June 12? If before, then certainly Paul would have been confident, and it would explain why he referred to lifting the 6,270 as 'not extremely difficult'. If afterwards, when?

7. Julius tells this story as someone who was not present.

Which brings up this question? Who was present and did bring along a camera? The Guinness Rep? Karo Whitfield? The newsman Maurice Payne? Friends who wanted a snapshot to own? Apparently not a single soul saved the incident on film for posterity. Amazing.

### **IT'S A HOUSE DOOR, NOT A CASTLE DOOR!**

Paul's daughter, apparently wanting to know how much the safe weighed, enlisted someone for the task. The weight was found to be in the neighborhood of 2,300 lbs. (first weighing was 2,375 lbs, but the second weighing was 2,240 lbs, so splitting the difference, I use about 2,300 lbs) We no longer have the platform to weigh, so there is no way to determine if the 1,800 lbs was accurate, although a wooden platform, nailed together, which was the size of a large household door would have to be how thick to weigh close to a ton? Those who suggest railroad ties may have been involved are adding information from imagination rather than source material. And why would railroad ties rot as quickly as whatever the platform was composed of, did?

## **THE NEW, KNEW MATH**

In regard to the other materials on the table,:

Earle Liederman writing in Muscle Power magazine February 1954:

"The basic weight for this exercise is an old steel safe filled with cement which weighs 2300 pounds."(The source for this information must have been Paul himself.)

But in the January 24, 1990 letter Paul wrote to me:

"Let's now go to the 6, 270 pounds. This was rounded off, because it actually was a couple of hundred pounds more. [Roark, 6,470?]  
The basic weight was a big manganese safe I bought at a junk yard when I lived in Tennessee. It weighted about 3500 pounds. Someone had tried to break into it, or perhaps lost the combination, for the back was cut out; so I filled it full of weights to bring it up to a greater poundage. The walls on it were very thick, and I was surprised at how few weights I could get into it. I then poured in concrete to stabilize the weights and add a little more poundage. My Dad had built the platform for me, and it weighed well over a thousand pounds, and the other poundages were made up of official weights.[Roark: barbell plates?]

So, what we know for sure is that the safe weighed about 2,300 lbs, that the platform was probably less than 1,800 lbs- probably far less, and that we do not know specifically what other items were placed on the small remaining space of the table. We also know, that at the minimum, the 6,270 lbs claimed was overstated by 1,200 lbs, so the most the back lift could have been would be 5, 070 lbs. My opinion is that the platform probably weighed far less than 1,800 lbs (really, is it difficult to doubt the weight of the platform, when the weight of the safe was overstated by about 50%?).

### **CAN THE BACK LIFT CLAIM BE BACKED UP?**

Anyway, the question now becomes, did ANY back lift happen on June 12, 1957? We know the 6,270 figure was too high, as would be the 6,470 figure Paul mentioned to me in a letter. What can be used to establish that any back lift happened that day considering no witnesses spoke about it at the time, and only rumors, later, seem to mention it, and in those reports the total weight does not agree!?! Even Guinness did not use the 6, 270 number until more than a decade after the back lift. We have no record of Paul trying to correct the 6,000 entry or the 6, 200 entry during those 13 years.

## PAUL APPEARS ON ED SULLIVAN'S TV SHOW

Earlier in 1957, Paul had appeared on the variety television show of Ed Sullivan. Then his second appearance on Ed's show took place *four days after the back lift*, that is, on Sunday June 16, 1957. On this appearance, Paul cleaned and easily pressed 415 lbs. So, did Paul use this nationwide occasion to announce that on the previous recent Wednesday afternoon, on a blazingly hot occasion he had eclipsed Cyr's 60-year old lifting record by more than one ton? No. We must wonder why. Wasn't such an achievement significant enough, and timely enough to proclaim on national television?

Earle Liederman, writing in Muscle Power magazine February 1957 mentions the safe weighed about 2,300 lbs. The article had taken some months of negotiations with Julius Johnson because Earle offered:

"And I might add that Julius Johnson and I spent a few months in our endeavors to decide what to release to the world with Paul's own special approval, because Paul is ever reluctant to talk about himself, nor, as mentioned, does he care to reveal his astounding records done in training as these are not official."

Later that year, when summoning witnesses to watch his back lift, perhaps Paul thought that by having the feat listed in Guinness, it would be 'official'.

And what other astounding records were done in training during 1956 ? Perhaps he was referring to his ability in the squat, which was indeed superlative.

p 57 describes his harness lift with 2300 lb cement filled safe

"The basic weight for this exercise is an old steel safe filled with cement which weighs 2300 pounds. To perform this exercise Paul stands on a platform with a hole in the center. He hooks the belt to a chain which drops through the hole and it is hooked to the safe beneath. Thus, he is able to perform a squat without the weight touching bottom too soon, or without it jamming between his legs. He chains additional weights all over this safe, and has performed this exercise with as much as 4,000 pounds, three reps!"

(Joe Roark asks: So 1,700 lbs of extra weights were chained to an object (the safe) whose dimensions are roughly a cube of 2' ?) And, the safe is made of manganese, not steel.

p 58 mentions Paul back lifted over 5000 lbs

"As for Paul's back lifting, he was publicly challenged by Jack Walsh, who as many may know, performed a back-lift with an elephant on Steve Allen's television show. Paul became interested in this lift and consequently made a heavy platform on which he put his heavy safe as a basic weight. To date he has lifted all the weight he has been able to load onto this platform. These total weights, calculated by adding together the various poundages, comes to something over 5,000 pounds! Since no one knows how much the heavy platform weighs, the exact over-all weight remains guess-work."

Notice that final line- no one knows how much the heavy platform weighs? So, Paul had not yet taken apart the platform to weigh it. Writings about when this happened are vague, but I would assume before the June 12, 1957 back lift attempt. But if the weight was 'something over 5,000 lbs, and the platform was about 1,800 lbs then we are close enough to knock on the door at 6, 800 lbs plus!

Paul knew how much the safe weighed when he bought it (especially if he paid 'by the pound' for it). It was he, no doubt, who supplied the 2,300 lbs figure to Liederman.

And after Paul's daughter had it weighed we know how much it weighs- the same as when Paul purchased it, and to be fair, that amount would likely be after he added more weight to it and welded it shut, so about 2,300 lbs

So where did the 3,500 lbs safe enter the scenario? Some would claim that Paul strapped extra weight *to the safe*. *But this contradicts what Paul himself asserted, that after he filled the safe and welded it shut he had an object which weighed 3,500 lbs to struggle against. Here is the actual quote from his bio World's Strongest Man:*

*"...after I welded it shut, and added slots for the belt connections, I found myself with 3,500 pounds to struggle against."*

**The safe, by itself, Paul counted as 3,500 lbs.**

### THE DUST STORMS CONTINUE

Guinness was told that the total was 6,270 lbs. I was told it was a couple hundred pounds more than that, so 6,470 lbs. Both of Paul's biographies assert that the platform weighed 1,800 lbs. But Paul wrote to me that the platform was 'well over 1,000 lbs' so assuming he meant 1,100 lbs, we have:

Safe	3,500	or	3,500	or	2,300	or	2,300
Platform	1,800		1,800		1,100		500 (my guess)
Other items	970		1,170		970		who knows?

total 6,270 6,470 4,370 2, 800+

Someone actually said to me, well, you cannot prove it *did not* happen. This article is written for those who understand that the person claiming to have lifted something (the affirmative) has the burden of proof. If you, dear reader, believe that something happened because someone cannot disprove it, then may I please claim to bench press 700 lbs?

### **NEVER FEAR TRUTH**

Some people are curious why I study such matters. My reply is that I honor ironhistory- not my version of it, not your version of it, but the true version as close as we can get. And in this topic we can certainly get closer than what the majority of casual followers of the game have accepted these past six decades.

I am not certain what, if anything, Paul lifted that day. and this conclusion is based on the continuing dust storm of doubt surrounding details of that day. Unlike my trip home from Quincy, where ,using caution and edging forward, the landscape cleared, in the sixty years since the back lift claim in Toccoa, many writers have added to the uncertainty surrounding it. Writers who- let's hope based on their texts- have never studied the issue but have simply echoed the words of others also ill informed. It may be painful to study, perhaps, for anyone who has believed the traditional storyline, perhaps as painful as spinal surgery.

There is no evidence proving that a back lift by Paul happened on June 12, 1957, but if you choose to believe something happened, then may I ask: what *exactly* was it that happened? And upon what do you base your belief?

**Perhaps we will never know what happened on June 12, 1957 on Tugalo Street in Toccoa, Georgia. But we can know what did not happen, and that is, a back lift of 6, 270 lbs.**

For a discussion of this article visit my forum: [ironhistory.com](http://ironhistory.com)