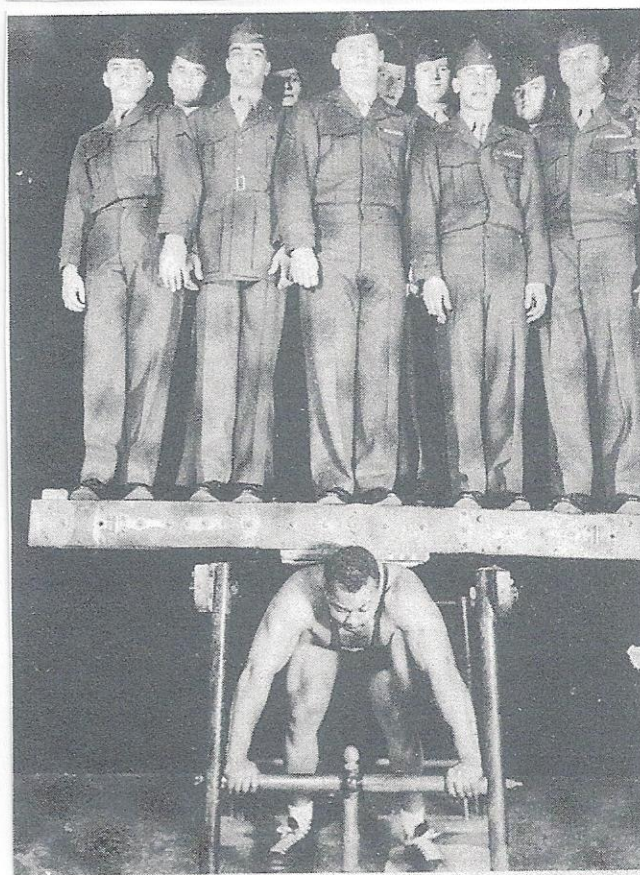
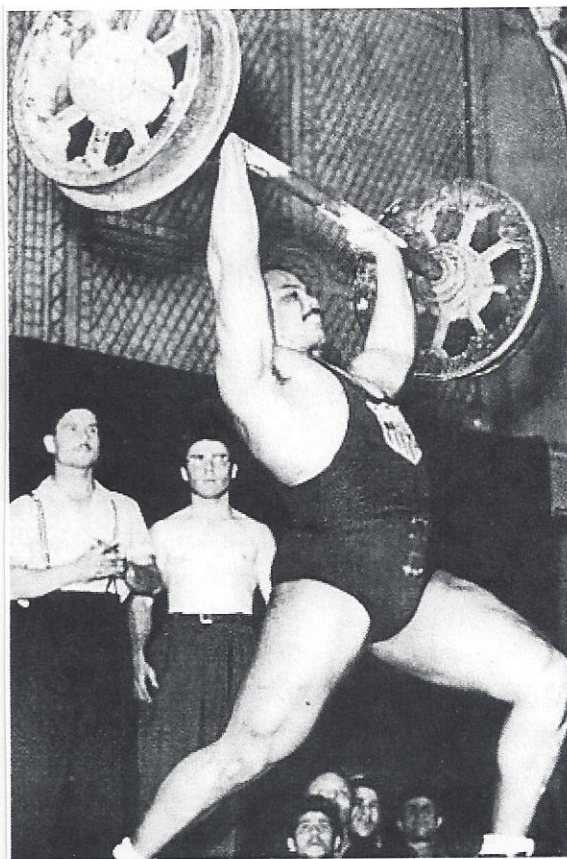


Strongest Men of Their Times (Part 3)

1938-56 John Davis USA, 5-8 ½ , 180-230 lb, born Jan. 12, 1921 as John Henry Davis, named after the steel-driving man of song; died July 13, 1984 from cancer—he was a chronic smoker. He grew up on the playgrounds of Brooklyn, New York, where he became a playground gymnast being very adept on the rings and horizontal bar. He also excelled at handball and track. Steve Wolsky saw Davis at the playground one day lifting a cement block and realized that the kid was quite strong. Steve invited him to his gym where at age 16 Davis pressed 170 lb the first time he ever tried it. In Spring 1938 he won the 181 lb class with a 3-lift total of 810 at only 17. At 17 at about 175 lb he met Warren Travis and duplicated all six of Travis's gripping feats. He also backlifted 3000 lb and hip lifted 1600 lb. Somehow that year he was briefly jailed for malicious mischief and never finished high school. Out of jail he earned a spot on the U.S. weightlifting team and went to the 1938 World Championship in Vienna. To everyone's surprise he won the world's lightheavyweight championship at age 17! That same year weighing 177 he did a chinup with 171 lb of extra weight for a 348 lb total. In 1940 weight 181 he did three one-arm chinups with each hand while the other hand held 20 lb. This was witnessed by Ed Jubinville. In 1941 at 201 ½ lb he won the natl. heavyweight lifting title with press 322, snatch 317, clean & jerk 370 to total 1009 becoming the second man ever to total over 1000 lb. He went on to win every world heavyweight lifting title from 1946 at Paris thru 1952 at Helsinki including the 1948 and 1952 Olympics. World War 2 stopped world championships from 1939-41.

In all he set 22 world records and was undefeated from 1940 (lost to Stanko) until 1953 (lost to Schemanski.) His best official lifts were press 350 (unofficially 375), snatch 330 ½ , clean & jerk 402 and total 1063 ¼ . He deadlifted 705 at 193. He full-squatted 550 for 3 reps, bench pressed 425, strict curled 215, and pinch lifted a 75 lb barbell plate. John did 5 one-arm chins holding a 25 lb plate in the other hand while weighing 205 in 1941. He worked as a prison guard for over 25 years on Riker's Island. **Photos** show Davis lifting the Apollon railway wheels near Paris in 1949. Only the second man to ever do so; Charles Rigoulot was the first. The wheels weighed 365 lb with a bar that didn't rotate and with a hefty diameter of 1.9 inches. Photo courtesy of David Champman. Bottom photo-backlifting 2000 lb from *Look* magazine & *Strength & Health*.



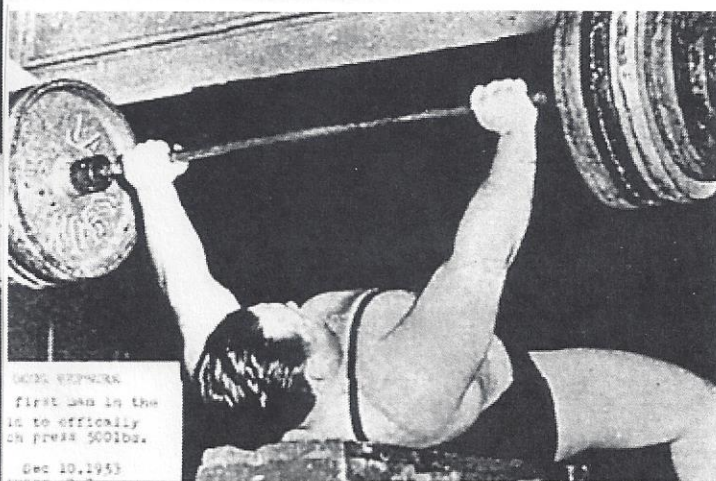
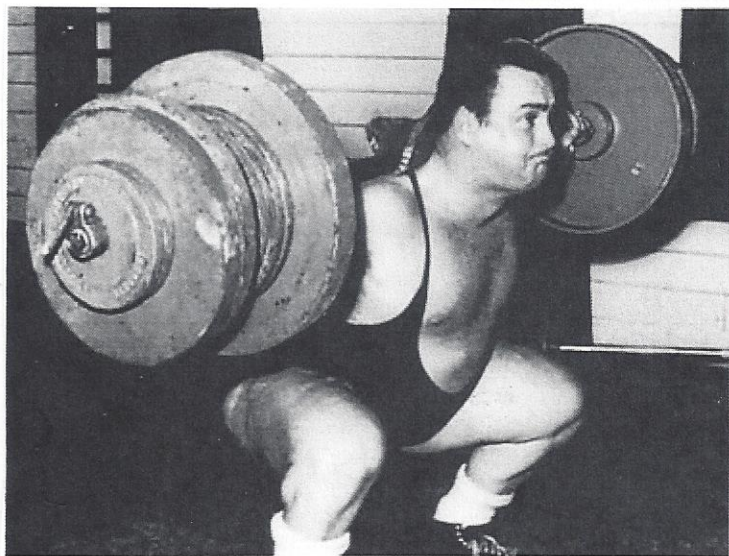
1947-56 Doug Hepburn CAN, 5-8½ , 250-296 lb. Born Sept. 16, 1921. Died 2002. Born with a clubfoot on his right leg and a cross-eyed eye. At age 5 he had surgery removing his ankle bone, fusing the ankle. It made that foot two inches shorter and shortened the distance from his hip to the floor. It's amazing that the hip stood the strain of very heavy squats in later life. As a boy he played soccer (semi-pro at one time), softball, baseball (pitcher), swimming, bike-riding, and gymnastics (hand balancing, springboard, high bar). He started weight training at 15 and spent many hours doing chinups, handstands and parallel bar dips. He dropped out of high school after 11th grade. He got his eye corrected at 17. At 18, weight 208, he pressed 200 lb, did 12 reps in the handstand press, and five reps in the tiger bend (handstand, lowering one's self to an elbow stand and pressing up to a handstand).

On Sept. 30, 1950, age 29, at the British Empire Games in Vancouver he pressed 327 ½ , snatch 255, and clean & jerked 317 ½ . The press was a new Canadian and British Empire record. On Dec. 19 he visited New York City and showed Charles Smith and 30 others what he could do: curl 200, side press 200, rack press 365, and push press 385. On Dec.23 at Abe Goldberg's gym he did push press 405, bench press 410 and squat 550.

In Los Angeles on June 16, 1951 at the U.S. Nationals he set his first world record-a press of 345 ½ weighing 260. He did his first 600 lb squat on November 11, 1951 at a Portland, Oregon, exhibition. On April 11, 1953, he went to the American Bench Press & Squat Championship in Oakland, California, where he bench pressed 450, with a two-second pause at the chest, and squatted 665 with a two-second pause at the bottom! This took back the world record from Paul Anderson's 605. Doug also pressed 366 ½ for a world record at the U.S. Jr. Nationals on May 17, 1953 at Cleveland, Ohio. He did the first 500 bench press in Vancouver on May 28, 1953 before ten witnesses. It was done with a two-second pause at the chest and a shoulder-width grip.

Doug won the World Weightlifting Championship in Stockholm, Sweden, on Aug. 30, 1953 : press 371 ¼ , snatch 297 ½ , clean & jerk 363 ¾ for a 1032 ½ lb total. His best official lifts are press 381 WR, snatch 302, clean & jerk 372, total 1040, bench press 502, squat 665, curl 260.

Photos: Doug squatted with 665 lb. He was first man to officially bench press 500 lb. Photos courtesy of Walt Evans.



1947-64, Norbert Schemansky USA (obituary) , 5-11 ½, 189-274 lb. Born May 20, 1924. Died Sept. 2016, age 92. He was the sixth of eight children.

In Detroit's high school in 1940 he was an all-city shot putter at only 5-9, 170 and ran 100 yards in 10.4 seconds. He took up weightlifting at 16 and jerk-pressed 135. By the end of the year he jerked 195. In early 1941, still only 16, he clean & jerked 235. Later he passed a football 70 yards. Then he went into the Civilian Conservation Corps. In May 1943, turning 19, he enlisted in the service where he spent 27 months and was discharged in 1945. In 1946 he became the junior national weightlifting champ. In 1947 he made the national team and at the 1947 World Weightlifting Championship at Philadelphia he took 2nd.

In 1948 he took silver at the London Olympics. He won nine national championships: 1949 as a heavyweight (198 lb), 1951-53 as a mid-heavy (242 lb), 1954 heavy, 1957 in the 225 lb class, and 1962-64 as a heavyweight.

He was the first man who medaled in four Olympics and the oldest to medal at 40: 1948 silver medal as a heavy, 1952 gold as a midheavy, 1960 and 1964 bronze as a heavyweight. After winning the 1954 World's in Paris he cleaned the 366 lb Apollon Wheels that only two men had ever lifted overhead before. He jerked it overhead an easy three reps. The crowd was stunned. The wheels were retired forever after that. Most experts consider Norb and Tommy Kono America's greatest lifters.

For most of his life Norb had trouble making a decent living. He worked for three car companies; at Briggs he inspected windows and radio antennas and chased stock. After four years he got fired because he wanted to take time off to compete in the Olympics. Norb had an IQ of 132 and aced the entrance exam for the Detroit police academy in 1955 but passed a chance to become a cop because he chose to compete in the PanAm games which he did and won. In 1957 he got a great job with Stroh's brewers lasting for over 4 years. However he had his 2nd back operation of three in all and quit when Stroh's wouldn't let him have an easier-on-his-back sales job. He earned an engineering certificate and worked over 20 years as a construction supervisor for the city of Detroit retiring at age 73. He owned his own home and had a nice pension by then but his back still bothered him at times.

Photos-top from *Strength & Health*-Norb setting WR 445 lb clean & jerk in 1962 at 38 weight 268 lb. Bottom photo-a younger 224 lb Norb showing his powerful physique.

