

# THE GREATEST ATHLETES IN THE WORLD

By Joseph P. Kelley

## SCULLING

As a boy of fifteen, I was at 32nd Street and Allegheny Avenue (where Pep Boys now stands) with hundreds of other citizens, waiting for two of the world's greatest athletes to appear for the start of a Welcoming Parade — the first of many. It was September 22, 1920. At that time, there were beautiful green fields and large shade trees on each side of Allegheny Avenue.

On the north side, from 33rd to Shedwick Street, was the John Dobson Estate enclosed by a 15-foot high stone wall with huge iron gates. Next to the gates was the servants' stone house, which is still occupied. Some early motion pictures depicting prisoners escaping over these very walls were made by the Lubin Company.

Finally, along came a parade of shining new Packard Touring cars with the tops down. In the lead car were John Brendan Kelly and his cousin, Paul V. Costello, returning from the 8th Olympiad that had been held at Antwerp, Belgium. They had won the World Championship in the single and double sculls. Kelly had beaten the English champion, Beresford, and then joined Costello in the doubles for another victory for America and East Falls.

The parade wound its way to the Cafe LaRiviere, a restaurant then located on the East River Drive at Stanton Street, where the two heroes were further honored by a banquet given by St. Bridget's Holy Name Society.

After conquering all competition in the double sculls from 1921 to 1924, they again won a place on the Olympic Team of 1924 at Paris, France. In the final race, the opposing crews were from Italy and France. The Italian crew was heavily favored, but they came in a close second to the United States, while France finished third.

On July 4, 1924, Costello broke the world record in the single sculls by beating W.E. Garrett Gilmore, who had beaten all other competition that year, including Walter Hoover, Jack Guest, Bob Dibble, Jack Balyea, and Joe Wright.

En route to the Olympics, Jack Kelly was acclaimed the most perfectly built athlete on the S.S. America by Dr. Judson Daland, a noted Philadelphia physician. Dr. Daland immediately requested R. Tait MacKenzie of the University of Pennsylvania to have Kelly's body done in bronze.

After Mr. Kelly's death in 1960, a monument in his likeness was dedicated

near the end of the Henley Course, facing up the Schuylkill where he had scored so many wins — a permanent tribute to the rowing prowess of a sculler with over 125 victories.

During these years, Charley McIlvaine was winning in the lightweight singles; he also started rowing in Quads and Eights. One of the Quads that broke the record for the 2000 meters was composed of Jack Kelly, Paul Costello, Bill Auer, and Charley McIlvaine. Bill Auer, upon retiring, was a successful coach at the Crescent Boat Club. Among the East Falls boys whom he coached were my brothers, Jim and Bill Kelley, and Tom Grispon. Charley McIlvaine, upon retiring, coached the LaSalle crews for many years.

the 2000-meter course still stands. This was the only eight-oared crew to win the World Championship outside of the Olympic Games. (There are more oarsmen from East Falls in the Helms Hall of Fame at Los Angeles, California, than from any other place in the world.)

Over a three year span (1929-1931), the crew remained virtually intact and won thirty-one consecutive races, including United States and Canadian titles, and broke the record on every course on which it rowed. In 1950, the Associated Press voted them the greatest crew of the half century.

In the Olympic Finals at Amsterdam, Holland, in 1928, Paul Costello and Charley McIlvaine broke the world record by rowing the 2000 meters in 6



Olympic Champions: (L-R) Charles McIlvaine, Paul Costello, and Jack Kelly, Sr. (Evening Bulletin)

The Philadelphia Inquirer of February 8, 1976, tells of further East Falls fame: "The 1930 World Champion Penn A.C. eight-oared crew has been inducted into the Helms Hall of Fame. Ceremonies took place at the convention of the National Association of Amateur Oarsmen, in Alexandria, Virginia, last weekend. Members of the crew were: Chester Turner, Stroke; Daniel H. Barrow, C. Joseph Dougherty, (Capt.) Myrlin Janes, John McNichol, John C. Bratten, Thomas Curran, Charles J. McIlvaine, Bow; Thomas Mack, Cockswain."

The team captured the World Championship on August 17, 1930, on the Muese River in Liege, Belgium. The record time of 5 minutes, 2 seconds, on

minutes, 41.4 seconds, a record that has never been equalled.

The Queen of Holland presented the World Cup, which stays in the victors' country until the record is broken. At that time, the Cup was valued at \$10,000. It is kept at the Bailey, Banks & Biddle Company in Philadelphia, and, at times, is put on display there. The names of the winners from the various countries are inscribed on the trophy.

Jack Kelly had trained for the English Diamond Sculls in 1920, but was denied the privilege of entering it by the English rowing officials who said he had an advantage over other scullers because he had worked with his hands setting bricks during his apprenticeship. Jack Beresford



of England won the Diamond Sculls but Kelly had his revenge later that year by beating Beresford in the Olympics.

Jack Kelly, Jr. and Art Gallagher, who had been winning National and Canadian Championships in the 1940's, entered the Royal English Henley in 1946 (Diamond Sculls), and were defeated in the finals. The next year, however, they entered and won the Diamond Sculls.

The 1947 championship completed the two most coveted titles for the Kelly family — the Olympiad and the Diamond Sculls. These, and all their other triumphs, came after years of arduous training which made the name "Kelly" synonymous with world rowing supremacy.

Sam Moorehead's first sculling race was on June 20, 1920, in the Navy Regatta on the Schuylkill River. Rowing with him in the Vesper Junior Eight were Jim Wood, Jack Costello, Linton Nelson, Jimmy Carton, John Rabbitt, Benny Hill, and Bert O'Connell; they won the race easily. Later on, teamed with John McNicholas in the Double Sculls, they won the Canadian Championship.

Sam also won in Doubles with Paul Costello at Buffalo and Baltimore. At the Royal Canadian Henley in 1921, the Senior Four consisting of Jack Kelly, Sam Moorehead, Jack Costello, and Ken Myers won the Cup. In July, 1925, rowing for Penn A.C. in the Quad, Kelly, Regan, Costello, and Moorehead beat all competition.

Sam also had many victories in the Singles and was Alternate for Kelly and Costello in the 1920 Olympics. In 1928 & 1929, Sam Moorehead and John McNicholas won the National and Canadian Doubles Rowing Championship.

## GOLF

In the Spring of 1894, a group of aristocrats who made up the membership of the Philadelphia Country Club, a four-year-old Polo, Tennis, and Cricket establishment located a mile or so west of the Schuylkill River at City Line, decided

to build what is generally considered to have been the first golf course in this area. Whether or not golf had been played prior to that time is, for the most part, academic, for it was from this beginning and because of the social prominence of these people that golf spread so rapidly.

Before the nine-hole 3,050 yard layout was replaced in 1898 by an 18-hole course that measured a scant 5,630 yards, the blue-bloods of Philadelphia had taken to golf so thoroughly that they formed an association to govern their tournaments. A Country Club member, Edith Burt, had been runner-up in the qualifying rounds of the Women's Championship.

As golf became more popular, it attained the status of "a way of life" to the

rich and "a way of living" to the poor. The first ball had no sooner bounced into the tall grass than the neophyte golfers of the "90's" realized the need for sharp-eyed youngsters as caddies, and the local neighborhoods supplied them in abundance.

In that time of low wages, uncertain employment, and large families, everyone worked, and caddying became a popular way for a boy to help his parents. Although boys came to the Country Club from West Philadelphia and Roxborough, by far the greatest percentage of them were from a nearby mill section with the romantic name of the Falls of Schuylkill.

Young men of that era spent much of their time on street corners, and Ridge and Midvale was a natural. They would talk about the brand of golf played by the members of the Club, and brag a little about their own game. When the bragging had to be backed up, they would get their clubs and wager on driving a ball across the river. Many a Baby Dimple and Silver King found the bottom of the Schuylkill before the boys grew into manhood.

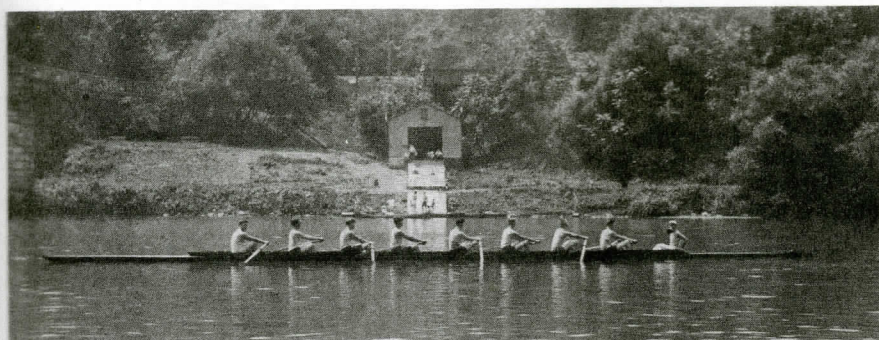
As the corner grew in importance, Ed Byrne opened a small restaurant on Midvale Avenue, a few doors east of the Ridge. The little enterprise, which he named "The Gunboat" was not much more than a coffee and doughnut house, but its ideal location as a place around which to gather and talk golf made it an immediate success.

## John B. Kelly, Jr.



### "Diamond Sculls Winner"

Royal English Henley Regatta  
1947



1916 Montrose B.C., Junior Eight; All East Falls Crew, near Falls Bridge. Bow, Charley Turner, Bill Morrow, Harry West, Jack Barrow, Ben Walker, Harry Morrow, Harry Smith, Stroke, Sam Moorehead, Coxswain, George Harbeson.