
Introduction

This is more than just a story about an athletic coach. It is the biography of a man who dedicated his entire life to a cause; that being the promotion of the sport of gymnastics.

The man, Dr. Hartley D'Oyley Price, was born in Australia in 1902 and died in Tallahassee, Florida shortly after his 75th year on September 14, 1977.

He taught physical education and coached the sport of gymnastics for over 40 years. During that span he not only coached his teams to many national championships, coaching Olympians in the process, but further promoted the "minor" sport through every means available.

He felt that the sport was lacking in proper exposure because the atmosphere surrounding it was too sedate. To overcome this he added "color" to gymnastics through the means of pageantry. His glamorous Gymkana productions were the result.

Dr. Price (he earned no less than five college degrees including his Ph.D.) believed that there was a place in these famous Gymkana shows (See Chapter 6) for all individuals regardless of a person's sex, nationality, race, religion, or age. This was so even in the early thirties, three decades before such acceptance became popular.

In the realm of coaching, it was his philosophy that by recruiting outstanding individuals to augment his teams so that an atmosphere of "excellence" would permeate among all of the team members. Unlike most other athletic coaches, Dr. Price stressed that his gymnasts should enjoy the achievement which is realized only through hard work.

There was no room on his teams for athletes who did not want to work hard to excel.

I met this unforgettable character in 1950 when

Doc and Billie Price embark for Bogota, South America on Dr. Price's Fulbright in 1961. Picture was taken at Dale Mabry airport in Tallahassee.

assigned by the editor of the school newspaper at Florida State University to produce a "filler" article about the gymnastics team. Dr. Price's gymnasts went on to win three national team championships including the state of Florida's first NCAA title in 1951 prior to my graduation two years later. Needless to say, feature stories replaced the gymnastics "filler" stories.

I returned to Tallahassee as a state employee in 1974 and visited with the Prices regularly until "Doc's" death.

Doc was still active in gymnastics, serving behind scenes as Chairman of the Awards and Research Committee of the National Association of Collegiate Gymnastics Coaches until his passing in 1977. Newt Loken (one of Hart's proteges and his personal choice for the post) was named to fill the slot vacated by "Doc's" death.

Hart did live long enough to see his vision of recognition for gymnastics become a reality.

He retired in 1971, just one year before the 1972 Olympic games held in Munich, featuring a small Russian girl . . . Olga Korbut . . . gymnast.

The medium of television also brought perfection of execution into America's living rooms in 1976 when a little

14-year-old Romanian, Nadia Comaneci, scored her fabulous tens in the Olympics held in Montreal. Gymnasts at long last today are being publicized on an equal basis with most other amateur athletes.

Behind almost every successful man down through the ages, has been an ever-devoted and dedicated wife. Mrs. Price is no exception to this. Billie has joined with "Doc" to share his burden in the many gymnastic enterprises. More than a few times she has prepared meals for the indigent among the students, made lunches for the team and troupe on many of their long trips, sewed costumes for the Tots and Gymkana troupes as well as other over-looked tasks to lighten the load of the crusading professor. They worked together as a proficient team.

A check made recently by the NCAA Statistics Service revealed that Dr. Hartley Price achieved the distinction of being the only coach in collegiate history to win national team championship titles at two different universities in the United States. His teams won a grand total of eleven at the University of Illinois and at Florida State University.

"The true champion should seek excellence physically, mentally, socially and morally." This was Dr. Hartley Price's definition and he lived that kind of life.