
ARMIN (MR. CLEAN) STOJKE

Constable #505

*Written & researched by John Burchill
August 15, 2021. Winnipeg Police Museum*



Watching former WWF wrestling all-star Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson this week in Disney’s *The Jungle Cruise*, I am reminded of another wrestling *all-star* who also toiled on the water, and worked for the Winnipeg Police.

Armin Stojke worked out at the Central YMCA in the 1950s. He was born on a farm in Germany on September 5th, 1936, shortly before the outbreak of World War II. His birth mother (Amanda) died five hours after he was born and his birth father (Oskar) was killed returning home from the war. Armin was raised by his stepmother Aldolfina, who brought him to Canada in 1950. Upon arriving in Canada Armin worked at his uncle’s farm in Waldersee, before moving to Winnipeg where he attended school to learn English.

In 1953 Armin’s step-mother married Wilhelm Reich and they moved into 487 Elgin Avenue, just a short distance from the Winnipeg Police headquarters on Rupert Avenue and a similar distance to the Central YMCA at 301 Vaughan Street. At 230 pounds of solid muscle from working on the farm, Armin stood out among his peers. Besides being a wrestler, he held Manitoba’s heavyweight Bench Press record as a member of the YMCA from 1960 to 1964, pushing 400 pounds in 1964.

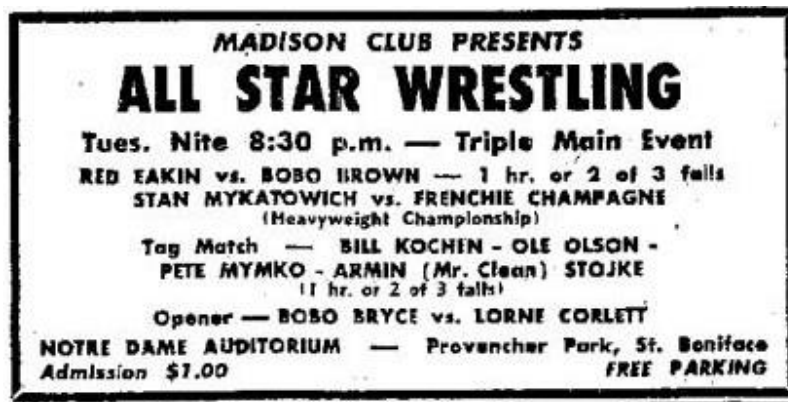
Armin’s prowess likely caught the eye of Alex Turk who, in 1946, introduced modern professional wrestling to Winnipeg. Turk later aligned himself with the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA), a group of independent professional wrestling promoters that remained the largest and most influential body in wrestling until the mid-1980s when the World Wrestling Federation (WWF), now the WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment), took over.

Turk would later work as a wrestling promoter and represented Verne Gagne and Stu Hart, father of Bret and Owen Hart, among others. He was also a member of several clubs, including the Central YMCA which sponsored the Alex Turk trophy for outstanding wrestler. A number of young men who wrestled out of the YMCA in the 1950s would also go on compete in local wrestling matches including George “Red” Eakin,¹ Wally Hewak, Fred “Golden Boy” Popsiech and Victor Kowal.

¹ George “Red” Eakin was the father of Constable Grant (“Butch”) Eakin #1341, who was a member of the Winnipeg Police from 1982-2002.

Victor Kowal (badge #194), who would join the St. James Police in 1959 and later the Winnipeg Police after amalgamation, was a winner of the Alex Turk wrestling trophy in the middleweight division. Vic stopped wrestling when he joined the St. James Police; however, Eakin, Hewak, and Popsiech continued to wrestle in the Winnipeg *all-star* circuit for the next dozen years alongside “Iron” Mike Koncur, Dave Piper, “Frenchy” Champagne, “Wild Bill” Foley, Boris & Taras Laskoff, Karl Von Steiger, “Ole” Olsen, “Mad Dog” Morowski (Stan Mykietovich), Johnny DePaulo, “Bad” Bill Kochen, “Killer” Korchynski, and the Ross “The Madison Mauler” Headon.

For seven years from 1957 to 1964, Armin wrestled the local Winnipeg circuit as “Mr. Clean”, battling Koncur, Champagne, Olsen, Morowski, DePaulo, Kochen, and Von Steiger at a number of wrestling clubs inspired by the NWA (e.g. Brooklands, Crescent, Norland & Madison). Sometimes alone, other times in tag team matches or battle royals that involved up to eight other wrestlers. According to www.wrestlingdata.com, Armin fought in 142 matches, winning 72 times and losing 34, the remainder being draws or battle royals with multiple fighters. Eleven different wrestlers teamed with Armin during that time, while 23 fought against him.



Perhaps one of Armin’s more memorable fights was on June 2, 1964, at the Notre Dame Auditorium against Lorne Corlett.² While the main bill featured a “Lumberjack Match” between John DePaulo and Mad Dog Morowski against Red Eakin and Frenchy Champagne, the headliner was *Chad Allan and the Reflections*. For those too young to remember, Chad Allan and the Reflections (later the Expressions) was the forerunner to the Guess Who featuring Randy Bachman, Jim Kale, Garry Peterson, and Chad Allan (who was eventually replaced by Burton Cummings on vocals). They were probably the Number 1 club band in Winnipeg at the time.

Armin stopped wrestling at the end of 1964 when he met his future wife, Angie. His full-time job at the time was with Winnipeg Hydro (which was bought out by Manitoba Hydro in 2002). While Armin always wanted to be a police officer, he was turned down several times by the Winnipeg Police, allegedly for being “too big”.³ However, after moving to Fort Garry, it was a

² The Notre Dame Auditorium was located at 299 de la Cathédrale Avenue in St. Boniface. It was taken over by the school division in 1967, and now forms part of the Collège Louis Riel.

³ Although Armin did not seem out of place in his recruit class, this was not the first time I had heard an officer was “too big” for the Winnipeg Police. When I spoke with Ed Mularchuk #218 shortly before his death earlier this year, he too was rejected by the Winnipeg Police for being “too big” at 6’7” so he joined the Assiniboia Police instead.

chance encounter with Arthur Bridgwater, then Chief of the Fort Garry Police, that resulted in Armin being hired by his department on April 15, 1967.



Armin “Mr. Clean” Stojke and George “Red” Eakin, take on Chad Allan at the Notre Dame Auditorium, June 2, 1964. Courtesy Angie Stojke.

After joining the Fort Garry Police, Armin was instrumental in the formation of greater Winnipeg’s first Search and Rescue Dive Unit. Being an active scuba diver, Armin believed trained divers should be used to search underwater for persons or items instead of using drag hooks, which were traditional tools used by the police.

Armin approached Chief Bridgwater with a proposal to form a Police Dive Unit. While Chief Bridgwater was quite interested in the concept, there was no funding or resources for the initiative. However, he allowed Armin to explore the feasibility of such a unit, and recruit potential members from the police force who may be interested.

Along with Brian Stevenson, a certified scuba diving instructor and former President of the Manitoba Underwater Council, and Tommie Towns, a civilian diving enthusiast, Armin set out to recruit and train a police dive team. Six members of the Fort Garry Police signed up and were trained by Stevenson. They all bought their own diving equipment and paid for their own training, which was geared to the blackwater conditions of the Winnipeg river systems.

This volunteer “team” commenced operations in 1970 and provided assistance to the Winnipeg Police, RCMP and other surrounding police agencies. Due to the success of their early efforts, Chief Bridgwater allocated some departmental funding and officially sanctioned the dive team as the Underwater Rescue Unit. Armin and the dive unit members were able to “scrounge” a 1959 International Harvester delivery truck from the Winnipeg Fire Department as their first vehicle, as well as a 16’ aluminum boat and trailer.



Fort Garry Police Underwater Rescue Unit, 1970
Armin Stojke is back row, second from the left.
Courtesy Winnipeg Police Museum

With the amalgamation of the Fort Garry Police and the surrounding municipalities of the greater Winnipeg area, to become the Winnipeg Police Department in 1974, the Underwater Rescue Unit became a specialty unit for the Winnipeg Police. In 1979, the Underwater Rescue Unit was restructured, and only police members were accepted where before civilian members had been allowed. The Underwater Rescue Unit increased in size to 12 members and changed its name to the Underwater Search & Recovery Unit (USRU).

During this time Armin also volunteered year-round with Winnipeg's Police & Pal program spending many summers taking youths out for a two-week wilderness canoe adventure. He also trained youth and police officers during the winter with the USRU, side by side in a city swimming pool to be certified scuba divers ending with a certification dive at West Hawk Lake. This was a great introduction to scuba diving for the youth as well as for the volunteer police officers, many of whom would later express interest in the unit after their certification.

The Police & Pal program was started in 1970, by a local Winnipeg businessman who felt that he would like to assist the police in their battle against crime and delinquency. He believed that if young persons could associate with police officers in an informal setting, it would increase their understanding and respect for the law as well as open lines of communication between these young persons and the participating officers.

From this idea, the Police & Pal Association of Manitoba was created, and with the help of local businesses, the Association arranged financing for Police & Pal activities, with day-to-day expenses covered by the Winnipeg Police Commission, and individual officers donating their own time and resources.

Initial activities centered on an annual golf tournament but grew to include a curling bonspiel, fishing derbies, a shooting competition, a five-day wilderness canoe trip, automotive repair, scuba diving, and four weekly clubs for boys and girls which were aimed at youth from the inner city area. The youth ranged in ages from 5 to 17 years, from all different socio-economic backgrounds regardless of whether they had any previous contact with the police.



Police & Pal scuba diving certification in West Hawk Lake, c. 1978.
Courtesy Winnipeg Police Museum

Armin retired from the Winnipeg Police on April 30th, 1994, after 27 years in policing. He passed away on July 2nd, 2012, after being admitted to the Health Sciences Centre suffering a brain aneurysm. While the surgery was successful and there was every hope for recovery, he succumbed to a stroke. He left behind his wife Angie, of 47 years, and son Bill.

Something For Expert And Novice



Ow - w - w, Hey Ref — he's breaking my fingers! Ole Olsen obviously has the upper hand on Stan Mykatowich during a recent 12-man Battle royal which drew some 600 wrestling fans. That's Johnny DePaulo coming to Stan's rescue.

Madison Well Equipped

The Madison Boxing and Wrestling Club at 147 Provencher St. in St. Boniface is well equipped for the most avid boxer or wrestler or those just desiring to improve their general health and well-being.

It has a membership of close to 60 of which some 35 are active in the boxing and wrestling about the club has staged the past 12 years.

Promoter Al Yumson's weekly wrestling shows on Tuesday's at 8:30 at the Notre Dame Auditorium have featured some of the wildest and best matches seen by Winnipeg wrestling fans.

Such men as Bobby Jones, who is program director and wrestling instructor with the Winnipeg Parks Board; George "Red" Eakin a football referee and linesman at the Bomber games; Ole Olsen, wrestling instructor at the Lord Roberts Community Club, and Lennie Johnson with Winnipeg's finest, are among those active in the club.

Its facilities include weightlifting equipment, boxing ring, wrestling mats, a rowing machine and bicycle which compensate for roadwork; a light-bag that develops speed and co-ordination, and a heavy-bag used for power punching. What the club lacks in space it makes up for in effort.

An all-star boxing card is scheduled for next Wednesday at the Notre Dame Auditorium with army boxers entered.

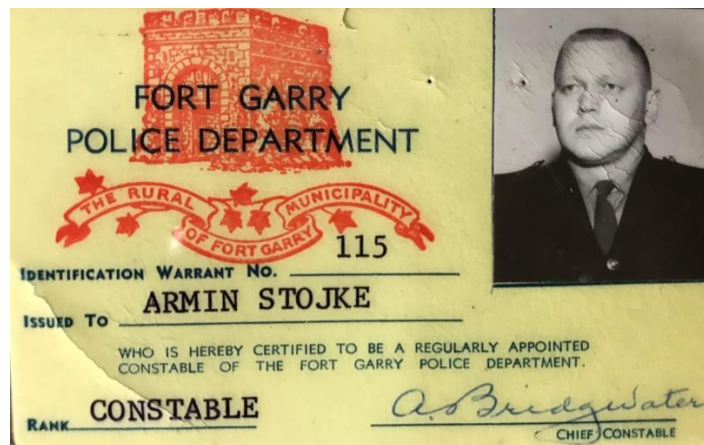


Former Canadian amateur light heavyweight Champ Dave Piper (right), demonstrating a big throw on weightlifter and wrestler Armin Stojke. Stojke has held the Manitoba bench press record for the last two years.



DON WALKER WALTER NOEL GENE YUZEFOWICH
... They'll Play Lead Roles in Wednesday's Boxing Show

Armin Stojke works out at the Madison Boxing & Wrestling Club, St. Boniface
January 19, 1963. Winnipeg Free Press



Armin Stojke, For Garry Police Identification Card
c. 1967. Winnipeg Police Museum

NORLAND WRESTLING CLUB

presents

WRESTLING

at the

NATIONAL (U.N.F.) AUDITORIUM
935 MAIN ST.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 2, 8.30 P.M.

MAIN EVENT—TAG TEAM MATCH

"IRON MIKE"

1 FALL OR 1 HOUR

WALLY

KONCUR

235-lbs.

&

HEWAK

215-lbs.

VS

TED

GORDIENKO

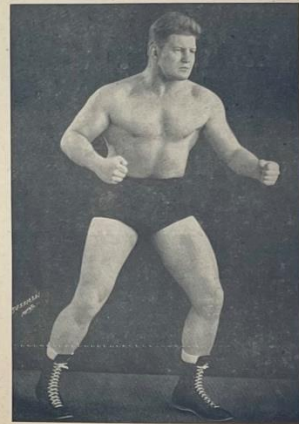
220-lbs.

&

ARMIN

STOJKE

230-lbs.



"OLE" OLSEN

SEMI-WIND-UP

45 MINUTES OR 1 FALL

"OLE" OLSEN vs JOE SHLONTZ

215-lbs.

208-lbs.

SPECIAL EVENT

"Killer" Korchynski vs Frenchy Goulet

218-lbs.

224-lbs.

OPENER

Fred "Golden Boy" Pospiech vs Tiger McClure

160-lbs.

162-lbs.



"KILLER" KORCHYNSKI



"IRON MIKE" KONCUR

Children: **35¢**

Adults: **75¢**

NEXT SHOW → OCTOBER 9th

Sanctioned By

Manitoba Branch of A.A.U.

Norland Wrestling Poster, October 2, 1957, featuring Armin Stojke.
Courtesy Hunter & Gun Barbershop which still has it featured on a wall of their business.