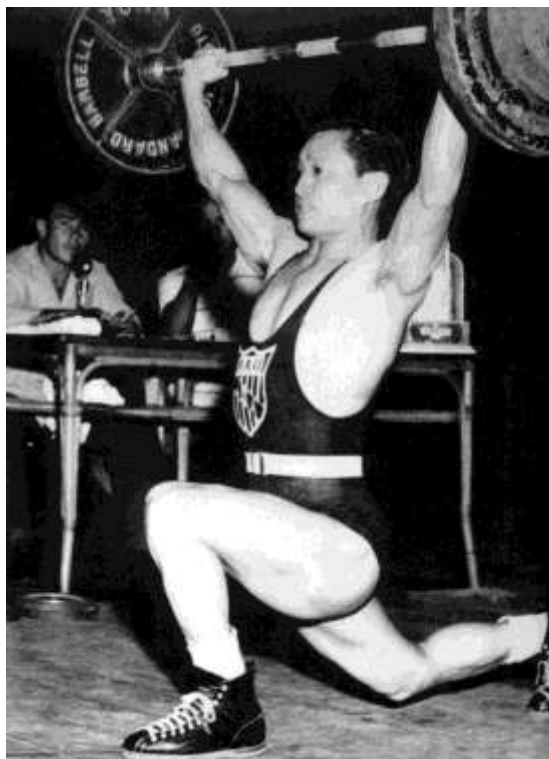


Richard Tom, Olympian Weightlifter 1948

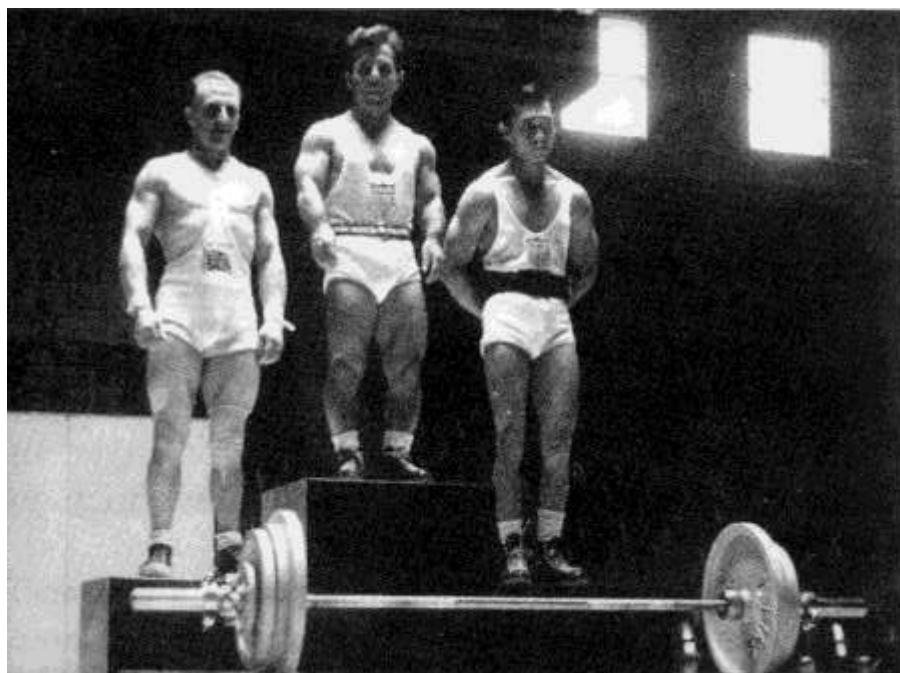
Richard Tom (1920-2007) was born in 1920 in China. His family relocated to Hawaii when he was a boy. When Richard was 14 years old, his uncle had a barbell set which caught his interest and started him on bodybuilding. At that time there were no coaches so he had to learn and train by watching others train. In 1936, at the age of 16, he entered his first weightlifting contest in the 118 lb class which included 114 lbs in the press, 114 lbs in the snatch and 160 lbs in clean & jerk.

In 1947, he competed in the Junior National, placing 1st and two weeks later competed in the Senior Nationals but did not total. Soon after, he was selected to the World Team to compete in National Championship in Philadelphia and placed 2nd in the 123 lb class. In 1948, he competed in the Senior Nationals in Los Angeles placing 2nd which qualified him for the Olympic trials, and he made the Team two months later in the New York trials.



Richard Tom at the National Championship in Philadelphia in 1947.

The 1948 Olympic Games were held in London, England, with Richard winning the bronze medal. It was the first time Asian Americans were selected to the U.S. Olympic Weightlifting Team. The three other Asian Americans on the Team were, Emerick Ishikawa, 132 lb, placed 6th, Richard Tomita, 132 lb, placed 8th, and Harold Sakata, 181 lb, winning the silver medal in the Light-heavyweight class (75-82.5 kg).



From L to R, Julian Creus of Great Britain, Joseph De Pietro of United States, and Richard Tom of United States, at the Olympic bantam weightlifting class (56 kg) medal ceremony, summer of 1948, London, England.

Richard was proud of the fact that he was the only one of Chinese ancestry to win a medal at the 1948 Olympic Games. In 1951 he competed in Tokyo and placed 1st in three meets in the 132 lb class. In 1952 he again qualified for the U.S. Olympic Team and was selected as an alternate but did not get a chance to participate in the Games in Finland. After returning to Hawaii Richard retired from weightlifting but continued to work out and officiated weightlifting contests for some thirty years. His hobbies included building model planes and ships. He was inducted into the U.S. Sports Hall of Fame in 1976 and the Hawaii Sports Hall of Fame in 2007.

