

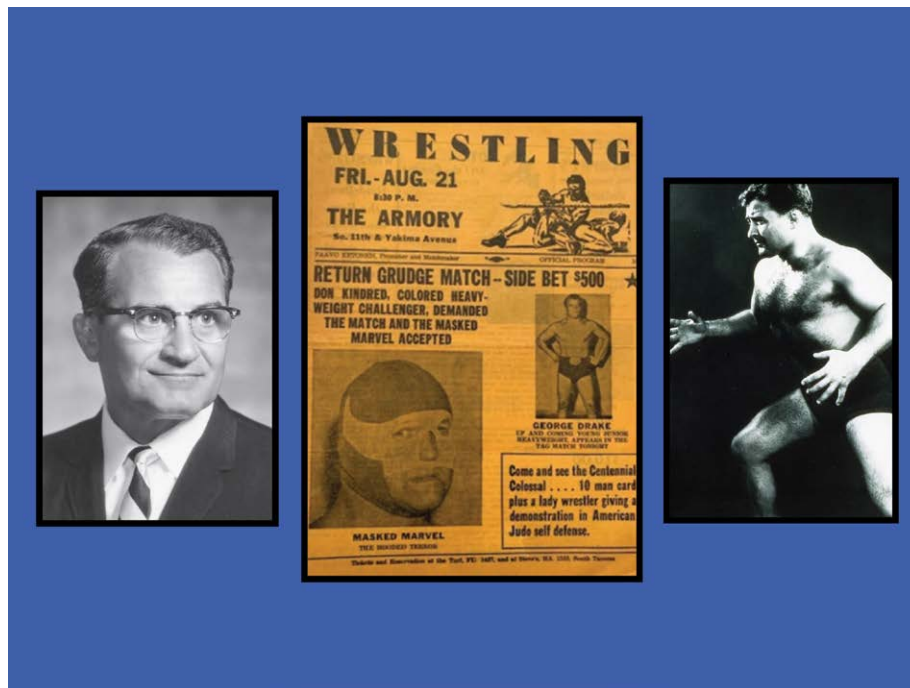
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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Dr. John Bonica's Dueling Identities: Bringing the Pain... and Healing the Pain



As a young Italian-American immigrant in New York City, John J. Bonica, M.D. (1917 to 1994, *left*), was frequently bullied and tragically lost his father when he was 15. That same year, he became Brooklyn's youngest Eagle Scout. In high school, Bonica excelled academically and won the city's scholastic wrestling championship. During college, he worked as a professional wrestler and circus strongman (*center and right*), appearing in arenas as Johnny "Bull" Walker (and later, the "Masked Marvel"). In medical school, Bonica made the Alpha Omega Alpha honor society while secretly becoming the light heavyweight champion of the world. Throughout his life, Bonica maintained dual identities as a fierce fighter and serious intellectual, and eventually became the "founding father" of the discipline pain medicine. He reached the pinnacle of his specialty as Chair of Anesthesiology at the University of Washington and as President of both the American Society of Anesthesiologists and the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists. At the same time, he transcended anesthesiology, founding the International Association for the Study of Pain and leading global efforts in multidisciplinary pain research and treatment. A deeply human, real-life superhero, Bonica channeled his competitiveness for the greater good. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Schaumburg, Illinois.)

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