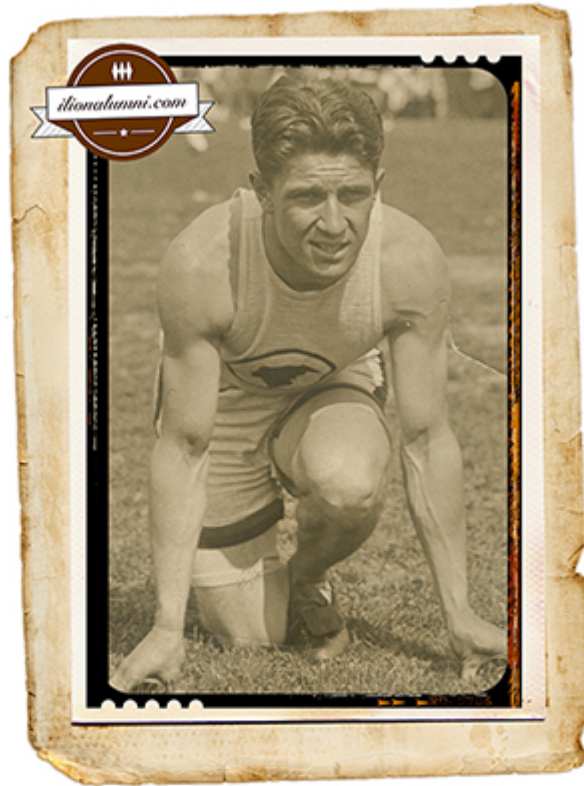


# IHS Harold 'Boots' Lever

June 2019

By Aileen Carney Sweeney



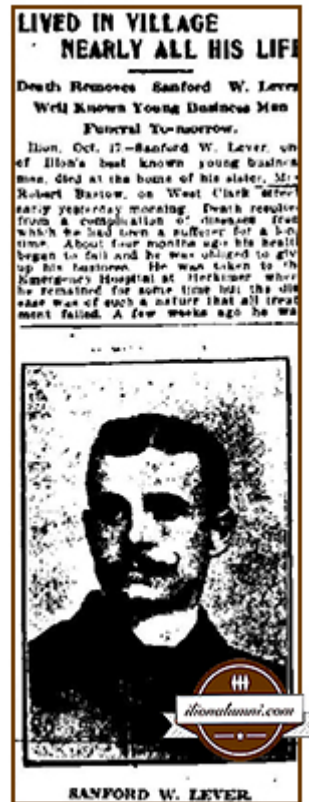
THE LEVER CUP  
HAROLD "BOOTS" LEVER

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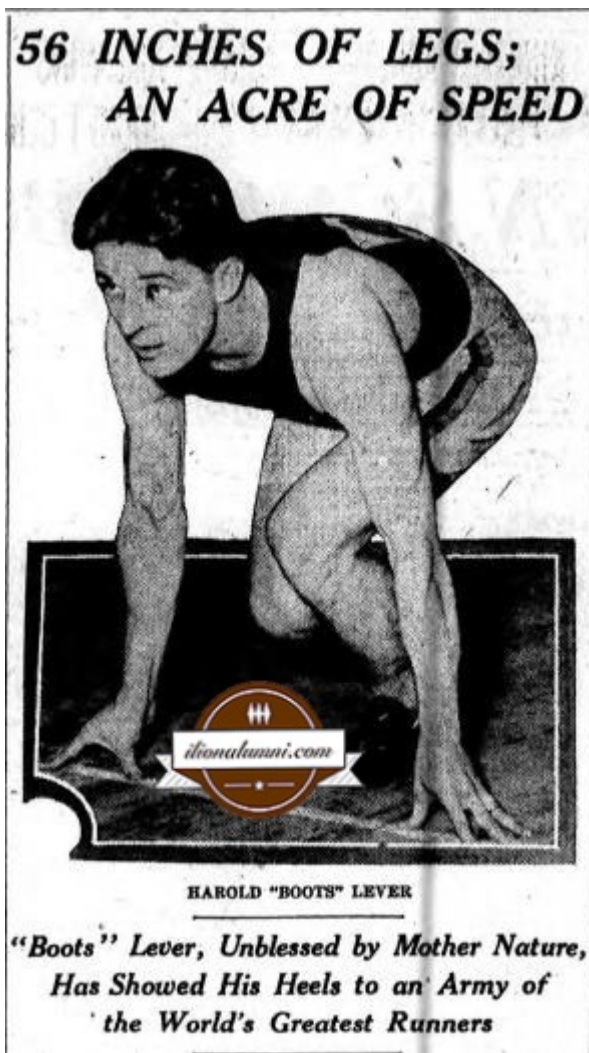
## The Early Years of Boots Lever

Harold Brandenburg 'Boots' Lever was born August 24, 1895 in Iliion, New York the son of Minnie (Brandenberg) and Sanford Lever. Before he married Minnie, Sanford Lever was a nationally known roller-skater, having captained the touring Crescents in 1880. In 1892, Minnie Brandenberg and Sanford Lever married.

Several years into their marriage, Mrs. Lever fell ill. While running for the doctor, Sanford Lever fell and injured his left leg, which later had to be amputated. Ironically, his son, Harold, would go on in life to become a track star of world renown. Minnie Lever died, at the age of 27, in February 24, 1901. Her husband, a son Harold, who was five years old, and an eight years old daughter, Helen, survived her. - [March 1, 1901 - The Ilion Citizen](#) - Illion NY Citizen 1900-1902 - 0519.pdf and [August 12, 1898 - The Ilion Citizen](#) - Illion NY Citizen 1896-1898 - 0091.pdf



Sorrow struck the Lever family again, on October 16, 1904, when Sanford Lever died. One daughter, Helen, and his nine-year old son, Harold, survived Sanford. Four brothers, James, Alfred, Robert and Joseph, and two sisters, Mrs. Robert Bastow and Mrs. James Bastow, also survived him. Young Harold Lever went to live with his uncle and aunt, Robert and Sarah Lever. Both Minnie and Sanford Lever are buried in [Armory Hill Cemetery](#), Ilion NY. - [October 17, 1904 - The Utica Herald Dispatch](#) - Utica NY Herald Dispatch 1904 - 0494.PDF



## Nickname 'Boots' Origin

According to a February 19, 1922, front page article, in The Philadelphia Inquirer, "When he was just a little fellow, perhaps four or five years old, he was given a pair of high boots. And he wore them most of the time that there was bad weather up there, and that was most of the time. It did not take long before he was just 'Boots' to his pals. ...When a high school boy he ushered in a "movie" theatre in his home town, and used to run up and down the aisles for practice to strengthen the muscles in his short, stumpy little legs. - [February 19, 1922 The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) - Philadelphia PA Inquirer 1922 - 2793.pdf



Photograph of the Ilion High Towpath 1910 courtesy of Joe Smith

## Early Track Training - The Ilion High School Towpath

The next time you take a stroll along the high school towpath, you can contemplate the early days of Ilion's 'Boots' Lever. In a letter dated June 22, 1961, written by Harold 'Boots' Lever, to the high school principal, Mr. Leo Sammon, Boots described his early years training in Ilion.

Forty-Five years ago, Weavers' Pond [correct name was Weber's Pond], just below the H.S., had a feeder running to the Remington Arms Co. From Benedict Ave., there was a cinder path, which most students, going North would use. I found it an excellent place to do my work if I could find anyone, willing to stay on and set me off my marks. I was still able to use the showers in the H.S., although the gym, had nothing but concrete floor at that time.

Harold 'Boots' Lever most likely would have been a member of the Ilion High School Class of 1913 when he reached the age of 18. He was not listed officially as a member of that class, as published in the Alumni book "History of the Union School", which was published in 1925. The book contained the names and address of each alumnus, as of 1925. Perhaps they just did not have his address at the time of publication.

His Ilion High accomplishments and entrance into the Mercersburg Preparatory Academy, in Pennsylvania, were described in the February 19, 1922 article, in The Philadelphia Inquirer. - [February 19, 1922 The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) - Philadelphia PA Inquirer 1922 - 2793.pdf

It is May, 1910. "Boots" is the one-man track team of the school. His first race in actual competition was in the Cornell interscholastics. It was admitted to be only an experiment by the school authorities. But "Boots" finished third in the 100-yard dash, surprising even himself. He was beaten by Brownville, of Mercersburg, who won, and Gardner, of Perkiomen.



The following Saturday, Lever went to Syracuse for the interscholastics there and won the first race of his career. He made the 100 in 10 1-5 seconds and was a real dark horse. More than that, he defeated Gardner, who nosed him out the week ahead. Brownville was not present.

One more week and Lever had stirred the country when he made the century in ten seconds flat, the feat going into the schoolboy annals of the country. That was in the Colgate championships.

When the curtain rises again it is August, 1916. Ted Meredith, the greatest of Penn runners, is performing in Ilion in a special meet of the Remington Arms Centennial celebration. Ted met "Boots" on the cinder path there. And through the chance meeting, the mere accident of an exciting afternoon, the way is paved for "Boots," not only to come to Mercersburg, but also to the University of Pennsylvania.

Enrolling at Mercersburg, through Ted's efforts, "Boots" started in a major way on his career. He played football in the fall of 1916 there much to the consternation of Jimmy Curran, the Mercersburg track coach, who was on pins and needles throughout the season for fear that the youth would suffer injury.

In the spring of 1917 "Boots" competed in five inter scholastic track meets. He won the 100-yard dash in every one of them, outclassing the schoolboy sprinters in the East. He ran the stretch in ten seconds flat in the New York University meet, and in the meet at Penn. He did 10 1-5 in the other three, at Rutgers, Princeton and Lafayette.

In the Princeton and Penn meets he ran his first 220-yard races and took second place both times. He was an entry to win points for the team, and filled the bill.

Then the United States declared war.

## World War I

Harold Lever enlisted in the army in June 1917. He was stationed at Camp Meade MD with the Three Hundred and Fourth Field Hospital. While at Camp Meade, he wrote home, in November 1917, stating that he was quarterback on the company's football team and was elected captain. Lever played quarterback in the November 2017 game between the Three Hundred and Thirteenth Field Hospital Corps and Three Hundred and Fourteenth Corps. The final score was 13 to 12, with Lever's team on the losing end. However, Lever scored both touchdowns. - [November 2017, The Ilion Citizen](#) - Illion NY Citizen 1917-1919 - 0360.pdf

Lever won the camp championships at Oglethorpe, Ga., and at Camp Meade in the 100, 220 and broad jump. He went overseas to serve in France for nineteen months. He continued his running and competed in various events. He won the 100-yard and broad jump championships of the 79th Division at Souilly, and later competed in the A. E. F. championships on Colombes Field, Paris.

"Harold 'Boots' Lever who has been in service overseas for the past 13 months received his discharge at Camp Mills Saturday. 'Boots' will work out at Typewriter Park for a few weeks and late in September will enter the University of Pennsylvania. He made a name for himself in A. E. F. athletics." - [August 23, 1919, The Utica Observer](#) - Utica NY Observer 1919 - 2885.pdf



## University of Pennsylvania Track Star

### 1920 - Freshman Breaks 60 Yard World Record

Harold Lever broke the world's record for the 60-yard dash, as a Penn Freshman, in the national junior games held in Buffalo, NY, on February 21, 1920. "Lever made a new championship time in the sixty-yard sprint dashing the distance in six and three-fifth seconds." - [Evening Public Ledger May 18, 1920](#) - Philadelphia PA Evening Ledger 1920 2967.pdf

### LEVER, PENN, OUT FOR OLYMPIC TEAM

## Billy Morris, New Miracle Man at Penn, Saved Lever's Future

Below is the article from the Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger about Boots Lever's freshman year at Penn. - [Evening Public Ledger May 18, 1920](#) - Philadelphia PA Evening Ledger 1920 2967.pdf

They have a new miracle man out Penn way. He is Billy Morris, veteran rubber of football and track team at Franklin Field. Since Morris has been rubbing athletes at the Red and Blue institution, he has had such success that many new men, especially freshmen, call him "Doctor."

The latest success of this miracle man took place on Saturday afternoon when Harold Lever, the sensational freshman sprinter, won two events at Cornell against the Ithaca freshmen. On the Saturday of the relays it will be remembered Lever finished second to Scholtz, of Missouri, by virtually throwing himself across the finish line. The youngster had to be carried to the dressing room, where, doctors pronounced his injury as a badly pulled tendon. Usually that sort of a diagnosis means a layoff of several months, if not permanently.

Morris was appealed to and he sat to work to get the youngster in shape. Within ten days, Lever was able to get into a tracksuit and jog easily around the track. The treatment continued and Lever asked Coach Robertson to permit him to make the trip to Ithaca. The permission was granted with the proviso that if the injured leg did not feel just right Lever should remain on the sidelines. Lever felt "right," went into the meet and won two events, the hundred and the broad jump.

## Olympic Hopes

On June 26, 1920, a meet was held on Franklin Field, in Philadelphia, to select American entrants for the Olympic Games. Harold Lever, a freshman ten-second sprinter represented the University of Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, Lever did not make the team.

"Murchison scored an easy victory in the 100-yard final in which he beat H. B. Lever, of the Meadowbrook Club, and William D. Hayes. His time was 10 seconds." - [New York Tribune June 27, 1920](#) - New York NY Tribune 1920 06-27 Page 19.pdf



## LEVER IS FASTEST on GET-AWAY

The Utica Herald Dispatch published an article describing Lever's performance at the Olympic tryouts on July 7, 1920.

"Look out for Harold Lever, the brilliant young sprinter of the Meadowbrook Club, whose home is in Ilion. With but one day to train in before trying out in the Philadelphia Olympic preliminaries, Lever was barely nosed out of first place in the 100-yard dash by L. Murchison, the N.Y.A.C. star."

"Lever, although he was somewhat short and stubby legs, is a brilliant and powerful runner. There was little doubt in the minds of those who saw him work out in the tryouts here that he would have beaten Murchison had it not been for lack of training. Lever has one of the speediest starts ever seen, his leap at the gun appearing to be at least ten feet and giving a lead that hard for anyone to cut down." - [The Utica Herald Dispatch July 7, 1920](#) - Utica NY Herald Dispatch 1920 - 2911.pdf





[The New York Herald March 11, 1922](#)

## University of Pennsylvania College Years

Lever was elected Captain of the University of Pennsylvania track team on April 29, 1920. - [The Evening Public Ledger - Philadelphia April 29, 1920](#)

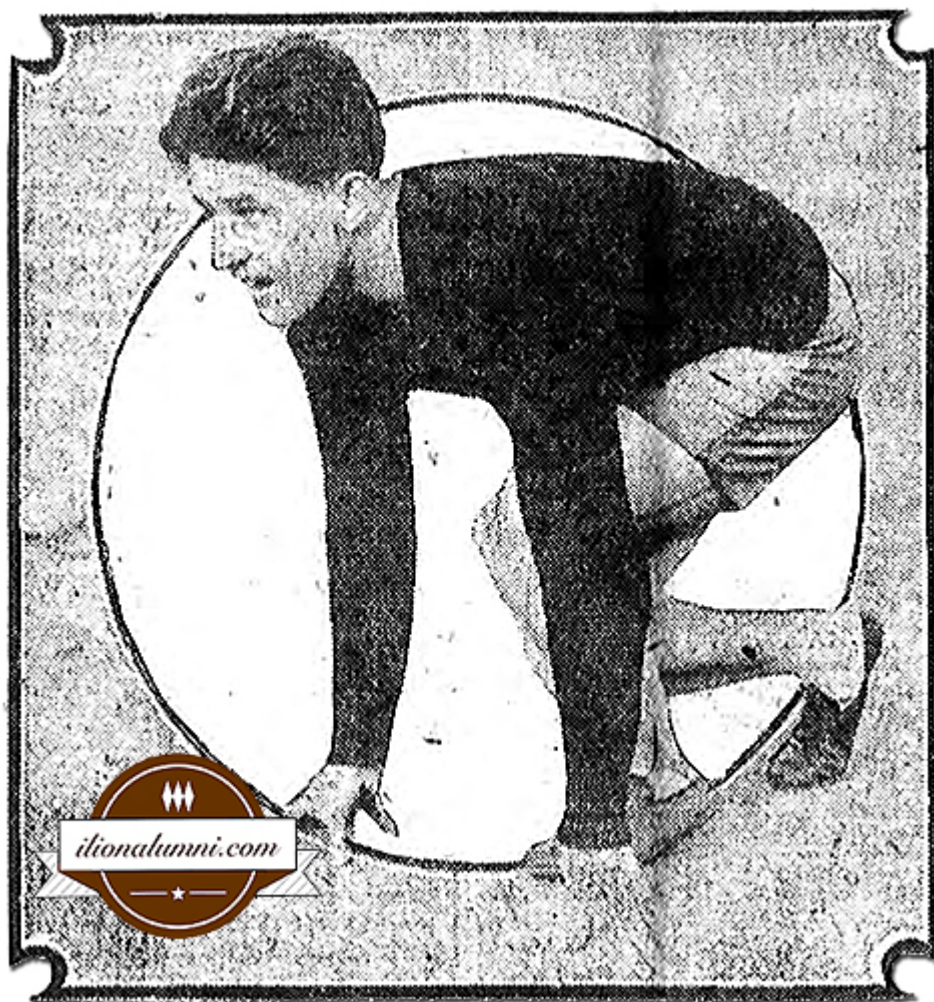
In January of 1921, some athletes were cramming for exams and missing practice. Boots Lever was not among those missing practice. He would pay for that later.

"A flunk for an athlete and he is ineligible for some time. Two flunks and he might get his walking papers into town. Three flunks and he is certain to be moving to other fields. ... Coach Roberson's band of track athletes seem the least perturbed outwardly, although several admitted that they were seething caldrons inside. Smalley, Lever, Meredith, Eby and a host of other varsity men were out on the track yesterday working out. There is to be no let-up for the regulars because of a meet in Brooklyn Saturday night." - [The Evening Public Ledger January 25, 1921](#)

Boots Lever did have a problem balancing his academic studies with his track career but persevered and recovered his academic standing. The Washington DC "Evening Star" reported on May 6, 1921, "...Harold Lever, star sprinter of the Pennsylvania track team, recently banned from participation in athletics for falling behind in his studies, has passed his conditions and has been declared eligible." - [The Evening Star Washington DC May 6, 1921](#) - Washington DC Evening Star 1921 05-06 Page 27.pdf

In June of 1921, Harold 'Boots' Lever earned his Varsity Letter. - [The New York Herald June 12, 1921](#) - seq-49.pdf

During the spring of 1922, he competed at the indoor championship games of the Intercollegiate Association of Amateur Athletes of America in the Twenty-second Regiment Armory. He sprinted in the 70-yard dash and the running broad jump. - [The New York Herald March 11, 1922](#) - seq-13.pdf

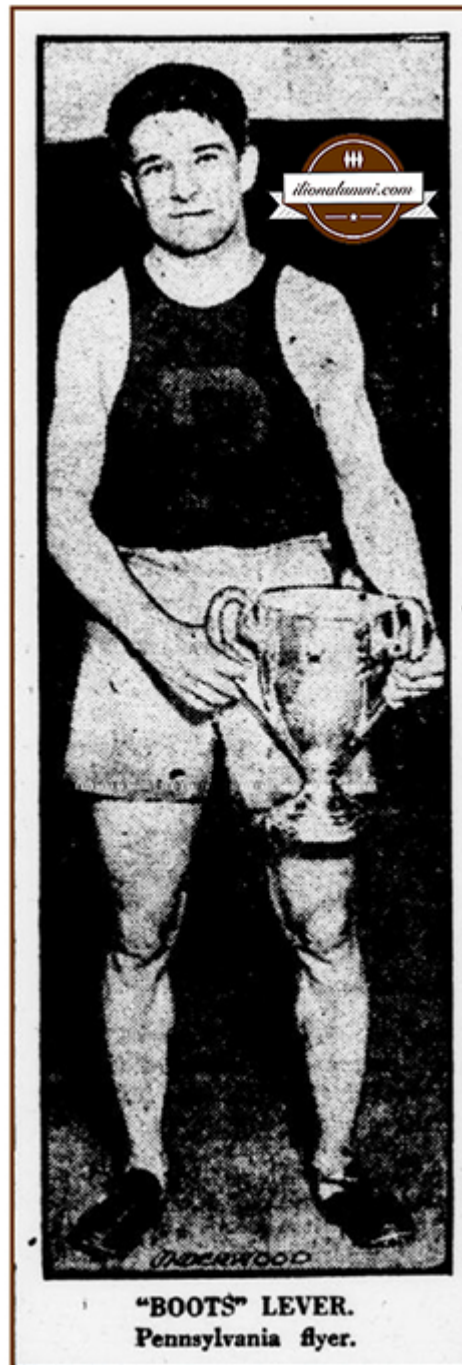


[Philadelphia PA Inquirer April 23 1923](#)

## Breaking World's Records

The year 1923 was outstanding for Harold Lever as a member of the University of Pennsylvania track team. "The Sunday Star", March 11, 1923 newspaper edition featured this article chronicling how he got in shape to break the world's record in the 70-yard dash. Below is the full text from that article. -

[The Sunday Star March 11, 1923](#)



[The Sunday Star March 11, 1923](#)

The entire content of The Sunday Star - March 11, 1923 article is reproduced here.



## **Lever Set World Mark on Diet of Raw Meat**

"That's what enabled Harold E. (Boots) Lever to break the world indoor record for the 70-yard dash that had stood the test for twenty years. Lever himself is sponsor for the story that raw meat combined with milk enabled him to establish the new figures of 7.1 seconds in New York the night of March 3. On the advice of Lawson Robertson, coach of the university track team, Lever followed a course of dieting that made him fit for the race of his life."

"When I left my bed in the training house the Wednesday afternoon previous to the race still weak from the grip," said Lever, in telling of the preparations he made for the intercollegiates, "I naturally felt rather weak. I had been in bed for almost a week and my strength was at a decidedly low ebb."

"The first thing I did was to ask Coach Robertson what he wanted me to do in preparation for the race. I felt that I would enter no matter what happened, though I could not win my heat. Robbie told me that I would have to feed up on raw meat and milk. I laughed at first, but when I found him serious inquired further and then decided to go ahead."

### **Did Not Taste So Bad**

"I went to a butcher shop and asked for a half pound of round steak chopped up with as much as the fat removed as possible. I took the meat to the chef of the fraternity house, asked him to fix it up in some way that it would be palatable and waited results."

"That night at dinner the raw meat was put on the table, and I surprised myself and those around me by finishing every morsel of it. It wasn't the most tasteful thing in the world, but I figured that it was up to me to eat it to gain strength."

"In addition, I drank one quart of milk in the course of the day and had my second portion of raw meat. On Thursday, I repeated the same process and again on Friday. Saturday morning I felt rather fit. Not that I had had any practice, but I felt my strength had at last returned and that I would be able to do something worthwhile that night."

Lever's story was seconded by Lawson Robertson, the Penn coach, who was present during the interview.

"Raw meat did it," chimed in Robertson, whose strategy was responsible for Penn winning the championship when its prospects were considered worse than third. "Best thing in the world for an athlete whose strength has been sapped by an illness. Helped Lever a lot."

### **Follows Orders Closely**

Lever is one of the best examples of close application to training orders of any athlete in college ranks. He adheres strictly to all the rules as laid down by Robertson and as a result is one of the easiest of athletes to handle.

He served in France with the 814th Infantry Ambulance Corps and ran as a member of the United States team in the Interallied games. On his return to this country he matriculated at the university and has been a star sprinter there ever since. He has worked his way through the Wharton School writing for newspapers and working at nights.

His ideas on sprinting are worth repeating. "Nervousness is something that cannot be overcome in sprinting," said Lever. "It is almost impossible for a man to lose nervousness. From the time I get into my track togs until a race is over I feel nervous. On the floor I keep thinking of the race and wondering just how successful I am going to be."

### Describes How He Started

Lever was asked to explain his methods of running a race. "In the first place," he said, "I put my foot down on the floor firmly, stamping it a number of times. When the starter says, 'Come on, boys,' I put my right knee on the floor and my left foot against the block, but not tight. During the time between 'Come on, boys,' and get set my right foot is quivering like a man with the palsy."

"When the starter raises the pistol, I put that right foot firmly against the block and wait for the report. I never use the front block, as many sprinters do, but am content with the rear one, which gives me an opportunity to shove away at the crack of the pistol with all possible speed."

"From the time that gun goes off until the tape I never remember a thing. I might as well be away off in another sphere. There is not a thought in my mind. I move mechanically with all the speed I am capable of. I take a deep breath before the pistol is fired and that's all I remember before the raw is over."

Training for sprinting is vastly different than training for anything else, according to Lever.

Robertson, to whom Lever attributes all the success he has had in running, doesn't believe in having a sprinter run his full distance in preparing for a race.

Fast starting and racing for perhaps thirty or forty yards is sufficient, according to Lever. He never runs the full distance, whether it be fifty, sixty, seventy or a hundred yards. A fast, start and speed for the aforementioned forty or fifty yards is sufficient.

As far as food is concerned, Lever eats everything, including raw meat, before a race, except pastries and fried food. Coffee is tabooed, but milk or tea are used in moderation. Greasy foods are also on the blacklist, but otherwise anything that is served Lever consumes. The new world's record holder thinks that an athlete should have at least eight to nine hours sleep at night and that he should not smoke at all. On this basis, he works constantly training from the middle of December until the day of the outdoor Intercollegiate, with the result that, barring illness, he is always in tip-top condition.

### 'Boots' Lever Sets World's Record for 70 Yards on Track 4 Yards Too Long

The newspaper "New York Evening Telegram", March 4, 1923 edition, added another twist on how Lever broke the world's record in the 70-yard dash. Alfred J. Lo Coney, of Lafayette, had held the record at 7 8-10 seconds. Both Lever and Le Coney had cut the existing record by one-tenth during the semifinals. "Lever nosed out Le Coney in the jump." At the end of the games, the track had to be measured in order to verify Lever's record. It was discovered that the track was "...four and a quarter yards over the prescribed distance, making the record all the more remarkable." - [New York Evening Telegram March 4, 1923](#)



## 'Boots' Lever Broke His Coach's Record - June 1923

Boots Lever broke the 65-yard and the 75-yard world records on Franklin Field on June 17, 1923. "His time for the shorter distance was 6 8-10 seconds, or one-fifth second better than the previous record held by his coach, Lawson Robertson. In the seventy-five-yard dash, Lever covered the distance in 7 5-10 seconds, one-tenth of a second under the old mark." [The Sunday Star - June 17, 1923](#)

## June 30, 1923 - Boots Lever Day - Ilion, NY

### Hometown Welcomes Back Track Star



[June 24, 1923 - The Utica Observer](#) - Utica NY Observer 1923a - 473.pdf

"The greatest collection of track and field athletes ever gathered together in Central New York State will perform at the Remington Typewriter Park, at Ilion, Saturday, in the Lever Day A. A. U. track and field meet arranged as a testimonial to Harold "Boots" Lever, star track athlete of the University of Pennsylvania, world's record holder, 100-yard intercollegiate champion, and native of Ilion."

"Fans of this vicinity will have a chance to see many crack men in action, in addition to Lever who holds the Indoor 30 and 70-yard dash records and the 60 yard mark jointly."

"Saturday will be a full holiday at the Remington plants and a record-breaking crowd is expected to take advantage of the opportunity of seeing so many track celebrities in action and also paying tribute to Lever, Ilion's native son, who has put the town of the world's athletic map."



Boots Lever Day Medal - auction on eBay

**ILION BRANCH OFFICE**

**Republicans to Hold  
Gathering Tomorrow;  
Athlete Makes Gift**

Members of County Committee Men and Women,  
Will Attend Meeting at Newport--Will Hear  
Noted Speakers--Harold "Boots" Lever,  
Will Give Cup to Promote Athletics.

July 1923 - The Origin of the Lever Cup

## **Lever Expresses Gratitude**

On July 13, 1923, "The Utica Observer" printed an article with a letter from Harold Lever, explaining his gratitude for those who organized the "Boots" Lever Day meet. He also described his plan for The Lever Cup. The entire article is printed below. [July 13, 1923 - The Utica Observer](#) - Utica NY Observer 1923a - 983.pdf

### **Athlete Makes Gift**

#### **Harold "Boots" Lever Will Give Cup to Promote Athletics**

#### **Will Present Memorial Cup to Schools**

Ilion, July 13 - "Boots" Lever has sent the following letter to Ernest Wright, president of the field day held in his honor:

Delanco, N.J., July 8, 1923

"Mr. Ernest Wright,  
President Business Men's Association and  
Chairman Lever Day Committee,  
Ilion, N. Y."

"My Dear Mr. Wright:"

"Having been forced to leave Ilion much sooner than I had originally planned, I, in my haste, did not thank many of the committee, as I should have done. However, there are a great many that I do not know, and I know that a letter to you as chairman would at least show you all, who did so much, just how I appreciated it."

"I want to thank each one personally for their work in making the affair a success. It could never have worked so beautifully and successfully had not everyone worked together. The entire day was far more than I had hoped for; it meant a great deal more to me than you can all imagine. Preparations for such an event mean work for all those who hope to put it over. In regard to the field program, I think that with the exception of the delay of the Rochester team, due to change of time, all worked as smoothly as it would have where meets are run off weekly."

"The fellows from Pennsylvania, who came with me, wish to express their thanks and appreciation to the general committee for their gracious reception. They had a very wonderful time and wish those to whom they are indebted thanked."

"I have just dropped a letter to W. J. Powers telling him of a proposed idea of mine, which originated when on the field last Saturday. You all started a meet which attracted attention throughout the entire valley. My plan is to attempt to carry your work a step further. Athletics for our boys and girls are what we all agree they need. It is up to the older people to encourage them as much as possible. I consider myself in this class now that my days of actual competition are about over, therefore my plans are to put up for competition in the high school a cup, as a memorial to the boys who were killed overseas. The conditions of award and manner to be decided later. This award to be made in connection with the commencement exercises each year to the individual who in the opinion of judges has maintained a certain standard throughout the year, in all branches of sports. I would be

very glad to have you get in touch with Mr. Powers, and any suggestion, which you may offer, will be incorporated into, the original plans. This plea for help is open to all who may have had more experience than myself and who may be acquainted with the boys and their qualifications."

"Once more, I want thank you for all your work in making the day a success and, indeed, it was from every standpoint, and should at any time the village need a few men to make a meet a real high class affair, I stand ready to secure the services of any one of the many stars that we have in the East."

"With many thanks to you all I beg to remain, even though far away.

"A sincere Ilion Booster,"

(Signed) "Harold 'Boots' Lever"

## **Lever Cup Award Point System Announced**

Principal, John Guy Prindle announced in February of 1924 the basis on which The Lever Cup would be awarded. "Five points for each varsity letter earned; two points for members of squad; one half point for each school count earned per term and one-half point for each regents count earned in addition to school counts. The cup will be presented to the winner at the commencement exercises in June each year and will remain in the winner's possession until the honor is gained by another." [February 4, 1924 - The Utica Daily Press](#) - Utica NY Daily Press 1924 - 1348.pdf

## **Post College Years**

## To Defend Sprints Cup on Feb. 21



"BOOTS" LEVER

### Loughman Sprints Trophy Holder

Harold Lever worked for the Insurance Company of North America A. A. after graduation from the University of Pennsylvania - Wharton School. He married Dorothy Henderson on June 23, 1923, in Delanco, New Jersey. He also continued competing in track events and on February 21, 1924 entered the New York Athletic Club Invitation Cup events held at the 102nd Engineers Armory.

Boots Lever first competed for and won the Loughman trophy in 1923 while he was still on the University of Pennsylvania track team. He won the three events for the 50, 60 and 70 yard sprints and scored 15 points in the 1923 competition for the trophy. President of the New York Athletic Club, M. Frank Loughman, presented the trophy in 1922 to be awarded at the annual indoor games.

Competitions were held for sprints at 50 yards, 60 yards and 70 yards. It was planned that the cup would become the permanent property of the competitor scoring the most number of points at three successive annual indoor games.

[February 13, 1924 - The Yonkers Statesman and News](#) Yonkers NY Statesman 1924 - 0556.pdf

In the 1924 games, Boots Lever made a clean sweep at 50, 60 and 70-yard sprints and won the Loughman Trophy again. It is unknown if he competed and



won in 1925 to become the permanent trophy holder. [February 22, 1924 - The New York Times](#)



## Coach Lever and Family Life

Besides working in the insurance business, Boots Lever coached the Palmyra High School track team in New Jersey. His one-mile relay team won the National title at the University of Pennsylvania Relay Carnival in 1924, and won the suburban Philadelphia mile crown the next day.

"The boys of Palmyra swear by their coach. From the smallest youngster in the grammar school to the biggest youth of the high school there is lingering hope to emulate the deeds of Lever." [March 1928 - The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) - Philadelphia PA Inquirer 1928 a - 2791.pdf

Harold and Dorothy Lever resided in New Jersey until 1931. They were parents to Harold Lever, Jr, born in 1927 and Roger Lever, born in 1932. The Levers moved to Fairfield, CT. in 1931 where Mr. Lever owned his own Insurance Agency.

## Lever Visits to Ilion

## 1937 - When in Town, Visits Jim Woodard

### Pole Vaulter Paralyzed at Remington Park

Jim Woodard was paralyzed while pole-vaulting at a Remington Typewriter Field event in 1910. In 1937, when Jim was 55 years old, the Rem-Rand workers raised money to replace his steel leg braces. "Boots Lever" remained his friend and always made time to visit Jim when Boots returned to Ilion. "The Ilion Sentinel" reported on September 30, 1937, "Despite, his affliction Jim Woodard remains one of the most popular and interesting personalities in Ilion. His friends are legion. Out of town visitors always stop in to see him when renewing old acquaintances. Joe Carney, back for a brief vacation from his duties as a Standard Oil executive out in China, Harold "Boots" Lever, Ilion's most famous athlete...." [September 30, 1937 - The Ilion Sentinel](#) - Illion NY Sentinel 1935-1937 - 0819.pdf

### 1937 - "Paavo Nurmi" of Ilion Returns

What is the meaning of Paavo Nurmi, the person, that Harold Lever was compared to in the August 25, 1937 Ilion Sentinel article?

["Paavo Nurmi"](#) was nicknamed the "Flying Finn" as he dominated distance running in the early 20th century. Nurmi set 22 official world records at distances between 1500 meters and 20 kilometers, and won nine gold and three silver medals in his twelve events in the Olympic Games.

Lever had returned to Ilion to attend a family reunion. Mr. and Mrs. Aksel (Lever) Johnson, 33 Benedict Avenue, a cousin to "Boots", hosted Mr. Lever. On Friday night, "Boots" attended a reunion of the Lever-Bastow families in Russell Park. He attended a Herkimer Firemen's clambake Sunday where he met up with Jack Knoll, another old-time Ilion athlete, and one of his old friends. He also went to the American Legion clambake at Ilion Fish and Game clubhouse. [August 25, 1937 - The Ilion Sentinel](#) - Illion NY Sentinel 1935-1937 - 0783.pdf

### 1945 Varsity Club Banquet - Love for Ilion

Lever returned to Ilion in December 1945 when he was a guest speaker at The Ilion High School Varsity Club Dinner. [December 4, 1945 - The Herkimer Evening Telegram](#) - Herkimer NY Evening Telegram 1945 02194.pdf

**Ilion Gridders Feted At Dinner By Varsity Club**

Ilion - Fidelity to their alma mater and importance of clean sports was imbued into young athletes last night by Everett (Hap) Day and Harold (Boots) Lever, as they addressed the more than 200 athletes, guests and friends attending the Varsity Club banquet in Beethoven Maennerchor Hall.

In an inspiring talk, tinged with love for Ilion, Lever, holder of the 70-yard indoor track record, reminded that "whether we win or lose it doesn't make any difference the long run because its the team that counts."

The football field has been the training ground for men in the past war. It is a worthwhile game because it is a fight. Life is a fight.

### **Maintain Friendship**

"When you go onto the field whether you win, lose or draw, if you play hard and square and come out feeling the other fellow is still your friend, you can feel that you have gone forth in preaching clean sportsmanship," he said.

Lever, a graduate of Ilion High School and Mercersburg Academy, gave the Lever Cup to the high school to be awarded each year to the most outstanding athlete. Milton Hess, football captain, is the present holder. A member of the Class of 1923 at Wharton, he served two years in France during World War 1 with the ambulance corps. Termed one of the greatest sprinters in the history of the University of Pennsylvania, Lever is co-holder of the university record of 9.8 seconds for the 100-yard dash. In 1923 he won the 100-yard dash in the Intercollegiates, besides playing football at Pennsylvania.

Day, brother of Harold Day, Remington Rand, Plant 1 manager, offered sidelights of his early sport years. He graduated from Ilion High School where he captained the 1917 and 1918 football team and then went on to gain track and football honors at the University of Pennsylvania

### **Voted to Membership**

The club adopted the following resolution: "Be it resolved that we of Ilion Varsity Club having duly, noted the evidence of sportsmanship and fair play exhibited over a period of years and taking into consideration certain conflicts of time and distance that render these gentlemen incapable of attaining active participation, do hereby empower the secretary of the Ilion Varsity Club to officially recognize and forward evidence of such recognition to the participants that they are life time honorary members of the Ilion Varsity Club. We do therefore publicly announce these appointments: Charles Luce, Everett Day, Harold Lever."

Ernest Sitts, captain in 1923 and 1924 introduced these guests: Luce, Carl Peterson. Roy Bennett, Ralph Horton, Edward Day, Elmer Morgan, Daniel Murphy, Jack Storn, Bentley Williams, Albert Schulz, George Finnigan and Charles Mallory.

Other speakers were J. G. Prindle. E. P. Watkin, Milton Hess, who introduced all team members and cheer leaders; and Kenneth Patrick.

Sitts was general chairman, assisted by Capes, Glenn Salsburg, Frank Connors and Arthur Barnum.



## The Death of Harold Brandenburg Lever - "Boots" Lever

### Lever, 68, Dies in Florida; Sprint Star During 1920s

The Utica Observer Dispatch - April 21, 1963 - Harold B. (Boots) Lever, 68, an Iliion native and a well-known area athlete died April 18, in Daytona Beach after he was stricken with a heart attack while scoring the Florida Amateur Golf Championship.

He was an official tournament scorer of the Florida Section of the Professional Golfers Association, and was scoring the amateur tournament on the Port St. Lucie Golf Course.

He was born in Iliion and educated in local schools. Although he was active in all sports, he was most proficient in track. He was a track star at the University of Pennsylvania during the 1920s and twice won the Maxwell Trophy, now awarded only in football. It was then emblematic of track supremacy.

He captained his college track team in 1923 and set a record of 7.1 seconds for the 70-yard indoor dash, a mark which has been surpassed only twice since.

While in Iliion, he was active in church, civic and Masonic affairs. He settled in Connecticut after his college days and was a retired insurance executive. He had been living in Florida since 1960.

[April 19, 1963 - The Bridgeport Post from Bridgeport, Connecticut · Page 35](#) - additional obituary available

Harold 'Boots' Lever was predeceased by his son Harold Jr. He was survived by his wife, Dorothy, son Roger and his grandchildren Darcy, Holly, Piper, Susie, Katie, Scott and John. Dorothy Lever died in 1980. The Levers are buried [Daytona Memorial Park](#), Daytona Beach Florida.

## The Lever Cup Award Recipients

Former IHS Athletic Director and 1967 Lever Cup Recipient, Robert Turley, provided the names of the winners of this trophy. Garrett Olds, current Central

Valley Academy Athletice directory, provided the names of the CVA recipients.  
- [The Lever Cup Trophy](#).

The trophy, which was first introduced in 1924, is still being awarded to outstanding male scholar/athletes, including students at the merged Ilion-Mohawk school District high school - Central Valley Academy. For 95 years, young men have been honored to receive this award. May the tradition live on beyone its Centennial anniversary in 2024!

### **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to the granddaughter of "Boots" Lever, Darcy Baadshaug, Rockaway NJ, for providing the cover story photograph of Harold Lever; which was the spark for this article. Darcy also provided biographical data about her grandfather. Joe Smith created the scanned photo of the Ilion High School Towpath. Thank you to Mike Disotelle of the Ilion Public Library for providing the 1963 obituary of Harold Lever. Additional thanks goes out to current Central Valley Academy administration officials, Sally McCann Kramas (IHS 1975) - Vice Principal, Garret Olds - Athletic Director for the names of the CVA recipients, and Cuyle Rockwell - District Communications, for the photograph of The Lever Cup. Finally, many thanks to former Ilion Athletic Director, Robert Turley (IHS 1967) for providing the names of the Ilion High School Lever Cup recipients since 1924.

### **BACK**

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