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Now the man behind the face-paint emerges to tell the real story. No, he wasn't a Stone Age throwback or a refugee from a freak show — he was veteran grappling hero Dewey Robertson, known to wrestling aficionados for his all-Canadian looks, physique and mastery of a thousand holds.

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DEWEY ROBERTSON is "The Missing Link," one of the most memorable performers in the history of professional wrestling. MEREDITH RENWICK is a respected Toronto writer.

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Estratto della pubblicazione

THE MISSING LINK

Bang Your Head! the real story of THE MISSING LINK

Dewey "The Missing Link" Robertson and Meredith Renwick
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Contents

FOREWORD—PERCY PRINGLE III v

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vi

DEDICATION viii

PROLOGUE ix

CHAPTER 1
The Man Behind the Blue-and-Green Mask 1

CHAPTER 2
“It’s Up to You” — Al Spittle’s Gym 16

CHAPTER 3
Pittsburgh on $25 a Day 29

CHAPTER 4
NWA — OK 43

CHAPTER 5
The Crusader 60

CHAPTER 6
Canadian Heavyweight Champion 72

CHAPTER 7
Kansas City All-Star 92
CHAPTER 8
The Birth of The Missing Link 103

CHAPTER 9
New York, New York 129

CHAPTER 10
Mr. Universal 148

CHAPTER 11
The Wild, Wild West 160

CHAPTER 12
Recovery 177
I remember January 16, 1985 vividly. It was my first day working with *Championship Wrestling From Florida*, and my first encounter with Dewey Robertson, “The Missing Link.” To say that Dewey is one of the most unique individuals that I have experienced in my 30-plus years in sports entertainment is definitely an understatement. The lessons I learned as his manager while traveling countless miles around the country in one of his old classic green Cadillacs will never be forgotten.

I was honored when Dewey asked me to write the foreword to his autobiography. He sent me an advance manuscript to read, and asked for my suggestions. I made several notes as I read, and realized that it wasn’t my place to make any changes to my friend’s life story. This is a Byron Robertson chronicle. I tossed my notes into the trash, and returned the book exactly as it was sent to me. However, I must say that I secretly kept something from the package that I addressed to Hamilton, Ontario. I retained a renewed respect for the man known as The Missing Link.

*Bang Your Head* is as unique as Dewey himself. These chapters document his battles in and out of the professional wrestling ring, and the defeat of the many demons he befriended along the way. His determination and persistence to keep moving forward exemplifies his heart and soul.

Faith, family, and friends are what this personal story is all about. I am so proud to have crossed life’s pathways with the author. I am no doubt a better man, and I believe you will walk away from this reading with the exact same sentiments.

Now . . . turn the page and experience Dewey — The Missing Link.

— Percy Pringle III (WWE Legend Paul Bearer)
A lot of people think writing a book is a solitary pursuit. I thought so myself, until Dewey Robertson asked me to help with a project very dear to him, the writing of his autobiography. I knew very little about professional wrestling or the career of Dewey Robertson, but something about his story grabbed my interest when I heard it for the first time, and I thought it would be compelling to a lot of people, wrestling fans or not.

As it is with so many of life’s major undertakings, I had no idea what I was getting myself into when I agreed to take on the project. Let’s just say it was an adventure, a journey into previously uncharted territory for both myself and Dewey. I learned a lot, and I discovered it takes many people to weave the fabric of a person’s life into a coherent pattern. They are part of the story of Dewey’s book too, and I’d like to take a moment to acknowledge their contributions.

I was helped immensely by talking to the following people about Dewey’s early life, the rise and fall of his career, and his years out of the spotlight following his return to Canada: Killer Tim Brooks, Ragan Davis, Rusty Davis, Harry Demerjian (Ref Harry D — who also provided the funniest account of a Missing Link match I heard from anyone), John Evans (Reginald Love), Jimmy Garvin, Gary Hart, Jimmy Hart, Kevin Hobbs, Ricky Johnson, Gene Lewis, John Mantell, Terry Morgan, Buddy Roberts, Ethel Robertson, Jason Robertson, and Dean Walker.

I also owe a great debt to the fans and historians who’ve kept the records and the stories of professional wrestling alive — special thanks to Terry Dart and Andrew Calvert for their contributions. A huge thanks also to all the contributors at Kayfabe Memories
for providing an invaluable resource when I was trying to piece together where Dewey had been and when.

Other people I owe thanks to are:

Jim Freedman, author of the superb Drawing Heat (it’s hard to find, but well worth the effort) for his insights into the nature of Dewey’s appeal to wrestling fans past and present.

Britt Britton, promoter of Wrestlecon, for putting The Link back in the public eye and giving me a chance to meet some of the other wrestlers of World Class Championship Wrestling.

Bill Hanna and Matie Molinaro, for their guidance and advice on writing books and navigating the publishing industry.

And finally, a heartfelt thanks to my husband, Greg Oliver, for his patience, love and support, for his role in raising the standards for writing about professional wrestling, and most of all for encouraging me when I was ready to hand the whole project over to someone else. As always, you were right.

— Meredith Renwick
DEDICATION

To my family, who should have come first — for so many reasons. I hope you’ll understand a little better when you’re done reading this.

To Dean Walker, a man who never quits, and who heard me tell my story at a school and first encouraged me to write it down.

To Paul Pendakis, Angelo DiAnia, and the many 12-step groups who invited me to share my story in many venues — public schools, high schools, service clubs, jails — so I could help others from starting down the wrong path.

To Susan Brower, widow of Dick “The Bulldog” Brower, who was instrumental in getting me started and directing me to the extraordinary Matie Molinaro, who listened to and advised me for ten years.

To Wayne Harrison, fan, friend and the person who for ten years made me believe this project was worthwhile.

To Kevin Hobbs, friend, writer, fan and wrestler.
To Bill Puskas, lifetime friend and training partner.
To Keith Adams, fan and friend.
To Gene “Cousin Luke” Lewis, who was always ready to share his optimism.

To all the employers, promoters and bookers who kept me working for 44 years and always gave me a break.

To all the other 12-steppers, doctors, fans, mentors and friends who listened, gave advice, and helped me get back on the road to recovery when I strayed. You know who you are.

To the memory of all the wrestlers whose lives have been tragically cut short by the abuses that nearly took me down. They are sadly missed by their peers, fans and families, but will never be forgotten.
For The Link

Where does he come from?
Nobody knows.
Where is he going?
To parts unknown.
Can Sheena control him?
He pulls at his hair,
He does not speak
The General is there.
What does he feel as he bangs his head?
His opponents shiver, and wish they were dead.
Does he come from a jungle,
Where they walk on all fours?
Or a far-off planet,
In between all the stars?
He’s fierce and ferocious,
So better beware.
Stay out of the ring
If The Missing Link is there.

Diane, June, 1984

The two photographers were in the empty dressing room backstage at the University of Tampa Spartan Sports Center. They were waiting for a professional wrestler called The Missing Link, to see if they could take his picture for an upcoming issue of Sports Illustrated. Long regarded as a cartoonish pseudo-sport ranked a notch or two above a carnival freak show, in the spring of 1985 professional wrestling had suddenly become trendy. A promoter based in New York City named Vince McMahon Jr. had just put on a huge, star-studded extravaganza called WrestleMania at Madison Square Garden that made a lot of money and was seen by over a million people via closed-circuit television, the largest audience ever for a single wrestling show. McMahon’s World Wrestling Federation, as he called it, had also created the celebrity athlete of the moment, a blond-mustached, yellow-spandex-clad giant named Hulk Hogan who was getting the full star treatment from the mainstream media. Sports Illustrated had decided that despite its dodgy claim to being a sport, professional wrestling was now worthy of a cover story. The photographers had gone to Georgia first, where there was another longstanding, very successful wrestling promotion but got an extremely hostile reception from the management there, so they came further south to Florida.

The dressing room had been full of people when they arrived,
mostly hard-core fans and other wrestlers, who were brusquely hustled away by security and The Missing Link’s bodyguards before they entered. “What are you doing? Get your hands off me,” shouted one female fan as she was escorted out. “What’s the problem? We’re supposed to be here,” insisted another. “Not tonight, you’re not,” replied the bodyguard. “Now get out.”

The photographers had no idea what to expect when The Missing Link arrived in the dressing room. The Link was a strange character even in the out-there world of professional wrestling. He had a honed, 260-pound bodybuilder’s physique, but that was combined with a blue-and-green painted face, a bizarre tufted hairdo and a beard like a malevolent circus clown. His hair was black; he wore black trunks and furry black boots with matching knee and elbow pads. And if The Link’s appearance was weird, his behavior was downright scary. He was like a primitive Neanderthal man come back to life in the 20th century. The Link had never spoken a word to anyone in the ring or out of it, and often appeared not to know where he was or what he was doing there. During matches he would wander aimlessly around staring at the ring floor, growling softly to himself like a jungle cat, occasionally stopping to glance up in a startled way at the crowd, never looking his opponents in the eye. Just when they thought he’d forgotten they were there, without warning The Link would rear up, grab the tuft of hair on the back of his head, let out a terrifying roar, charge headfirst at his opponent’s chest and the match would be on.

That particular night The Missing Link climbed out of the ring when his match was over, trudging down the narrow aisle, his eyes cast down on the ground. He occasionally stopped and jerked his head upward to glance at the fans, many of whom had blue-and-green painted faces identical to his. Suddenly a fan jumped out in front of him and handed him a metal folding chair. The Link knew instinctively what the fans wanted to see. He grabbed the chair in both hands, raised it up in the air and pounded the chair
against his skull again and again, so hard it dented the chair seat, while the cheers got louder with each blow. The Link’s hard head was his most fearsome weapon in the ring. Besides using it to knock down other wrestlers, he would slam it into chairs, tables, turnbuckles, even ring stairs (sometimes until his forehead was bloody) without ever showing any sign that it hurt him.

Backstage, the dressing room door opened and in came a slim, attractive dark-haired woman dressed all in black — leather chauffeur’s cap, tight-fitting blouse, spandex pants and high-heeled shoes. This was The Link’s driver and handler Sheena, who went everywhere with him. She was the only person The Link would listen to — even his manager, the perpetually furious, spluttering, motor-mouthed Percival Pringle III, could not always make The Link behave. Sheena would guide The Link backstage after the shows, taking him by the arm every time he was distracted by the crowd and moving him towards the dressing room. Now the green-faced behemoth the two photographers had been waiting for stood in the doorway behind Sheena, obviously hesitant to enter his dressing room with strangers in it. Sheena looked at the two men and asked “Who are you?”

“We’re from Sports Illustrated. We’re here to take The Link’s picture,” said one of the men. “Great!” Sheena replied. “We’d love to have you take his picture.” She drew The Link into the room and the photographers looked at him. Any expectations that he might drop out of the character and turn back into a normal person evaporated as they watched him. The Link stood mutely with his shoulders hunched forward, muscular arms slightly extended as though he was looking for a club or a large animal bone to grab, eyes trained on the ground. They had taken pictures of many athletes and entertainers but never anyone this intimidating. If it was an act, it was an extremely effective one. “Could you get him to do one of his wild poses for us?” one man finally asked Sheena.
“I don’t know, that might be difficult,” she mused. “He doesn’t like to be given orders on how to behave. In fact, he doesn’t even like having his picture taken.” She thought a bit longer. “I know!” she said. “I’ll whisper something to him, and when he gets upset you be ready to take a picture, quick.” They focused their cameras as she leaned over and spoke into The Link’s ear, something only he could hear. He came to life immediately. His head snapped up, his hand went to the back of his head, he leaned back and opened his eyes and mouth wide and let out the roar that other wrestlers had learned to fear. The photographers had their picture.

The “Mat Mania!” issue of *Sports Illustrated* hit the newsstands on April 29, 1985. Hulk Hogan was on the cover, but The Missing Link’s picture was the centerfold. A couple of weeks later, The Link was on his way to New York and the World Wrestling Federation.
Fractured right wrist
Partial hearing loss
Deviated septum
Broken teeth
Fractured skull
Permanent chemical imbalance/elevated enzymes
Impaired sight (left eye)
Multiple lacerations (approximately 150 stitches)
Pinched nerves (back and neck)
Calcium deposits in shoulders
Pulled back muscles
Damaged disc and vertebrae
Arthritis in spine
Shattered elbows
Dislocated sacroiliac
Severe groin injuries
Cancer has migrated to lymph node in the area of my ribs
Fractured ribs
Removed kidney (cancer, renal cell carcinoma, caused by toxins like steroids)
Jammed fingers and thumbs
Fractured right wrist
Torn ligaments (cartilage removed)
Shattered kneecaps
Fractured tibia
Iliotibial band syndrome
Sprained left ankle
Severe bruising of toes and feet
Multiple lacerations
(150 stitches)
Severe bruising of toes and feet
BangYourHead_FINAL 8/14/06 11:56 AM  Page xiv
Hi. My name is Dewey Robertson, and I used to be The Missing Link.

This book is the story of my life, my career in wrestling and my struggle with addiction to steroids, alcohol and drugs — the good, the bad and the ugly. Recovery from addiction is without question the toughest match I’ve ever fought. I am not writing this book to tell you what to do. I am just going to tell you what happened to me, and hope that people learn from it.

For nearly 15 years I was the “All-Canadian Boy” of professional wrestling. I was one of the most versatile faces in the business; my good friend, the late Bullwhip Danny Johnson called
me “The Man of a Thousand Moves.” As a dedicated bodybuilder since the age of 19 and someone who was always extremely conscientious about what I put into my body, I never thought I would become a substance abuser of any kind. Even now my mother says to me, “Byron” (that’s my real name), “I don’t ever remember you drinking a lot. You were always so interested in your health.” That’s true. If I drank at all, it was in moderation — two or three beers to loosen up at a party, never any more. I weight-trained and wrestled without using any steroids or illicit drugs for many years. That all changed when I moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, in the late 1970s. While going to Charlotte gave a huge boost to my wrestling career, I was also introduced to steroids and my drug of choice, marijuana. Once I left Canada, it only took 13 years of steroids, alcohol and drugs to take me to the bottom — and I mean the bottom.

When times were good it seemed harmless, but after a few years I came to a point when my career had stalled and I had to take drastic action. I went to Texas, shaved my head, painted my face and changed my name to The Missing Link. The Link was an immediate sensation, drawing so much heat that riots sometimes broke out during shows. But nobody knew that the outrageous antics everyone loved so much — the roaring, the hair-grabbing, the headbutts and chair-smashing — were fueled by my growing addiction to steroids, alcohol and drugs. The Link saved my wrestling career, but he nearly killed Dewey Robertson in the process. I literally “went missing” as The Link took over my personality. I lived the gimmick 24 hours a day. I didn’t speak to anyone for nearly eight years and sank into a fog of addiction.

As my mind and body went downhill, so did my career. When the last promotion I worked for went out of business in the late 1980s, reality hit me with devastating force. I was approaching my 50th birthday with no money, no career and nothing but my customized Linkmobile truck to my name. I had nothing to fall back
on, because I hadn’t saved a cent. All of my money had been spent on living the high life.

After a long, humbling struggle with poverty, illness and homelessness, my family and I finally made our way back to Canada and began to rebuild our lives from the bottom up. I had to go into rehab, and then recovery, which has been my primary occupation for the last 16 years or so. I’ve stayed sober, but not always clean, and it’s a constant battle to stay on track. My biggest challenge came when my wife left me after 32 years of marriage and I wasted a lot of time afterwards thinking she would come back to me — time that should have been spent getting on with the rest of my life. She never came back, and why should she? I blamed her for every mistake I made. It’s a credit to her that she hung in as long as she did. I hope one day she’ll be able to forgive me for all the terrible things I did while we were married.

As for me, I’m still wrestling occasionally, trying to achieve a measure of serenity and repair the damage that years of drinking and drug use did to my family life. I do a lot of public speaking about my experiences with addiction and recovery. Most importantly, I am finally starting to learn the lesson that in order to move on, I have to accept the past and then let go of it. And that’s what I hope to do by writing this book. There may be mistakes in here — my memory isn’t what it used to be — but this is the story the way I remember it.

* * *

I have an album of childhood photographs my mother gave to me as a Christmas present in the early 1970s that I enjoy looking through when I’m feeling down. There’s photos of my grandfather, my mother and pretty well everybody else in the family holding me as a baby; my father holding me on a pony, standing on the running board of his old Ford, wearing his army uniform,
with his army platoon. Some of the photos were taken at my house and some taken four doors up the street where my grandmother lived. I can see the years going by and me growing older: sitting on Santa Claus’s knee, class photos with three rows of kids in front of the school, pictures taken on holidays, as a teenager, and at friends’ wedding ceremonies.

The pictures tell me a story: that both my parents and my grandparents loved me very much, that I had a lot of friends, and how important it is to have something that reminds you of the good times, because life goes on very rapidly sometimes and changes happen that we don’t expect. That album tells me these were moments in my life I enjoyed very much, and I shouldn’t forget them when I think about all the bad things I’ve been through. A lot of people who are in recovery don’t grow up the way I did. Usually they come from abusive homes — they find the glass on the table when they’re 11 or 12 years old, take a drink of what’s in it and it makes the pain go away for a while. That’s not how it happened for me.

I was born Byron James John Robertson on February 28, 1939 to Ethel and Ken Robertson, of West Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. At that time, West Hamilton was a little village of its own, separate from the city of Hamilton. It was tucked under the mountain, across from where McMaster University Hospital is now. My brother Ken was born four years after me. I’m sorry to say I can’t tell you much about him. When things started to go bad between my parents, I began spending most of my time out of the house and never got to know my brother very well. This is only one of many regrets I have now about the direction my life eventually took.

I wouldn’t say we were poor but like everybody else back then, we made do with much less than people today would consider necessary for a good life. It was a simpler time. Parents, peers and neighborhood friendships helped form a stable community for
To this day my connection with children is my greatest achievement
And in this corner, at 260 pounds, from Parts Unknown, it's The Missing Link!

In the mid-'80s, fans of the mat game worldwide were thrilled by those words as the bizarre and volatile Missing Link entered the ring. But then he disappeared as mysteriously as he appeared, and for more than a decade, people wondered.... Now the man behind the face-paint emerges to tell the real story. No, he wasn’t a Stone Age throwback or a refugee from a freak show – he was veteran grappling hero Dewey Robertson, known to wrestling aficionados for his all-Canadian looks, physique and mastery of a thousand holds.

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