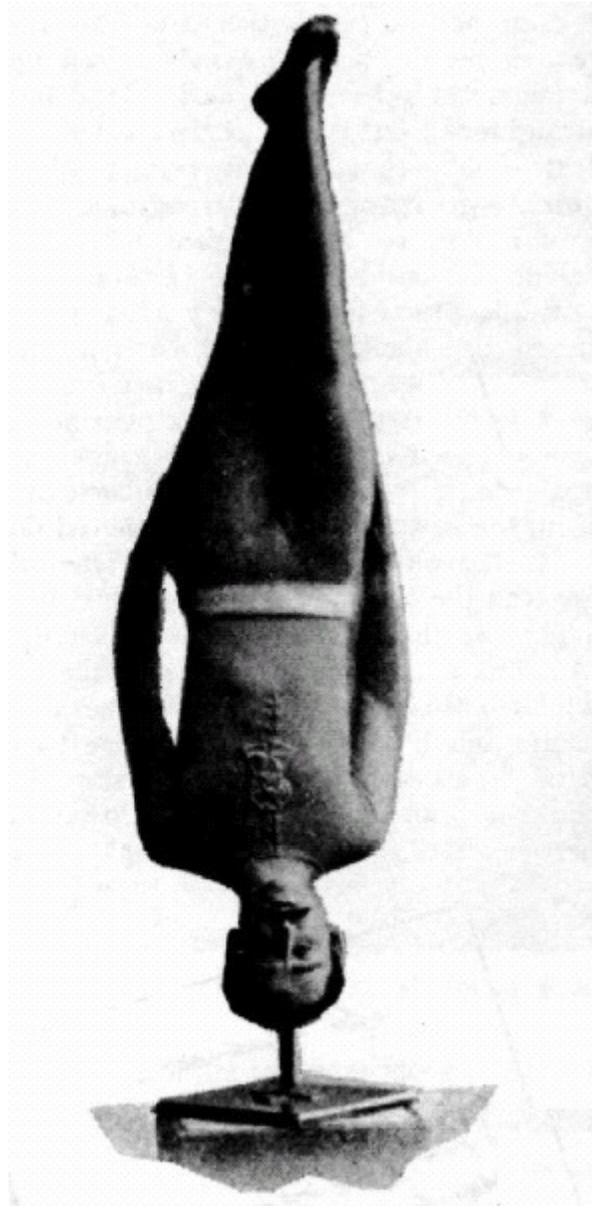


THE SCIENCE OF HEAD BALANCING



BY PROFESSOR PAULINETTI AND ROBERT L. JONES
Edited by Logan Christopher

Forwards

The First Two Chapters of this work, on solo and head-to-head balancing, were published by Professor Paulinetti in 1929; that edition is now exhausted (April, 1943) and in reprinting it I am presuming upon myself to add a few words in a place or two, and to supplant his original line drawing illustrations (made from photographs which I took under his supervision) with those actual photographs in figures 12-13-14-15 and to pose for illustrations for the first ten positions (four of which are additions to the original course). Again, thanks to the increased interest in the art, I am adding a chapter on head balancing trapeze as taught me by the great master some fifteen years ago. Under his guidance this was the easiest feet I ever learned, and I trust that you, too, may find it likewise not difficult.

The Professor has answered his last curtain call, but his masterful accomplishments will ever keep his memory alive and his name honored by us of the balancing clan. It is to the memory of the man personally and his spirit of friendly and sympathetic helpfulness that this revised edition is respectfully and lovingly dedicated.

Robert L. Jones
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
April 18, 1943

Ever since I had received *The True Art and Science of Hand Balancing*, which you can buy a republished edition on my site at www.LostArtOfHandBalancing.com, I was also searching for Paulinetti's and Jones' book on head balancing. I knew it existed but I was unable to find it anywhere.

Then out of the blue one day I received a copy of this book as a gift from Rick Schwarz. It came in the form of xeroxed copies from the original book. Not perfect, but I'll take it! As such the photos were of very poor quality. Still I've made them the best I can from what I have. You can still see what's the details of the move in each of them. And only one is missing, Position 17, in the head-to-head balancing section.

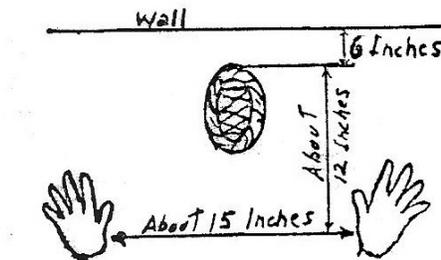
But the information is the best I've seen on head balancing yet. If details the exact steps you'll need to follow to attain a free standing head stand and then move beyond it. So I decided to republish it online for free as a gift to anyone and everyone who visit's my site. Enjoy!

Logan Christopher
Medford, Oregon
July 21, 2011

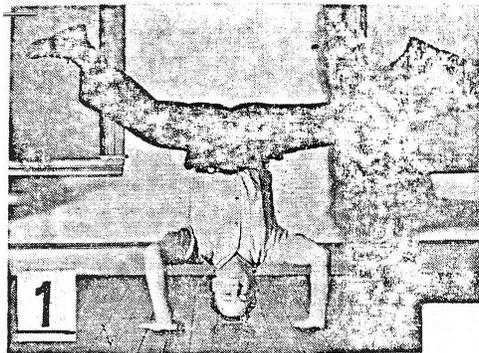
The Science of Head Balancing

The most essential phase of the practice of all head balancing by the beginner is following the instructions closely, to avoid wasting time and energy. Usually, at the beginning of any gymnastic feat, the student tries to do the whole thing at once, before learning the underlying principles of it. Therefore, I emphasize the necessity of your giving strict and earnest study to the following instructions. Doing so will save you much time and effort and addition, will permit you to learn head balancing correctly and in the scientific manner.

First, obtain a grommet. This is simply a doughnut-shaped pad to protect the scalp and in addition to afford a sort of balancing “socket” for the head. Out professional model is best, but you can make a substitute of your own design. Make it oval, about 4x6 inches over all, and of material about one inch in diameter. Shape it to fit your head, and use it in the same position all the time. Note that in figures 4, 6, 10, 20 and 21, etc.



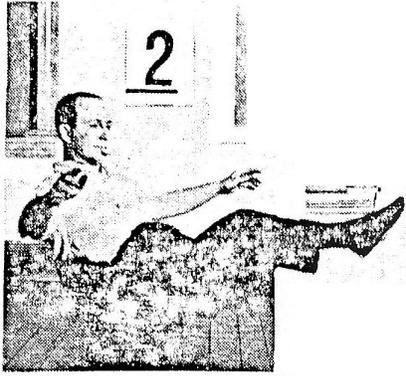
Position No. 1: Place the grommet on the floor about six inches from the wall, or at the foot of a bedstead (so your back will be about four to six inches from the wall when you are on your head; this keeps you from wasting too much time falling over and getting up again). Now place your hands on the floor, about 15 inches apart and about 12 inches nearer you than the grommet, and making a triangle with it - like a 3-legged stool. Point the fingers slightly outward; note the sketch for details. Bring the feet up to about 15 inches behind the hands; lift up from the hands and feet to the hands and head. (If you have never balanced in this position, allow the back to rest against the wall.) Keep the back as straight as possible (as in Fig. 4) and the shoulders back. Separate the legs as far as they will go comfortably, knees almost straight, and toes pointed; hold the feet about one a line with the hips.



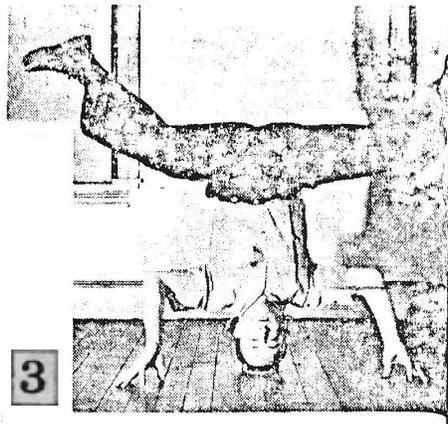
This is the easiest known position for begging the free head balance. Once you assume this try to bring the back (buttocks) away from the wall and to hold the position a short time before descending. Rest a bit, then repeat 6 or 8 times only, the first day. Increase a few repetitions each practice period until you accomplish 30 to 50, which will be enough.

Holding position 1 is done by maintaining a steady, even pressure on the head and hands, but as you try to shift more weight to the head you will find that balancing becomes less a matter of supporting yourself like a 3-legged stool, and more a feat of control by leg movement. To get the “feel” proceed to position Number 2.

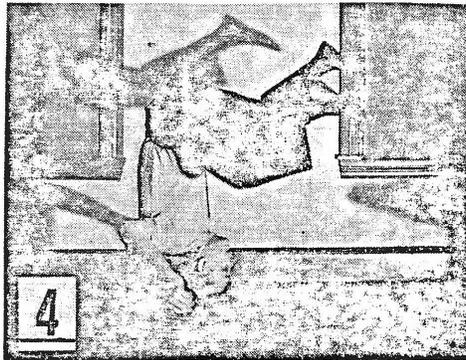
Position No. 2: Note how naturally you balance by arm and leg motion; extend the legs as you roll over, draw them in as you move forward; draw in right arm and leg, and extend left members, as you fall right, and vice versa. This is exactly the manner of balancing on the head as you continue to position 3 you will find the leg action asserting itself.



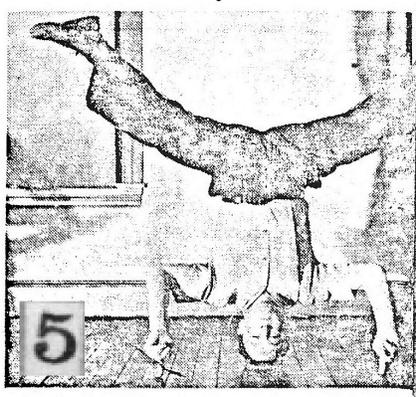
Position No. 3: Take the first position, but when you take the balance on head and hands use only the tips of thumbs and fingers, instead of flat hands, to assist the balance. Practice this style until it is easy. You will observe that a slight shift in the neck is now necessary; as you put more and more weight on the head you can no longer keep the neck and spine in the normal standing position, but must thrust the head forward to bring the center of your weight over the crown of you head.



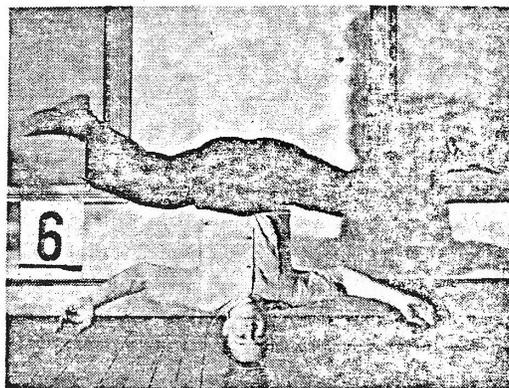
Position No. 4: This shows just how you legs, body and neck are carried in all subsequent positions, and illustrates the well-back arms and shoulders attitude of positions 6, 7, and 9.



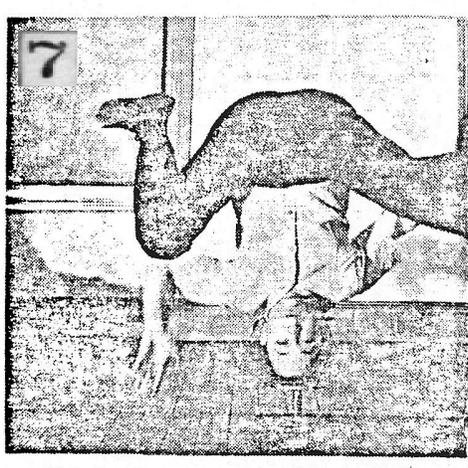
Position No. 5: Mount into the balance as in the past, only now use just the tips of the index fingers to aid in the balance. When you get good control, try it with the feet even a little higher than shown, depending less and less on the hands—and more and more on the leg action—to balance. You are now ready for...



Position No. 6: The Free Head Balance! Start as usual through Positions 1-3-5, shoulders well back, and the back close to the wall to catch you in case of losing the balance forward. (If you topple in any other direction, catch with you hands.) Neither arch the back, nor yet hump it forward; keep it as in Fig. 4 Shift more and more weight to the head, more and more balancing to the legs; easy up with those two index fingers, and YOU HAVE IT!

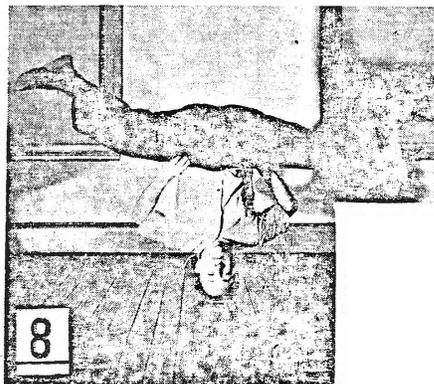


Position No. 7: Balancing is maintained, just as in position 2, by arm and leg action. If losing the balance to the left (as I am doing in Figure 7) draw in the left arm and leg and extend your right limbs; if toppling over, quickly straighten and raise both legs, while if falling back towards your starting position, draw in both knees well toward the chest.

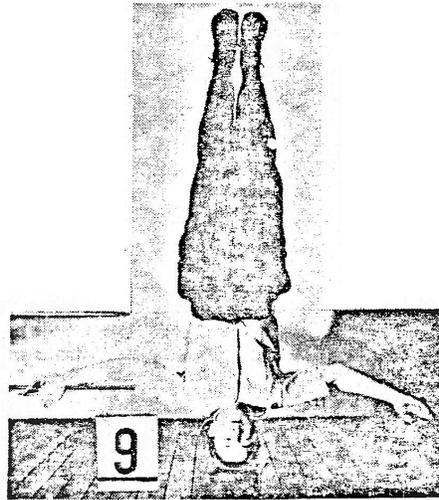


IN THE FREE BALANCE, rest the head on the grommet with slightly more weight on the back of the head—in other words, lean constantly over forward. This makes for steadier balance and better (higher) leg position. This is known professionally as "Pressing for balance". Hold the arms out at right angles from the shoulders and slightly bent at the elbows; the hands, a little lower than the shoulders. See figures 4, 6, and 9. (Some athletes prefer keeping more weight toward the front of the head, but the professor and I greatly prefer the recommended style. Incidentally, keep your face about perpendicular, as in Figure 4; do not either stand on the forehead—as some "headstand authorities" insist—or roll over onto the back of the head. Neither position is good.)

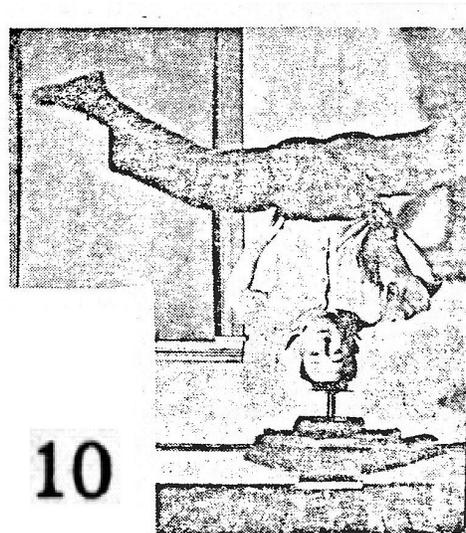
Position No. 8: Once reasonably sure of the free balance, you can raise the arms and place the hands on the hips, as in this illustration. This is not difficult if you keep the shoulders well back, and the next step will be to try folding the arms on the chest, or placing them back of the body, or reaching out and catching one or both feet, and so on.



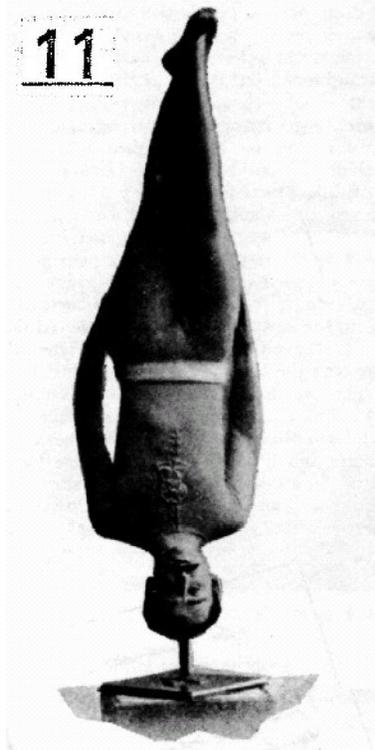
Position No. 9: You have now come to the point where your sense of balance is concentrated on the head; that is, you no longer depend so much on leg and arm action for balancing, and can "feel" the balance with the top of the head against the grommet. When you start losing your balance in a given direction, you press that side of your head more firmly against the grommet, and recover control and position. Commence raising the legs higher and higher until able to get them together as in the illustration. This demands new balancing technique.



Position No. 10; Before mastering position 10 you will have to get away from the in-and-out leg action of figure 7. Try now to keep your knees locked straight (even more so than in figure 5). And balance by shifting them only at the hips. If falling to the left as in figure 8 you drop the left leg and raise the right leg as shown, solely by motion in the hip joint. The next step is to lock the entire hip assembly and use the legs as if one solid balancing pole, weaving right or left by waist action when you lose balance laterally. By now, your balance fore and aft will be almost automatically and will be done entirely by head pressure.



Position No. 11: Perfection! Professor Paulinetti as photographed in Italy around 1900; balance held entirely by head pressing and a slight lateral weaving, or swaying of the trunk. This is uncanny, fascinating—the mark of perfection in head balancing.

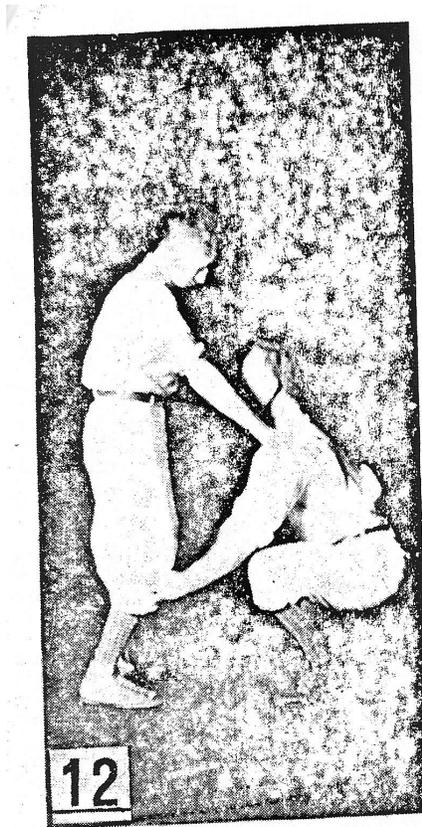


LONG BEFORE DUPLICATING the Professor's headstand you will be sufficiently advanced to try different professional numbers—juggling, revolving balancing a rocker as in figure 10, the head balance trapeze, work with a partner and so on.

Head-to-Head Balancing

It is highly desirable, before beginning the practice of head-to-head balancing, for the bottom man as well as the top man to practice the solo head balance on the floor. He will then feel the exact movement of the upper partner at all times and assist him immediately when the balance shifts. By having both men master the solo head balance, the head-to-head position can be accomplished in less than half the time that would otherwise be required; an under man who knows nothing about the theory of single head balance will, for a considerable time, work directly against his partner's balance instead of with him!

Position No. 12: Starting the mount. Take the position shown; the under man grasps the top shin just under the knees, and the latter places his hands on the under man's shoulders. He then springs upward, and the under man raises him up to position 13.



Position No. 13: Each straightens his arms to put the top man in position to place his head in the grommet which is held to the bottom man's head by a piece of half-inch black elastic (worn under the chin or behind the head and attached to the sides of the grommet to hold it firmly in place). The under man holds his head erect, face perpendicular, to keep the grommet horizontal and level.



Position No. 14: Once the top man has placed his head firmly on the grommet, he grasps his partner's wrists, one at a time, then spreads his legs and straightens his back in precisely the correct form for solo balancing. After practicing this mount a few times, the bottom man can begin walking forward and backward, to either side and in a circle, rapidly gaining for the team a good sense of balance

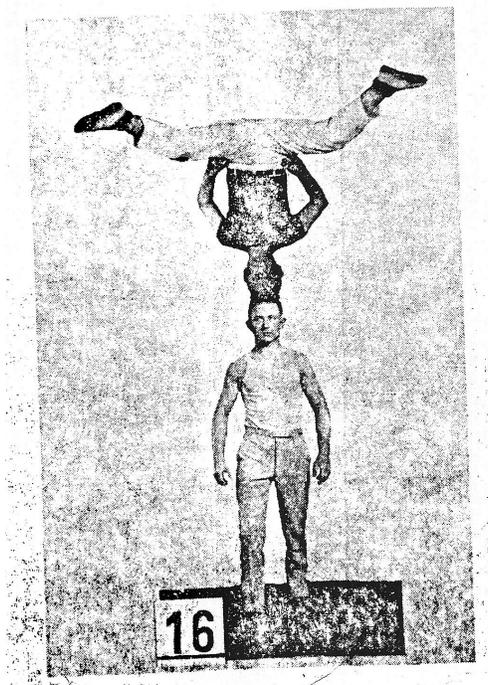


Position No. 15: When the team has developed enough endurance to make the balance feel fairly easy, the top man begins to release his grip by degrees until the free balance feels sure. The under man does not lower his arms, but leaves them raised to be convenient for the top man to grasp in case the balance is lost.



The team is now balancing exactly as in Figure 15 excepting that the top man is using his arms as in Figure 6, grasping his partner's upraised arms only when in danger of falling. The two men work for the balance exactly alike; if the top mounter is going of balance to his left, he pulls in the left arm and leg, and presses against the left side of the grommet, while his partner below presses harder on the right side of the grommet and shifts himself slightly to his right (which, of course, corresponds to the top man's left). The same method applies to the other directions in which balance can be lost, and these movements become shorter and shorter as practice brings progress—until they become imperceptible, and the head balance is under complete control as in positions 16-17.

Position No. 16: This position is very easy, after number 15 has been mastered, and you can balance without assistance from the bottom man's hands. Simply raise the hands to the hips, and there you are.

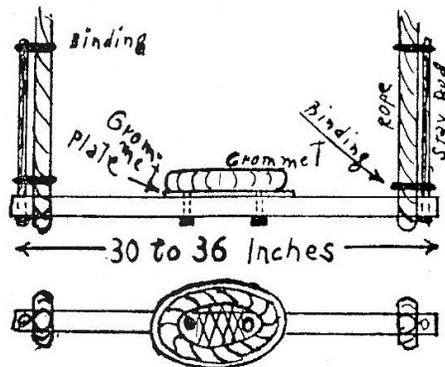


Position No. 17: Practice the preceding balance, gradually raising the legs higher and higher, and using the technique of figure 10 for controlling the position. Finally bring the legs together—at first, in this position, you will have to use the arms a bit as in figure 9 to aid you, but gradually master the head-and-body method of balancing, and work up to the style and position shown here.

You are ready to practice such head-to-head numbers as walking about, up and down steps, juggling, etc., as you may fancy. As you progress you will pick up additional ideas.

The Head Balancing Trapeze

It is assumed that you who would attempt the head balance on the trapeze have a working knowledge of the solo head balance, a bit of patience, and a special trapeze for the work. The ropes 8 to 10 feet long, and have some sort of gear to prevent the grommet from spinning around the bar, and to keep the bar from turning in the ropes. The sketch is a suggestion: a flat plate large enough to accommodate your grommet is bolted or otherwise attached firmly to the center of the bar, and provisions are made for fastening the grommet securely to the plate. The simplest way to solve the for-turning-in-the-ropes problem is to drill the ends of the bar and to pass a rod—say about 3/4 inch—through, with a nut on each side of the bar. Have the axis from 12 to 36 inches long, and bind them securely to the supporting ropes at top and bottom. (The apparatus in the photos is made that it can be suspended from two wires as shown, or hung from ordinary Roman rings by the hooks at the upper ends of the rods. If you chose this latter system, make certain that the ends do not bend and break where they pass through the bar—else a nasty fall will result. Likewise, be sure that the grommet plate cannot turn and spill you suddenly and roughly.)



Some performers prefer a very heavy bar—30 or more pounds in weight—but I like a light one better. It is "faster" to be sure, but a good performer has better control on such a bar. Again use ropes of the same length all the time or at least until you are pretty much at home with (the bar) for the shorter the rope the quicker will be the beat of its swing; a difference of but a few inches makes an appreciable change in the "pendulum period" of the bar.

Position No. 18: Rig the trapeze just an inch or two from the floor; straddle the bar and press up as in figure 18 until you are in position with the head on the bar and the hands on the floor. Better still, use a pair of heavy dumb-bells or other solid objects for the first few attempts. Do not try a box as I am doing—this is dangerous until you can really perform this feat well, and much more so than the figures 19-20 mount. Practice near the floor until you feel really at home on the bar.



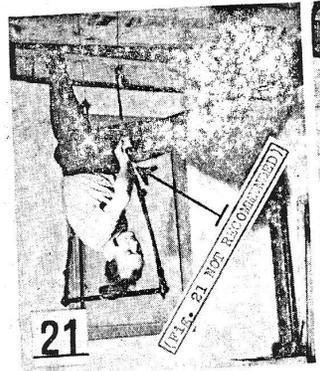
Position No. 19: To mount in the normal manner from the sitting-on-the-bar position, grasp the ropes with one hand in the normal grip and the other upside down, passing one leg through the ropes but NOT the other one.



Position No. 20: I originally grasped the farther rope with my right hand, thumb up, and the nearer rope with the left, thumb down, So upon inverting myself I pass the right leg through the ropes, but kept the left one on the original side, thereby straddling the near rope, held by the left hand. The original awkward position of the left hand is now strong indeed, permitting me to take my time and to place the head properly upon the grommet. It is much better to have strength and control at this position than at the start, Figure 19.



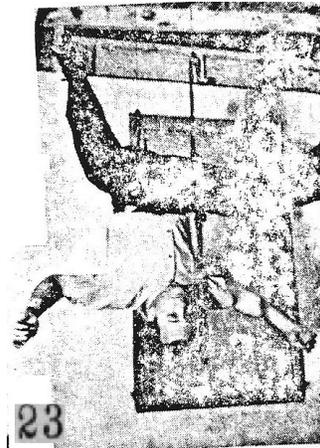
Position No. 21: Disregard this one; it is shown merely for comparison with figure 20. Some performers actually favor this normal grip with both hands—which is more natural while sitting on the bar. But once you get inverted you are in the awkward attitude of figure 21, and have much more trouble than in figure 20 in locating the grommet and placing your head on it. Of course, once you get fair control of the feat, you can vary procedure to suit yourself.



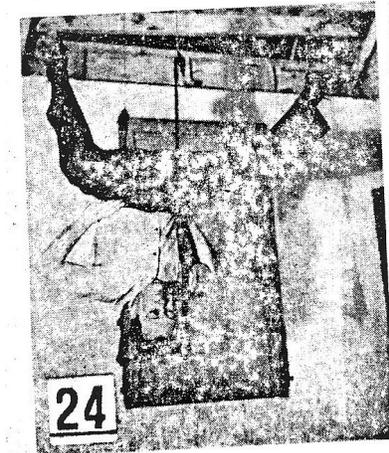
Position No. 22: Once the head is comfortably on the grommet after executing Figures 19-20, release the rear hand (my right one in the pose) and steady yourself with the other hand on the front rope while feeling for the balance with the legs and one arm; then gradually release the assisting hand and lower it to position.



Position No. 23: The free head balance on the trapeze—surprisingly easy, I assure you. Balance by figure 7 method at first, using both arms and legs. Then place the hands on the hips.



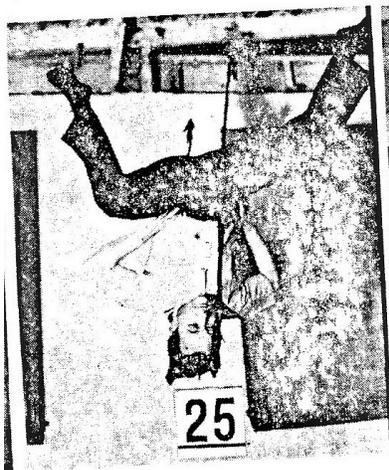
Position No. 24: In this attitude try balancing by the technique explained under figure 10, or even work up to 9 or 11. Once you get the "feel" of it, the slight motion of the free trapeze actually makes the balance easier! (The effect is not unlike rocking in a chair.)



On the Swinging Trapeze

Follow the same general plan of figures 19-20-22-23. Sit on the bar, work up a short swing, and at the end of the front swing go from 19 to 20. Then feel your way carefully through 22 to 23. You will soon learn to work with the swing of the bar and to utilize its movement to maintain control of your position.

Position No. 25: Beginning with only a short swing, proceed to the hand-on-hips style illustrated, but try to hold the leg position of Figure 5 rather than that is shown here. (Actually I was woefully out of practice at the time of posing for these nineteen new photos, I did not get the quite the desired positions in figures 23 and 24, as well as 25—or very much of a balance in the last named.)



Position No. 26: But what if you lose your balance? Nothing! The supporting ropes are always in the same position with reference to your position, so, once you feel your balance moving past the recovery stage, you can grab rapidly—either 23 or 24 arm support—for the two ropes; then either try the balance again. Or come down and start anew. Figure 26 is not posed, but actually shows me the instant of realizing I'd fallen too far from attitude 25, returning my hands hurriedly but in plenty of time for safe recovery—with supporting strands.



What next? Juggling, spinning, swinging, circles, or fore-and-aft as well as swinging supporting a partner from a second trapeze below you (from figure 23), playing a musical instrument.....when you get this far you are just ready to learn some advanced trapeze.

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