



IRON GAME HISTORY



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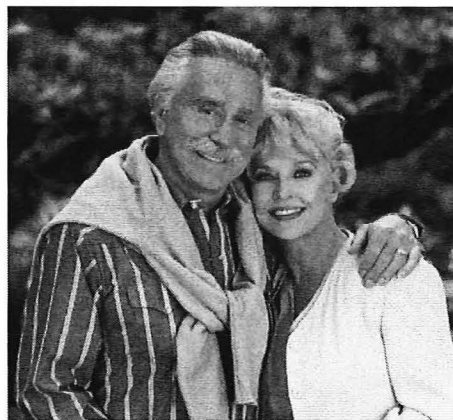
THE PASSING OF A TITAN

Early on the morning of 23 March 2013 Jan and I received a call from the family of Joe Weider that he had just died of natural causes in a local hospital near his home. To say that Joe was a giant in the world of strength and physical culture would be an understatement, and a case could be made that his reach and influence in North America during the twentieth century in that broad field exceeded that of any person living or dead. This reach and influence will be the subject of an upcoming special issue of *Iron Game History* and we invite anyone who might like to contribute for possible inclusion a short essay about Joe to do so. We've already received a number of emails and letters commenting on his life and, in particular, his impact on popular culture. Over the twenty-three years that we've published *IGH*, we've only devoted an entire issue to two men—John Grimek, the legendary bodybuilder, who was one of Joe's early inspirations, and Mr. America, Steve Reeves, of *Hercules* fame.

That Joe was considered a Big Man in this country and beyond was made clear shortly after his death when the *New York Times* published a long obituary devoted to his many accomplishments and contributions to the health and well-being of people everywhere. That he was well-loved by his family and close friends was apparent at a moving funeral service conducted by Rabbi Mordecai Finley in Los Angeles on 28

March 2013. Several people spoke there, including Joe's nephew, Eric Weider—who brought his "Uncle Joe" to life—and Joe's daughter, Lydia, who read a poem she'd written about Joe's love of the beautiful garden in the backyard of his and Betty's historic home. Most people who knew Joe well—especially during his California years—could relate to Lydia's poem as he seemed happiest sitting on the veranda at his glass-topped table and talking either business or philosophy with his many colleagues and friends.

Joe's impact on the field in which he made his living and his life was on full display for anyone to see at the lavish, invitation-only memorial service at the Fairmont Hotel in Santa Monica, attended by approximately four hundred people from various sub-cultures of the Iron Game—particularly the sub-culture of competitive bodybuilding. More like a family reunion on an important anniversary than anything else, the event was organized and underwritten by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, the man whose profound gratitude for what Joe did for him could be felt by attendees like a bass note in their very bones. Many people spoke their hearts, and told Joe they loved him on that beautiful California day when we all came together to bid god-speed to a wise old man who changed his address from Montreal to New Jersey to Southern California and, in the



Joe and Betty Weider, photographed in the beautiful garden at their home in Los Angeles, circa 2000. Together, they redefined fitness through their personal example and the promotion of bodybuilding as a lifestyle in their numerous, culture-changing publications.

process, changed the world.

For much of his life Joe survived and prospered because he was a hard-charging visionary, and like many such men he was not universally loved. However, as he aged, everyone who knew him well said he became mellow and more open-hearted. Bert Sorin, who attended the opening of the Weider Museum in 2011 told me that he shook Joe's hand during the opening and thanked him for his generosity and for all the many things he had done. With his frail hand in Bert's, Joe looked up and said quietly, "Not enough."

As for Joe's influence on the Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, it's not an exaggeration to

say that had it not been for the generosity of Joe and Betty Weider there would be no Stark Center. No Joe and Betty Weider Museum filled with the paintings and sculptures they collected over the years and gave to us so we could share them with their extended "family." Besides the art collection, Joe pledged \$2,000,000 to allow us to expand the work we've done at the university, and their support of our dream gave us the courage to approach The University for the space in which to build a research center and to approach the Stark Foundation for the \$5,500,000 required to actually build it out.

Joe Weider was Jewish, but he was also our patron saint.
—Terry Todd

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