

BOB HOFFMAN'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

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*The only way you can get along with Bob Hoffman is to steal everything you can from him.*¹ —Hooley Schell

On 18 July 1985, Bob Hoffman, founder and president of the York Barbell Company and widely recognized as the “Father of American Weightlifting,” died after a decade of deteriorating physical and mental health.² Much controversy, however, swirled around the terms of his last will and testament, dated 21 March 1978, and how it was formulated. By far the greatest interest focused on its limited distribution of assets to a select few employees whose entitlements were questioned by others in Bob’s organization, often called “the York gang,” and the Iron Game at large. It created rancor and resentment by designating Treasurer Mike Dietz, General Manager John Terpak, and Alda Ketterman, Hoffman’s common-law wife, as executors of the will, corporate heads of York Barbell, and almost sole beneficiaries of Bob’s \$5,758,075 estate. Overlooked were numerous other employees who had contributed much to the realization of Hoffman’s dreams of personal and financial success despite his repeated statements that he would remember them. “When I leave this world,” he asserted in a 1968 *Strength & Health* editorial, “51 percent of the company, according to present plans, will belong to the men who have worked so hard with me to make it what it is. John Grimek, Steve Stanko, Dick Bachtell, John Terpak, Mike Dietz, and others of the old-timers and the newer men who form such an important part of our organization, will all have a share in the York Barbell Co.”³ What aroused suspicions of chicanery was

the codicil, dated 6 April 1978, which set up a \$500,000 trust for allocation to five other beneficiaries: Helen Gemmil, 10 percent; Helene Lukens, 35 percent, Rosetta Morris, 12 percent; Harry Utterback; and Ruth Snellbaker, 10 percent. All were former girlfriends of Hoffman except Utterback, the company’s traffic manager. The inclusion of Utterback, one of the few employees who got on well with Dietz, fueled suspicions that Mike had exercised a heavy hand over the codicil. Advertising Manager Phil

Redman jokingly called him “York’s only male prostitute.”⁴ Noticeably excluded from the will were Bachtell, Stanko, and Grimek, whose classic physique had brought visibility and financial success to York in the early decades. To physical culturist Vic Boff, “Grimek was Hoffman’s trade mark.”⁵

Only Grimek, however, had the resources and courage to protest the will. He filed his initial complaint in December 1985 to the York County Court of Common Pleas. It received widespread endorsement from the weightlifting community. In an attempt to solicit support for Grimek, Robert Kennedy’s *Musclemag International* issued “A Plea to Help the Monarch of Muscledom” in 1986, hoping more witnesses would confirm the testimony in Bob’s 1968 editorial. The article contended that “Bob and John remained good friends to the very end, and Bob would never ‘disown’ him regardless of circumstances. . . . One only has to refer to Bob’s many books

and magazine articles . . . to see how he felt about Grimek. . . . There are some who feel it was Bob who left JCG [John C. Grimek] out of his will. Grimek, however, doesn’t feel this way but feels others, behind the scenes, made the change.”⁶ Only former Art Director Ray Degenhardt and former *Strength & Health* Editor Jim Murray testified at the May 1989 trial. They verified Hoffman’s remark that “Grimek and the boys were going to be rich men when he



Bob Hoffman is in his eighties in this picture taken at the softball park he donated to the city of York in the early 1980s. Hoffman loved medals and had dozens of them on every blazer he owned.

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died” and other such statements, but they were unable to assert how much the claimant was to receive. Nor were they able to legally document Hoffman’s original intentions from any previous wills. Grimek concluded in November 1989 that

those left in charge, supposedly ‘my friends,’ screwed me out of my share of my promised inheritance which was mentioned to me for nearly fifty years but somehow the appropriate wills etc. could not be found but others more favorable for those in charge were. The case is still in court but I think things have gone too far to be favorable to me. Suffice to say, however, one cannot count on friends when there is money up for grabs because the mind is voracious and eager to get as much for one’s self without regard for others. Yes, just days before his passing, as I visited with him [Hoffman], he in a more rational state of mind said, if anything should happen to him, I will be well taken care of . . . yes, I was . . . out in the cold.⁷

Lack of specificity ultimately doomed Grimek’s challenge. He appealed, but Pennsylvania’s Superior Court concurred with the judgment, and the state Supreme Court denied the case a hearing. After five years of litigation, the Grimek case ended in October 1990, but the tragedy of his failed protest went far beyond monetary loss.⁸ It was the duplicity of York executives. Grimek declared that he stayed with organization so long because he liked it. It was “not the money, but the thoughtlessness” that rankled.⁹

How such an injustice was perpetrated on loyal adherents to the York tradition can best be understood in retrospect as both sins of commission and omission. No doubt concern about possible reprisals from lawsuits kept contemporaries from naming names to accompany their accusations. Even Kennedy stops short of identifying the scoundrel who deprived York of its honor by judiciously asserting that it was “someone who did not contribute anything to the sales equipment or other merchandise.”¹⁰ While virtually no one was willing to make any accusations in print, many members of the York community were willing to state their views in an unpublished interview format about the critical role played by Mike Dietz and others. From 1987 to 1995, 29 individuals responded to questions relating to Hoffman’s declining health and vulnerability, the conditions that allowed fraud to occur, and the extent to which Dietz was culpable of wrongdoing. Responses revealed a 100% consensus in all three categories.

Long-time York employee John Terlazzo, younger brother of America’s first Olympic gold medalist in weightlifting, “noticed some changes in Bob in the late 1960s. He began slipping, and around 1975 Bob was really showing signs of decline, but he hung on for another ten

years.”¹¹ When Jan Dellinger joined the company in 1976 as Associate Editor of *Muscular Development*, Bob was “starting to lose it. He was getting forgetful and denying that he was failing. Efforts were being made to put him in the closet.” Dellinger recalls that “Mike would place papers in front of him, and Bob would ask, ‘what am I signing?’”¹² To former *Strength & Health* Editor Bill Starr, “it was easy to pull things off” at York. “It was like stealing from a blind man.”¹³ Underlying Hoffman’s vulnerability to deceit was his seeming unconcern about managing his company or appreciating money for its own sake. It was obvious to his brother Jack that Bob was “not a good manager.”¹⁴ Winston Day, who manufactured Bob’s food products in Philadelphia, observed that Mike Dietz “controlled his wealth completely. Bob never cared about money. He cared about ego. His whole life revolved around ego.”¹⁵ It was the power to make money rather than money itself that mattered. Phil Redman recalls that there was “always a tendency, particularly with Mike, to do what Bob wanted. Mike never disagreed with Bob.” He allowed Dietz “to do too much in running things. Bob never took enough of a hand.”¹⁶ When CPA Stanley Merves audited the company’s books in the 1950s, he told Bob that Mike was making more money than anyone else in the organization. A close friend and neighbor of York salesman Dave Mayor in Philadelphia, he verified that “Mike was stealing from the company.”¹⁷ Treasurer and later York Barbell President Vic Standish confirms that when a recession hit the industry in the early 1980s, “Bob let Mike oversee the company. Dietz totally controlled the company’s finances.” By the time Vic took over after Dietz’s death, an inventory revealed that York holdings were “understated by \$1,000,000.”¹⁸ After decades of corruption and mismanagement, neither Mike nor John Terpak, concluded Terry Todd, were “suited to manage a million-dollar corporation.”¹⁹

Suspicious that Mike was misappropriating funds, widespread for many decades, were fueled by his persistent nixing of audits, rejecting repeated attempts to offer public shares where the books would be subject to scrutiny, and blocking new employees who might interfere with his direction of the company.²⁰ Don Hess, who managed the company store, remembers that “Mike Dietz stuck out like a sore thumb.” “I have no proof Mike was stealing from the company, but I would bet the ranch on it. He had to have in order to acquire what he had. Mike made too much money and bragged about it. Where there’s smoke, there’s fire, and the smoke always went back to Mike.”²¹ Terpak confirms that Mike never got caught red-handed and never left a trail. He kept a close hand on things and this kept any new blood from outside.²² Grimek regarded Dietz as “a crook from way back” who shamelessly “used the same contractor to build his houses as we used to build company buildings.”²³ Richard Pruger, who served as marketing manager for York in the 1970s, saw how Bob was manipulated by Dietz at a board meeting where he was feeding Hoffman fallacious financial figures. Pruger was also struck by his arrogance. “We could take five pounds of shit and package it, and they would buy it. Dietz was not conservative. He was just a crook—just plain dishon-

est.”²⁴ Dick Smith, who served York Barbell in many capacities, observes that “Mike was in the position to steal and he did—millions. He was simply a crook and stole money from the company for years.”²⁵ Vern Weaver, 1963 Mr. America, described Dietz as a “rich hick, crude and lewd,” whose “life dream was to grab all the money he could.”²⁶ According to York weightlifter Donnie Warner, “Dietz screwed up York Barbell more than anyone else. He almost destroyed the company. Mike began to take more and more with the years.”²⁷ To Vic Standish, Dietz was “the worst person he had ever known.”²⁸

Juxtaposed to this litany of incriminating testimonies is a series of pre-1978 wills indicating Hoffman’s evolving preferences at successive stages of his career. The earliest, dated 10 October 1938, was discovered in the will vault of Hamilton Bank in York by its Vice President, David H. Spangler, shortly after Hoffman’s death.²⁹ Though it had no legal authentication, it revealed that Bob, still married to Rosetta (Snell) Hoffman since 1928, was smitten by a local model/dancer named Gracie Gerlitzki whose stage name was Gracie Bard.

In the event of my death, it is my desire that the property in Dover Township, of approximately 57 acres, which is registered in my name at the county court house, said property having three bungalows and other improvements upon it, shall go to Gracie Bard, as a testimonial of the many services she has rendered me.

She is to have everything upon said premises, furnishings, livestock, poultry, pets etc. and my estate is to be so arranged that an insurance annuity be purchased for her which will assure that she will receive ten dollars weekly for her life after the age of fifty.

Until the annuity goes into effect she is to have ten dollars weekly from my estate until she is fifty years of age. Also the farm near Jacobus of 177 acres 3 houses, 18 buildings all.

Witnessed by Merle Balck and Nelson F. Gerlitzki, the will made no mention of members of the York gang that was firmly in place by this time or any of the properties, most notably the Strength & Health Center on Lightner’s Hill in north York, that were still owned jointly with Rosetta.³⁰

By the time Hoffman made out his second will on 22 October 1944, Gracie had departed to California with one of his lifters, Orville Grabeel, in 1941, and in 1944 Bob and Rosetta were granted a divorce. It featured a significant increase of (mainly property) assets. First and

foremost, Hoffman desired a continuation of his business enterprises, including *Strength & Health* magazine, his various books and courses, the York Barbell Company, York Athletic Supply Co., and the company foundry and machine shop.

I would like to see the Strength and Health center improved and continued as originally planned. As the Strength and Health center of the world. With the back building maintained as a club to which visitors can come and train and visit a while. The home will then be a show place, with the lower floor in particular being kept as a museum and library. All the old pieces of training equipment and rare books should be put there. . . . I desire that a stone monument, of the stone used in the house, be built on the lot between Peragos home and the big house. On this will be an inscription mentioning the fact that this center and monument is in memory of Bob Hoffman to commemorate and advance the work to which he devoted the major portion of his life.

With Gracie gone, Bob identified others, mostly women, who had granted him favors, to be amply rewarded from his extensive private properties.

To Alda Ketterman, the home in which she is living this date, with all furnishings, the [neighboring] home in which I am living, the home in which [bodybuilder] Jules Bacon is living, the small farm and property where Mr and Mrs Beam have been living, and Brookside Park as it stands. The furnishings and personal belongings in my home may be divided among my sister Eleanor and Alda and Dorcas [Lehman], with Mike Dietz doing what they can to satisfy the parties in the division.

I feel at this writing that the men and women who have done so much to help our work and build the business should share equally in the various enterprises in which I have been engaged, Mike Dietz, Johnny Terpak, Gord Venables, Tony Terlazzo, Dick Bachtell, Steve Stanko, John Grimek, and if he has been working for us for five years from this date, Jules Bacon, also my sister Eleanor, Alda Ketterman and Dorcas Lehman. Again forgot to mention that in the event that my sister owes not more than a few thousand dollars on her property at Chalfont [PA] that this be paid so that it will be free and clear. Also want Dorcas Lehman to

have the Dunkard Valley farm where Lou Schell lives, the Jacobus farm, with three farms joined together, the plot in Violet Hill where Hooley Schell's family live at present, and to clear the mortgage on her house if it has not already been paid.

As for conduct of his business, Bob designated the twelve persons cited earlier in the will as "partners" or close associates.

Should anyone of them wish to withdraw from the business upon my death, each of them or any of them are entitled to one-tenth an equal share of the liquid assets which are listed in my name at present. This will mean my insurance policies, bonds, cash on hand, in banks, safe deposit vaults, safe at the office, Brookside etc. But in no event is this division to include more than three fourths of the cash and negotiable value of my assets, the other one fourth to be used to guarantee the future of our business, and to serve as a reserve. . . . Although it is apparent at this writing that my wife, Rosetta, will have received her share, it is my desire that she be given 25 dollars per week for life, 100 dollars of this at the beginning of each month, one hundred dollars before Xmas. If a settlement has not been made she is entitled to \$30,000 as agreed.

I appreciate very much the efforts of those who have spent much of their lives advancing this business, who have been responsible for its growth. I want them to receive a fair remuneration for their efforts. . . . It is my hope that our work will continue even for centuries, and that the partners, when they reach a stage of life that they feel retirement will be best, will appoint someone person to serve for them.

What is most notable about these projected distributions is how they form a foundation for the 1978 will, with Mike Dietz playing a central role and John Terpak and Alda Ketterman figuring prominently in it. It is also obvious that Bob felt a sense of obligation and appreciation, beyond any psychic or sexual satisfaction, to those who contributed to his larger goal of perpetuating "our present ideas and ideals."³¹

When Hoffman signed his third will and testament on 30 April 1960, it no longer included Jules Bacon, Gord Venables, or Tony Terlazzo, who left the company, or Dorcas Lehman, who allegedly absconded with \$3,000 from Bob's safe and moved to Florida. They were replaced by Harry Utterback and other girlfriends of Hoffman to

whom he bequeathed tax free the following percentages of York Barbell voting stock.

Alda M. Ketterman, R.D. 3, Dover, PA	17%
John Terpak, York, PA	17%
Michael Dietz, York, PA	17%
Steve Stanko, York, PA	5%
Dick Bachtell, York, PA	5%
John Grimek, York, PA	5%
Helen Gemmil, York, PA	2½%
Helene J. Lukens, Harrisburg, PA	2½%
Harry Utterback, York, PA	2%
Ruth Snellbaker, Weigelstown, PA	2%

By now, however, Alda Ketterman was more a common-law wife than a girlfriend with whom Hoffman had constructed a beautiful home in Dover, just north of York. Not surprisingly, she received the largest share of his personal properties, including Brookside Park and two houses and two farms in the vicinity, as well as two businesses known as "Better Nutrition Aids" and "Dover Advertising Agency" and a building at 701 East Market Street in downtown York, all tax free. She was also the recipient of corporate stock, along with Terpak and Dietz, in Hoffman Laboratories, Ridge Corporation, York Precision Co., and Swiss Automatic Inc., again tax free. For Rosetta (now Morris), for whom Bob bought a house in Fruitland, Maryland, he authorized continuation of a stipend of \$200 per month she was receiving. Finally, and most critical to the ultimate outcome of his bequests, Hoffman named Mike Dietz as executor of his last will and testament with "full power to do any and all things necessary to the proper settlement of my estate."³²

During the next decade Bob acquired numerous other Pennsylvania enterprises, the most important of which was Better Foods Foundation in Greencastle and Costas Candies in Pottsville. He had also created the Hoffman Foundation for educational benefits and tax relief. That Bob was having second thoughts about the distributions in his 1960 will is evident in a letter to Detroit accountant Clarence Johnson, a boon companion who accompanied Hoffman on many overseas trips. Distributing his assets so widely did little to memorialize his name. Although Alda's farms would remain intact, they would be combined with others they jointly owned and Brookside Park to form a Hoffman Park and eventually be joined to the Hoffman Foundation grounds "for the benefit of the people." Unlike the Richard M. Nixon Park that he donated to York County in 1969, it would be made part of the Foundation. He also questioned the wisdom of bequeathing his company's stock shares "absolutely" to so many legatees. Rather he suggested to Johnson that "the shares to each individual being his or hers during his or her life time, then be purchased by the Foundation . . . so that it will be perpetuated." Furthermore, he was "not at all satisfied with the way I have handled the other corporations giving them to Johnny, Mike and Alda. After all there is not too far from a half million dollars in cash in these corporations," which did not include his properties in Green-

castle, Pottsville, and Philadelphia.

Concerning the estate of Lightners or Hoffman's Hill. That I have been telling the world for so long, will be my monument someday. I want it to operate like the home of Jack London, the man who wrote Rip Van Winkle etc. [sic] There we have the first typewriter I used when Strength and Health was founded. Strength and Health and the York Barbell club originated there, and I want it to be perpetuated. Have an attendant there as at Jack London's Estate, and have people come there to see where we started, where we trained, where I lived and worked so long. This will have to be better covered.

Obviously, Bob cared as much about his future legacy as he did about his current assets or past accomplishments. Indeed, he believed that his current corporate wealth, estimated at least a half million dollars, "should be used to pay taxes rather than deeded outright to my three closest associates as I have done in the 1960 will."³³

During the 1960s and 1970s, despite occasional economic downturns, the company was thriving, and Hoffman's assets continued to grow. At the 8 June 1965 Board of Directors meeting, Mike Dietz reported that the net profit for the first quarter of 1965 was \$161,992.70 after taxes and that sales were "steadily on the increase and that facilities of the capacity were used to the peak of their capacity." To absorb this production, the board authorized construction of additional facilities, mainly for food supplements, on the properties it had purchased on Board Road along I-83 north of York.³⁴ Hoffman happily reported that "we have a machine which will package 90 one pound canisters a minute. We have a machine which will mix five thousand pounds at a time. And this will flow by gravity into the packaging machines. Things are humming."³⁵

In 1969 Bob boasted that "our business is moving right along in the face of loads and loads of competition. One day recently we received a seventy five thousand dollar order for Hoffman products from Health Food Jobbers in Chicago. That size order will require at least four tractor trailer loads (40 thousand pounds each) plus, the surplus will go by regular carrier." It was significant to Bob that "this company orders frequently from us, and this year in the first five months, we delivered three times as much of our products as we did in the first five months of last year."³⁶ Claudia Keister, who came on board in 1972, observed that "business was really good in the seventies, especially in protein products. Big distributors would haul three tractor trailer truck loads away. 1978-79 was absolutely the best year."³⁷

It is not surprising in the midst of these flush times that Bob decided to take stock of his assets and reconsider the will he had created a decade earlier. He called it an interim will because of ongoing discussions of "going public," whether the company should pass from the al-

most sole proprietorship of Hoffman to the general public. The new multicorporate structure would consist of York Barbell as the parent along with Ridge Corporation, Hoffman Laboratory, York Precision, Swiss Automatic, Costas-York, Better Foods Foundation, Strength and Health Publishing Co., York Athletic Supply, Blue Rock Mountain Spring Water Co., and the Boiling Springs Mountain Water Co. Disposition of Bob's personal estate was unclear. Most of the properties were still destined to Alda, but some bonds, a house in York, and a farm at Brookside were partly owned by Mike Dietz. Income from the sale of six additional buildings in the city, including 51 N. Broad Street where York Barbell originated, would be used mainly to pay estate taxes. Ownership of the Marietta foundry was uncertain, but it was still valuable and "growing." How the Lightner's Hill property would eventually become a Bob Hoffman Memorial was not specified, but it seemed likely that it would become part of the Foundation which Hoffman hoped would "go on forever." Although it might "never be as big as the Ford or Rockefeller [sic] Foundations it has an opportunity for good growth and to be a considerable and important part of the business for those who remain to operate it. The foundation has done much good and is in a position to do much more good. It must be an important part of the future of this organization. It will be one of the chief owners of our business." In this will, it would own 25% of York assets, more than any other holder. Before going public it needed to be "the ultimate owner of everything."³⁸

Again, as in all previous wills, the "interim will" placed great weight on Bob's sense of responsibility to the women in his life. Feelings still loomed large for his former wife Rosetta. "She played an important part in the formation and early growth of this business, and although we could not get along I am appreciative of what she did and want to take care of her." Hoffman would not only continue sending her \$200 monthly but owing to inflation was willing to send more, if needed. Others were rewarded for their loyalty and sustenance for his manly ego.

The several females who are a part of my will, aside from Alda Hoffman, have been faithful workers for our business for many years, running back to 1942. They have had much to do with the growth of our business and I am eternally grateful. . . . I wish to state strongly that they are entitled to their weekly stipend without a miss, just as any other worker. This is one hundred dollars weekly for Helen Gemmil, \$50.00 weekly for Ruth Snellbaker plus her usual salary, and \$140.00 weekly for Helene Lukens. For her work entails considerable driving as she continues her work with this company. She, more than any other was responsible for the early popularity of Hoffman products, as since 1948, she has gone to contests and conventions where she with her good looks

and sales ability did a great deal to promote the sale of Hoffman products and of our overall business.

It is significant that neither John Grimek, Dick Bachtell, Steve Stanko, or any other individuals who helped make York Barbell successful over the years is mentioned in this draft.³⁹

Meanwhile, contingency plans for transforming it into a public corporation were being formulated by Murray Levin, a New York stockbroker who would soon become president of the United States Weightlifting Federation. In a 1992 interview, he sought to set the record straight on the circumstances surrounding the negotiations over public offerings of York stock and their impact on Hoffman's final will.

I was working in 1972 for a company called Newburgh and Loeb down on Wall Street, an old-line investment firm. The president of the company was a man by the name of Paul Richter who was really crazy about York Barbell Company. He worked out with weights, and he said, 'I know you're involved.' I was the regional chairman then, not the national chairman. I was one step below that, and he said if you could ever convince John Terpak and Bob Hoffman to go public, we could actually do a hundred-million-dollar issue. So, I flew to York, and I spoke to Hoffman, and I spoke to Terpak, and they agreed, but Dietz was very much against it. Anyway, they put out a preliminary prospectus, and they were going to raise ten million dollars, and they were only going to give away twenty percent of the company to the public. So, everything was all set. But if you remember then there were big floods in Harrisburg and Maryland. We flew in in very bad conditions and met at the Yorktowne Hotel. Everything was ready to go. Bachtell and all the others that had been with the company for many years, they were all going to get stock. And Grimek was going to get a ton of stock. I know because I was involved. I was close to the underwriting syndicate who put out the prospectus, and at the last minute it was Dietz that convinced Hoffman not to do it. Now one of the reasons is that they had never been audited, and John Terpak was bitter about that because he complained that they should have had auditing every year, and Dietz wouldn't do that because he was playing with the books.

That alone told Levin that it was Dietz who "convinced Hoffman to change the will and to cut out John Grimek."⁴⁰



John Grimek appeared on the cover of *Strength & Health* magazine 27 times between 1935 and 1965. As the most recognizable person connected with York, other than Hoffman himself, it is not surprising that so many people were shocked to discover that Grimek was not included in Bob's will.

Any examination of company records would have also revealed that Mike and his sons had established an alternative manufacturing operation called York Enterprises, which extracted supplies from York Barbell and was in direct competition with it. As York customer service manager Ernie Petersen observed, "York Enterprises was living as a parasite off York Barbell. Mike was simply stealing from York."⁴¹

These considerations also hampered any further progress on finalizing the terms Hoffman set forth in his interim will with any outside party. In the spring of 1973 at the national weightlifting championships in Williamsburg, Virginia, Bob authorized Los Angeles Attorney David Matlin, who headed the Southern California chapter of the AAU, to prepare a final will. Matlin duly drafted a document in accordance with the provisions Hoffman requested. But even after three further meetings in Seattle, Pasadena, and Philadelphia over the next three years Bob was still undecided over the "few changes" he desired.⁴² These interminable delays stemmed from the continuing decline of Bob's mental condition, the immensity of his wealth and properties, and his confusion over who owned or was entitled to what portions of it.

It was overwhelming. "When we count all of

the things that we have here and there and everywhere, it amounts to a considerable sum. And requires a lot of thought to take care of those we should take care of." Bob seemed most perplexed over the state of his retirement fund, the Foundation's state of affairs, and the continued operation of the company's foundries, all of which related to Dietz's handling of monies. With regard to the former, Bob "talked to Mike at considerable length and did not arrive at much. He tells me that I had 270,000 in the retirement fund and since I did not retire and take this money annually," presumably after age 65, "considerable of it is gone already." Admittedly "it is my money and I can take it out, but since I did not take it out the money what I can get is reduced. It is hard indeed to know what I can do about it." Bob also wanted to know who would operate the foundation when he was not around.

What can I do to keep it going so that it will continue to grow and also be in a position to do the things I desire to do and want to do. . . . Mike and I are the only trustees of the money in the foundation and if I pass along and he does not do what I would like to have done, the foundation after all of these years can be given up. I did not find out just what is done with the quarter million dollars that is in the foundation at the present time. At 6% interest this means that we have only fifteen thousand dollars to use after a worthy purpose, which is not much. . . . To do this for some years I have been putting 30% of my salary in the foundation, and five percent from our various businesses. And after we have that built up through years of effort, all at once we find that our money is very limited.

Finally, Hoffman wanted to make sure the foundries would belong to York Barbell. He estimated that "those in the will have made a tremendous step forward. I am not sure of the worth of the foundries, but it will run into the millions. I believe that Mike said that the York Barbell Company was worth five million. I talk about our various holdings being worth 25 millions [sic]." Bob envisioned that ownership of the foundries would provide a competitive edge not only with the manufacture of barbells but with marketing the new machines for home gyms that appeared on the horizon. Bob did not reconcile easily with the prospect of death. If it was not possible for him to continue living indefinitely, he happily embraced the oxymoron that he could "continue doing even after my death the things that I have long been doing."⁴³

Several loose ends remained, however, that Hoffman sought to rectify in a 1976 document entitled "Setting the Record Straight." To ensure the smooth and undisputed passage of properties to Alda, he attempted to certify her entitlements through the

sanctity of marriage. It occurred in 1956, according to Hoffman, when they moved into the stone house he had built for them in Dover. "We were officially married that year at Alderman Fickes home and by him." That she retained her previous marriage surname of Ketterman owed to the fact that Bob had purchased for her the Thomasville Inn, a restaurant and dance hall where beer and liquor was sold, and he did not think it wise that he should be identified, as an Olympic coach and worldwide authority on health and fitness, with a tap room. His scenario was "easy to prove" as long as "Alda had her marriage certificate, but unfortunately we have had robberys [sic]. . . . In one of the robberys [sic] a box containing some tax free bonds and our marriage license was stolen. The Alderman is dead, so we can not [sic] get another license."⁴⁴ Other uncertainties included Mike's questionable ownership of properties belonging to Bob and the company. "I do not entirely understand how the property on 26-52 Ridge Ave, got in Mike's name," queried Hoffman. "It is listed as owned by he and his wife. Mike tells me that the deeds to the properties have been turned over, but not registered at the court house. Should place a passage in the will that Mike does not get his share until he turns over deeds to property on Ridge Ave, property at 807 Philadelphia St, and part of farm which had belonged to Rosetta Morris until we made arrangements to buy it back." These reservations culminated in an overall recommendation that any settlement should consist of "more than Mike as Executor of estate. See what is the best legal way to do this," he reminded himself.⁴⁵

What ultimately transpired was a four-hour meeting of the principals at Bob's home with Terpak, Dietz, and the lawyers in one room and Alda in the kitchen. Terpak insists that the resulting will "was Bob's doing. He was not forced to do anything. Alda was within hearing distance. The attorneys explained to Bob that if he gave money to a lot of people there would be the biggest dog



Hoffman with York's General Manager John Terpak (l) and Treasurer Mike Dietz (r), both of whom were named as major beneficiaries in Hoffman's final will and also helped shape how the estate was distributed upon Bob's death.

fight you've ever seen."⁴⁶ It was obvious from the long trail of testimonies and circumstantial evidence extending back decades that Dietz was most culpable for this outcome, but it was equally obvious that Terpak and Ketterman, who had much to gain from this settlement, were also complicit. Exactly how the codicil was contrived cannot be determined. But it was the logical outcome of policies that came into fruition as Bob lapsed into senility and lost what little control he still had over the destiny of his company. Alda confirms that "Bob always said, 'I know Mike is stealing, I just don't know how much.'"⁴⁷ Bob also told Terpak and others that "I know Mike steals but as long as he doesn't steal more than what I'm getting I'm not too worried."⁴⁸ By this reckoning, Bob allowed during his decades of lax corporate oversight and toleration of Mike's manipulations paved the way for the events of March and April of 1978 which disenfranchised so many who had helped make York Barbell so successful. How Hoffman's neglect led to confusion and ultimately blurred the distinction between personal and company assets is best captured in anecdote related by Grimek when he and his wife Angela were driving Bob and Alda to an AAU meeting in Philadelphia. Bob pointed out some dairy animals and says, "they look like our cows." Alda replies, "What do you mean, we don't have cows, Mike has cows." To which Bob casually responded, "Oh, Mike's cows, our cows, what's the difference?"⁴⁹



Bob with Alda Ketterman and his California lawyer, David Matlin, at an AAU convention (circa 1968).

NOTES

1. Interview with Alda Ketterman, 17 September 1992, Dover, Pennsylvania.
2. For background on the organization of the company see John D. Fair, *Musclestown USA, Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).
3. Bob Hoffman, "The Best Investment," *Strength & Health*, 36 (July 1968): 5.
4. Interview with Phil Redman, 14 September 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
5. Interview with Vic Boff, 10 November 1995, Fort Myers, Florida.
6. "A Plea to Help the Monarch of Muscledom," *Musclemag International* (December 1986): 57.
7. Grimek to "Jerry," 21 November 1989, Bob Hoffman Papers in author's possession. "Out in the cold" is not quite right. Grimek received a lump sum when he retired from York Barbell just two weeks before Hoffman's death. Interview with Grimek, 28 August 1987.
8. John Grimek v. The Estate of Robert Hoffman, Court of Common Pleas of York County, Pa., No. 85-SU-04775-01; and memorandum, John Grimek v. The Estate of Robert Hoffman, Superior Court of Pennsylvania, No. 00322 HBG 89, John Terpak Papers in author's possession.
9. Interview with John Grimek.
10. "A Plea to Help the Monarch," 57.
11. Interview with John Terlazzo, 25 August 1987, York, Pennsylvania.
12. Interview with Jan Dellinger, 14 December 1992, Red Lion, Pennsylvania.
13. Interview with Bill Starr, 20 July 1991, Aberdeen, Maryland.
14. Interview with Jack Hoffman, 1 January 1988, Parker, Pennsylvania.
15. Interview with Winston Day, 16 June 1992, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
16. Interview with Phil Redman, 14 September 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
17. Interviews with John Terpak, 25 July 1991, York, Pennsylvania, and Dave Mayor, 8 July 1990, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
18. Interview with Vic Standish, 15 December 1995, York, Pennsylvania.

19. Interview with Terry Todd, 6 February 1993, Austin, Texas.
20. Interview with Murray Levin, 7 July 1992, Boca Raton, Florida.
21. Interview with Don Hess, 17 September 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
22. Interview with John Terpak, 25 July 1991, York, Pennsylvania.
23. Interview with John Grimek.
24. Interview with Richard Pruger, 16 December 1993, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.
25. Interview with Dick Smith, 22 July 1992, Hanover, Pennsylvania.
26. Interview with Vern Weaver, 3 July 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
27. Interview with Donnie Warner, 17 September 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
28. Interview with Vic Standish, 28 December 1993, York, Pennsylvania.
29. David H. Spangler to John Terpak, 29 July 1985, Hoffman Papers.
30. Will and Testament of Robert C. Hoffman, 10 October 1938, *ibid.*
31. Will and Testament of Robert C. Hoffman, 22 October 1944, *ibid.*
32. Will and Testament of Robert C. Hoffman, 30 April 1960, *ibid.*
33. Hoffman to Johnson, no date [circa 1970], *ibid.*
34. York Barbell Company Board of Directors Minutes, 8 June 1965, 1 May 1969, and 2 April 1973, Hoffman Papers.
35. *Ibid.* Bob Hoffman, "How Some of Our Pet Products are Doing," circa 1969.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Interview with Claudia Keister, 10 September, 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
38. Bob Hoffman, "Last Will and Testament and Interim Will," circa 1970.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Interview with Levin.
41. Interview with Ernie Petersen, 4 July 1992, York, Pennsylvania.
42. Matlin to Hoffman, 31 July 1973, 14 November 1974, and 26 March 1976, Hoffman Papers.
43. *Ibid.* Bob Hoffman, "Questions I Need Answered," circa 1975.
44. Bob Hoffman, "Setting the Record Straight," 1976, *ibid.* Alda, however, stated that she "bought the Thomasville Inn herself and had two mortgages on it. She also noted that Bob repeatedly wanted to marry her, but she "kept turning him down." Interview with Ketterman, 15 September 1992, Dover, Pennsylvania.
45. *Ibid.* Bob Hoffman, "I Do Not Entirely Understand," circa 1976.
46. Interviews with Terpak, 25 July 1991 and 15 September 1992.
47. Interview with Ketterman, 15 September 1992, Dover, Pennsylvania.
48. Interview with Terpak, 25 July 1991, York, Pennsylvania.
49. Interview with Dellinger.