

IRON GAME HISTORY



THE JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

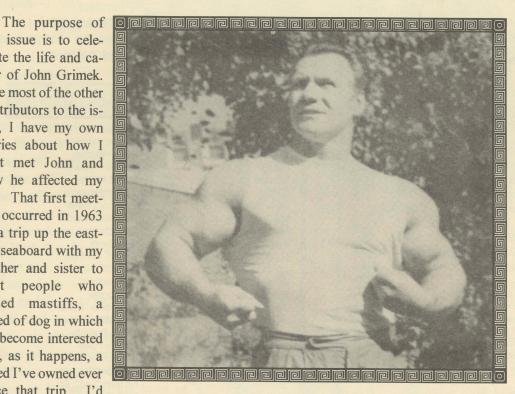
Vol. 5 No. 4 & Vol. 6 No. 1

April 1999

John Grimek—The Man

this issue is to celebrate the life and career of John Grimek. Like most of the other contributors to the issue, I have my own stories about how I first met John and how he affected my life. That first meeting occurred in 1963 on a trip up the eastern seaboard with my mother and sister to visit people who raised mastiffs, a breed of dog in which I'd become interested and, as it happens, a breed I've owned ever since that trip. I'd

visited York and the old Broad Street gym early in the summer of 1958, but John wasn't in that day. But five years later, as I walked into the gym in the York Barbell Company's new office building, there was The Glow, pushing the iron. After waiting until he was finished with his sets of pullovers, I introduced



myself; and I was both surprised and pleased that he knew my name from contest results. This was my first encounter with John's truly remarkable memory for names and faces. He was dressed plainly—in sweatpants and an old tee shirt-but his distinctive Grimekian shape unmistakable. The calendar said he was 53, but the size and shape of his arms were amazing, andwhen viewed from the side—his massivelyribbed torso and his small waist presented

such a contrast that it was breathtaking.

I asked him if I could train and, after I had ended my workout with some seated behind-the-neck presses, we talked for awhile. I remember how friendly he was, how at home he made me feel. At the end of our conversation, John asked me if I would let him take





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Special Double Issue

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weightlifter and powerlifter, I wasn't used to such requests. To be honest, it was the first time anyone had ever made such a request of me, but coming from the Monarch—especially a monarch who had known a nobody's name—it was impossible to refuse. Thus it was that we went out back, in the sun, and I did a couple of crude arm shots. He thanked me, and I thanked him back, but a few months later—when he ran one of the shots in *Strength & Health*—I was as proud as if I'd set a new per-

sonal record.

some photographs of my upper body.

Little did I know that not much more than a year later I would move to York to become the co-managing editor of Strength & Health magazine and a colleague of JCG, who was editor of York's the new magazine, Muscular Development. I was in York for about a year and a half, and in that time I saw John almost every day and came to know him well, and to appreciate even more his physical uniqueness, his prodigious memory, and his qualities as a man. I recall more than once watching the faces of visiting bodybuilders blanch in amazement and envy whenever John could be persuaded to roll up his pantsleg and reveal one of those legendary

calves. I also remember being struck by the size of his ribcage. Tommy Suggs and Bill March were both living and training in York at that time, and both men usually weighed well over 200 pounds, with Tommy being closer to 250.

They would sometimes come to my desk and

ask me to "adjust" their backs by standing behind them, grasping them around their chests, lifting their feet clear from the ground and gently shaking them and squeezing their chests so their spine would "release." They always seemed to enjoy the "treatment"; and one day, after watching all this. JCG came into my cubicle after the other two had left. With a quiet laugh, he asked me if I'd "adjust" him. I still remember how surprised I was at the thickness of his thorax. When I reached around him to secure a grip, I was barely able to clasp my hands. Although he was 30 years older and between 15 and 35 pounds lighter than Tommy or Bill, and although he no longer pushed the weights with the intensity of his salad days, he was much thicker than either of these

John also used to ask me from time to time to read something he had written. Although he was an intelligent man, he had left school early and lacked confidence in his grammar. Even though I went to him for

powerful young men.

help much more often than he came to me (when I couldn't remember some-

THIS EARLY PHOTO OF JOHN GRIMEK SHOWS WHY HE WAS SO OFTEN CALLED "THE GLOW."

one's name, for instance, or something that had happened in the old days), he always seemed reluctant to ask for help. He always asked offhandedly, with that sideways glance he used (in much the same way he used dark glasses) to keep others from seeing his bad eye, saying something like, "Todd, take a look at this when you get a chance." Never once did he say, "Todd, check this for errors for me, would you?" John was one of the proudest men I have ever met, and we both knew what he wanted. I was always happy to do this small thing for a man who had done so much for me and for the game I loved.

Even though JCG was first among equals to me, however, I wasn't above teasing him from time to time, as he was unfailingly susceptible to the same joke. He would often call me over to his office or come to mine to show me a photo of a man he was thinking of using in MD. "What do you think of this guy, Toddy? He's got good arms," he'd say in that jaunty way of his. To which I'd sometimes reply, after pausing a bit as if in reflection, "He looks great, John, but don't you think he's a little short?" This never failed to arouse him. "Short? Damn it, Todd, the

guy's 5'9" or at least 5'8", at which point I'd look down at him, smile, and say, "That's what I'm saying, John—short." This always provoked more swearing, followed by laughter, followed by still more swearing until he'd finally stomp off muttering and laughing.

It always seemed strange to me that a man with such an elephant-like memory wasn't immune to such horseplay, but his sensitivity apparently overrode his mnemonic gift. But that gift was real and often on display. One day in June of 1965, during my stay in York, someone mentioned that John's birthday was just a few days away; and I realized that he was within a couple of days of being exactly as old as my father, who was also born in June of 1910. I told John about this as soon as I saw him that day, adding that of course my dad was in slightly better physical condition and probably stronger. "Better calves," I told him, "and much taller." "I'm not only stronger than your old man, Toddy," he laughed, "I'm stronger than you." The next time he mentioned my father was 25 years later, in 1990, when I called to wish him a happy 80th. After we spoke for awhile and caught up on iron game news, he paused and said, "By the way, Toddy, how's

your dad now that he's 80?" And then he laughed, and added, "is he still training?" I was thunder-struck.

One of the aspects of John's character I especially admired was his deep appreciation for the iron game's past, for its heroes and great occasions. I could-and often did-listen to him talk for hours about visiting with Professor Desbonnet, or George Hackenschmidt, or Milo Steinborn, or making the trip to Berlin for the 1936 Olympic Games. I recall one rainy afternoon in the York gym, hearing him recount in detail the story of the trip he and Bob Hoffman and John Davis made to Springfield College in Massachusetts, where he did splits and backbends in front of Dr. Peter



John sent this Christmas card to Ottley Coulter. The photo was taken by Angela Grimek in August 1955 in their backyard.

Karpovich and thus helped expose the myth of the musclebound weight-lifter. But John also had respect for the men who were currently at the top. In this he was completely unlike some of the other people at York, who had seen so much lifting that it would have taken the arrival of Milo of Croton, carrying his bull, to impress them.

Some of the fondest memories Jan and I share of the Grimeks are of the summers, beginning in 1990. when we would pass through York on our way to our vacation home in Nova Scotia. We usually stopped on our way up, or back down, and had a meal with the Grimeks. John was in his 80s by then, but my god how he could eat! He preferred buffet-style restaurants, and they made no money on The Glow. Except for my maternal grandfather—who was also a stocky, powerful man noted for his strength—I've never seen such an appetite in a man that age. I used to love to watch Papa Williams eat, especially on holidays, and I loved to watch John as he made his way through one of those buffets. (Read Angela's article on page 19 for proof that this appetite was longstanding.) John ate with obvious gusto—the same sort of gusto he brought to dancing with his Angela, or talking about the Iron Game.

When you stand back and look at the man—and he was, indeed, The Man—it's no wonder John Grimek is so universally loved and admired. Ruggedly handsome, better built than anyone of his era, more flexible than any top bodybuilder has ever been, more inventive on the posing platform than any man living or dead, more widely acquainted with this century's iron game luminaries than any other man, and more knowledgeable than almost anyone in most aspects of the iron sports. All in all, Grimek was one hell of a man. A family man. And we were his family. We are his family. —Terry Todd

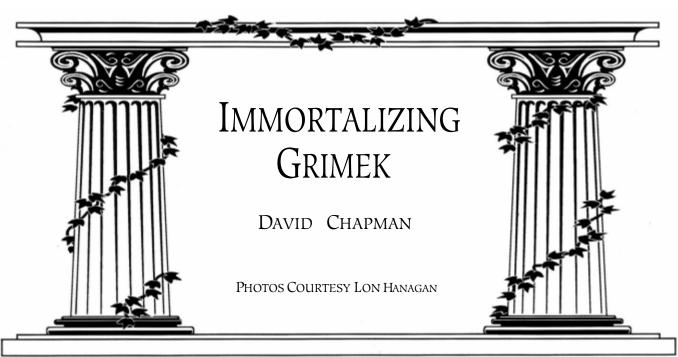
Putting together this issue has been a labor of love for us. However, it would not have been possible without the wonderful contributions our readers sent in response to our request for their memories of Grimek. To all of you who shared your thoughts, we are deeply grateful. As you can see, we



JOHN—WITH HIS TRADEMARK SHADES—LOOKED MUCH LIKE THIS WHEN TERRY TODD JOINED THE STAFF OF STRENGTH & HEALTH IN 1964

had so much material that we have made this a double issue. However, even with 72 pages to fill, we weren't able to include everyone's remarks and we had to edit many of the articles and letters for length. However, we have tried our best not to lose the essence of anyone's tribute to John and his memory. Normally, because of the cost, *IGH* includes few photos. This issue is different. This was for John.

We would especially like to thank the York Barbell Company for permission to reprint materials from Strength & Health and Muscular Development; Health and Strength magazine for permission to reprint Angela Grimek's article; Lon Hanagan for permission to use his classic photographs, and Angela Grimek for permission to reprint the other photos of John in this issue.



One of the most famous images in the iron game is the photograph of John Grimek leaning on a gleaming white pillar, one impressive arm lifted upward, and the other one angled downward to the pillar. Grimek's knee is bent slightly as it echoes the curve of his upraised arm, and the athlete's earnest face looks upward to the sky. The pose, the physique, and the lighting all contribute to the overall impact of this marvelous image. It is a classic—a genuine icon of the sport. The story of how this picture was taken reveals not only some reasons for its greatness, but it also shows that the ephemeral conjunction of time, place, and participants must all be right in order to produce a memorable photograph.

By 1942 physique photographer Lon Hanagan had been taking pictures of New York bodybuilders for several years, and several of his shots had even been used on the cover of *Strength & Health* magazine. Eventually, his technical prowess and artistic sense attracted the attention of John Grimek, so the athlete decided to drive up to New York from his Pennsylvania home and pose for some photographs. Bodybuilding journalist Gord Venables accompanied him to record what they all sensed would be an important event. It was the article by Venables that appeared in April of 1943 that provided the best written evidence of the events that followed.

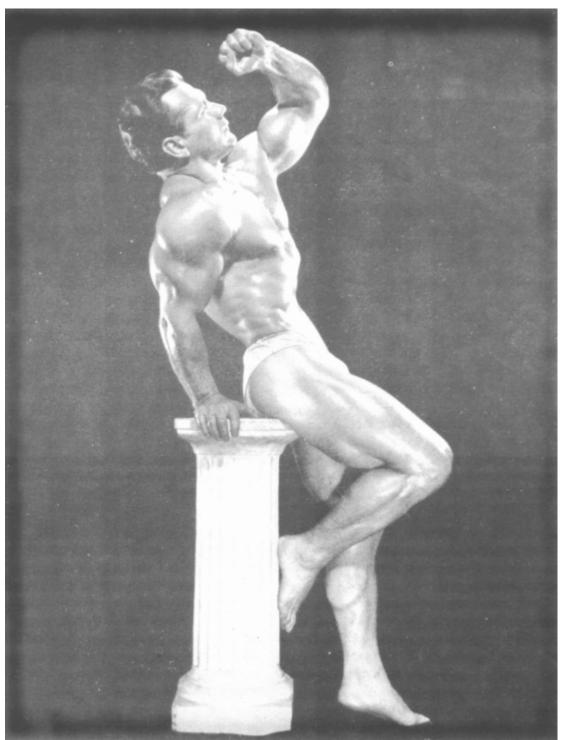
At the age of 32, John Grimek was at the peak

of his muscularity. He had been victorious in the Mr. America contest in both 1940 and 1941, and since he had shown every sign of continuing to win the competition, the rules had to be changed making victory a one-shot deal. It was therefore as the most perfectly built man in the world that Grimek entered Lon Hanagan's Second Avenue apartment.

In addition to being a photographer, Lon was also a very competent musician. For many years he had been a professional organist and worked regularly at Radio City Music Hall, but it was Lon's phonograph record collection that first grabbed Grimek's eye. According to Venables, the photographer had "more albums than our music store in York." John loved classical music, and he asked if Venables could put some music on the phonograph while he posed. Lon agreed enthusiastically. So with the stirring, graceful tones of Sibelius's Second Symphony playing accompaniment, Grimek stripped and began to pose. Lon had set up a large mirror directly behind the camera so that John could see himself and correct his poses. In the meantime, Lon balanced his camera on a stack of 78's and began making physique photography history.

John did not have a definite set of poses to go into. Rather, he did what was part of his muscle control routine, and he gracefully slid from one set of poses to another as seamlessly as the symphony that

APRIL 1999 IRON GAME HISTORY



THE MOST FAMOUS IMAGE IN THE HISTORY OF BODYBUILDING
JOHN GRIMEK AS PHOTOGRAPHED BY LON HANAGAN NEW YORK CITY, 1942
JOHN NEVER HUNG PHOTOGRAPHS OF HIMSELF IN HIS HOME BUT AFTER HIS DEATH HIS WIFE ANGELA HAS PUT SEVERAL PHOTOS ON DISPLAY AS A WAY OF KEEPING HIS MEMORY FRESH. THE IMAGE ABOVE IS IN HER BEDROOM AND IT WAS THE FIRST ONE SHE HUNG.

was playing on the console. The results of this combination were majestic. Grimek never looked more massive, and thanks to his inherent ability to pose gracefully, he was able to display his muscularity to great effect. Some of the poses called for Grimek to be semi-relaxed and others demanded the illusion of action, but he succeeds in appearing bold, massive, and masculine no matter what the pose.

"I left the posing to John," Lon confirmed. "He really knew what he was doing, so I didn't interfere very much." Fortunately, Lon was as artful at lighting as John was at posing, and Grimek had the good sense to leave the technical side of things to the photographer. Lon used only three lights: one overhead for general illumination and two photofloods. One of these was a small Photoflood No. 2 in a Victor Reflector fitted with clamps so that it could be fastened anywhere.

In all, Lon took two dozen poses; about fifteen of these were against a black background and the rest were against a white background. Toward the end of the session, Lon brought out a prop pillar, and he took several pictures of John sitting or leaning up against the plaster pedestal as Grimek tried out several poses. But then Hanagan had an inspiration that was to make physique photography history. John struck a beautiful attitude with his left arm raised in a biceps flex as his right hand grasped the edge of the pillar.

Lon immediately recognized that this was a perfect pose, but the lighting he had used was beginning to seem flat to him, so in order to liven up the shot, he tried something different. "In my left hand, I held the device that tripped the shutter," he explained, "and in my right hand I had a No. 2 Photoflood bulb in a reflector; I held it upright by the base. Just as I snapped the shutter, I swirled the light rapidly in a circular motion. Since this was an experiment, I didn't really know how the thing would turn out, but I was lucky and the effect was perfect." The bulb caught the sheen of the sweat and peanut oil that the athlete had rubbed on his body and created an effect that could not have been foreseen. When he developed the picture,

Lon knew at once that he had achieved something wonderful: the picture has a three-dimensional quality that it would not have had otherwise. The rich blacks and the bright highlights combined to form a gorgeous whole. He and Grimek had collaborated to create a classic image of muscularity.

Later, when he was asked what made that picture so great, Lon theorized that the reason for its success was because it was unique. "I could never duplicate that picture," he explains. "It was one of a kind." The real reason for its success, however, may be more brilliant than either of the creators suspected at the time. The picture represents a series of contrasts that offer a subtle, unspoken, and almost imperceptible appeal. For instance, there is a tension between the graceful "S" curves created by the athlete's arm and knee and the stone-like pillar against which he rests-it is a contrast between the living flesh and the deathless stone. The Greek column also serves as an emblem of classical eternity, and it reminds us that the stone is beautiful but lifeless, just like all great works of art. This is contrasted with the flesh, blood, and sinew of a living human being who represents the apex of physical beauty in all its spectacular evanescence. The photograph therefore gives the viewer a perfect balance of hard masculine muscle and soft feminine grace, of sinuous curves and geometrical angles, and ultimately of the eternal and unchanging nature of art with the temporary and mortal beauty of the human subject.

Such aesthetic considerations are far from the consciousness of most viewers of the photograph. They just recognize a good physique, a pleasing pose, and a technically perfect picture. Grimek, certainly, understood the photograph's appeal, and he asked Lon to make a life-sized copy of the picture for himself. Lon thought this was such a good idea he made one for himself as well, and he later decided to put this large print to good use. At one time, the photographer opened a studio on 46th Street, and he put the picture of John in the window in order to attract customers. As Lon tells it, "People would see [the picture] from across the street, and wonder to themselves, 'Who is

that well built fellow in the window?' Then, when they got closer, they could see that it was a photograph."

Shortly after this, Lon sold the negatives of their

two sessions to John Grimek. "He wanted them, and I sold them," the photographer explained laconically. Unfortunately, the negatives were later lost, so there will never be any other prints made from the negatives.

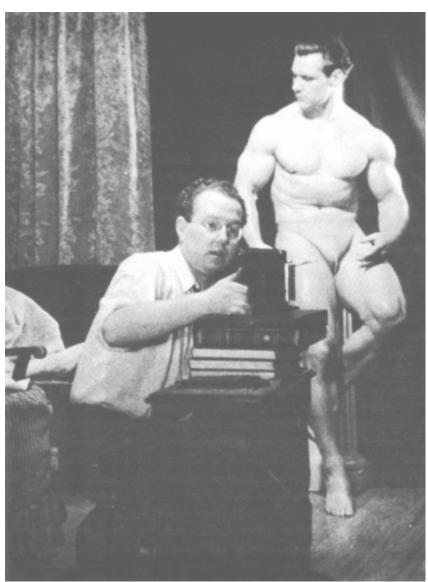
Like the subject of the photograph, there will never be another original.

Notes and Sources:

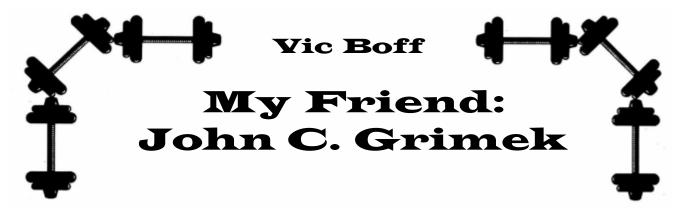
Material for this article was taken from "The 'Shooting' of John Grimek" by Gord Venables which appeared in Strength & Health, April 1943 (pp. 18-21 & 48) and from a November 27, 1998 interview with Lon Hanagan.

John Grimek was notoriously persnickity about pictures of himself, so his admiration of Lon's work is particularly significant. Grimek would often discard a photograph of himself that did not measure up to his own perception of absolute perfec-"When I don't like a picture," Grimek wrote in 1959, "I destroy it. I know I've torn up a lot of negs and pictures which others thought were terrific and wanted to buy the neg and photos. I threw them into the fireplace. Just something about the picture I don't like. It's not the muscles, because most of these I've thrown away had plenty of muscles, good muscularity, but it was something about the whole pose, the awkwardness, that I disliked, and rather

than keep it around to irritate me, I got rid of it." [Letter from John Grimek to Angelo Iuspa, February 4, 1959, in the collection of Michael Murphy.]



LON HANAGAN IMMORTALIZES JOHN GRIMEK AT THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S NEW YORK STUDIO, 1942. THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN BY GORD VEN-ABLES AND OFFERS A RARE GLIMPSEOF HANAGAN AND HIS MOST FAMOUS SUBJECT. RECENTLY, AN EXHIBITION OF LON'S PHOTOGRAPHS WAS HUNG AT THE PRESTIGIOUS WESSEL & O'CONNOR GALLERY IN NEW YORK CITY.



John C. Grimek was finally laid to rest on the beautiful, sunny day of Tuesday, November 24, 1998—thus ending one of the greatest chapters in the history of the Iron Game. His shining star in the world of physical culture and the Iron Game will glow forever.

For over six decades John Grimek has been heralded as the Monarch of Muscledom throughout the world. He was the greatest combination Iron Game athlete of all time and certainly one of the most popular—inspiring millions. He was a major influence in the lives of every top bodybuilder. Grimek was the only major bodybuilder in history who was never defeated in a contest. His charisma was so outstanding that everyone in the Iron Game wanted to meet him, shake his hand, or get an autograph.

This living legend was the Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey, and Red Grange of his sport. He had the unique ability not only to excel in his sport, but through his extraordinary personality to dramatize it in a way that has never been equaled. He is the symbol and link between the modern era and the old-time strongman, exemplifying the very best of both periods.

John Grimek did it all in an amazing, unbelievable career that spanned eight decades. He has been featured in every significant muscle and physical culture magazine in the world. He has traveled the globe giving dynamic exhibitions that included muscle control, handbalancing, contortion, weightlifting and feats of strength. Powerful, agile, and extremely flexible, John also dispelled forever the illusion that bodybuilders were musclebound, and not athletes. In his prime, Grimek was a pioneer in making physical

educators see the light in their attitude toward weightlifting for body development and athletic training.

Back in the Thirties, a symposium comprising Y.M.C.A. authorities, physical educators, and interested citizens was held at the Central "Y" in Queens, New York. The symposium had been organized because some "Y" officials had decided to abolish weight training and lifting at all of their Y's and schools throughout the country. The themes of this symposium were the same old bugaboos-lifting would make you "musclebound," cause heart problems, create ruptures, and so on. When I heard about this symposium, I summoned Bob Hoffman, then coach of the York Barbell Weightlifting Team. Upon hearing of the meeting's agenda, Bob attended with five of his greatest lifters: Grimek, John Terpak, Tony Terlazzo, Bobby Mitchell and Gord Venables. To make a long story short, Bob, with his vast knowledge easily refuted all their objections in his rebuttal. He then asked John to perform. The YMCA leaders and physical educators were amazed at John's musculature and fascinated with his performance. He did splits and backbends, and showed that he could bend over with stiff legs and touch the floor with flat hands below the level of his feet. The people in the audience were just as awed to see that such a big, muscular man could be so light and graceful. Upon finishing this unbelievable demonstration, Grimek politely asked the man who was conducting the symposium, "Can you perform as I did?" When the reply was in the negative, John simply responded, "Then you're musclebound, and I'm not."



JOHN'S FLEXIBILITY NEVER FAILED TO AMAZE THOSE WHO SAW IT DEMONSTRATED.

Bob then went on to further his rebuttal by waging \$5000 that his five athletes would beat any five Olympians in a series of events outside their specialty. In other words, the swimmers wouldn't swim, the lifters wouldn't lift, etc. After having seen Grimek and the other York men, there were no takers. Because of this remarkable exhibition, the various objections to weight training and weightlifting were held at bay. This was a very significant event in the history of the Iron Game, and had Bob and John not appeared at the symposium the myth of musclebinding would have grown even stronger and in all probability weight training would have been banned in YMCAs all across the United States. We owe these men an appreciation beyond words for their tremendous efforts on our behalf. Surely no thinking person, after seeing the graceful, hugely muscled, yet nimble and flexible Grimek, would call him musclebound.

Professor E. M. Orlick, physical fitness au-

thority and former editor of *Mr. America* magazine admirably expressed John Grimek's greatness in September 1959: "At best, photographs of Grimek—like all photographs—are static. In them you see flashes of his greatness. But seeing him in person is to appreciate a perfect symphony of muscle mass, proportion, shape and definition, blended with perfect coordination and harmony of movement, so that each muscle flows and blends into the others with a marvelous rhythm." Such a description demonstrates that John Grimek, more than any other physique star, is responsible for the sophistication of modern posing routines.

John retired from the York Barbell Company in 1985 after 50 years with the company. Beginning in 1938, he wrote for Strength & Health and, after 1964, was the editor of Muscular Development. September 1985 editorial of Strength & Health was appropriately titled: "Shoes Impossible to Fill." With Grimek's retirement, another great chapter in the history of the York Barbell Company came to an end. Over the years, this mecca for weightlifting and bodybuilding became so famous that the city of York, Pennsylvania became widely known as Muscletown, U.S.A.; and John Grimek was Muscletown's living symbol. Bob Hoffman summed up the magnitude of the man who did more than anyone else to make him wealthy when he responded to a young bodybuilder who had asked, "Was John Grimek as great as they say?' After a moment of thought, Bob replied, "Son, let me put it this way—in your lifetime, you will never see another Grimek."

John Grimek was a warm and personal friend of mine for over 60 years. His passing is a great loss to his dear friends and to all who knew him from afar. Our heartfelt, sincere condolences go to his lovely wife, Angela, his dear children, his grandchildren, his great grandchildren and his friends.

In conclusion, I would like to note that even though John is an Iron Game legend, he was not particularly famous in the wider culture. In other cultures things would have been different. I believe that if John C. Grimek had lived in the glory and grandeur of ancient Greece, he would have been proclaimed a national hero. His body and his name would have been immortalized in marble.



One time long ago—long before we had ever seen John Grimek in person—our friend, Bruce Conner, was discussing with Les and I the "aura" that seemed to flow from some people. Bruce thought this came especially from some of the people whose photos he studied in his strength magazines, which featured photos of the well developed, beautiful bodies possessed by the men who were gracing the pages.

I was new to this idea, but often thought about it and wondered about it. Then one night in the old upstairs Vic Tanny gym on 2nd Street in Santa Monica, I began to really understand what Bruce felt. There in front of us was our most favorite bodybuilder. He had come to California from York, Pennsylvania and to us it was a dream come true to see the great John Grimek standing under the lights on a wooden platform. We were all completely enthralled. Of course we had seen muscle poses displayed by other men who occasionally put on exhibitions but nothing like this wonderful, graceful, beautiful man. He had huge muscles, but he was also amazingly flexible, and suddenly I knew what it meant to see with my own eyes a physique that awed me—a living

picture of beauty, an unmistakable "aura." That was what Bruce meant, and even though I saw John pose many times after that and also saw many other outstanding physiques, I never forgot that special "aura" surrounding John when I first saw him pose. He was a special one.

As I came to know John as a friend over the years he always remained in a special niche far above the others of his day and time. He was a wonderful man who inspired a 19-year-old girl who had only seen him in photos in the magazines. I was just a fledgling but John inspired me to become a life-long participant in physical culture and to persevere in the early days with other women who loved to exercise and use their muscles.

Whenever John was in Southern California over the years he was always fun to be around. Les and I cherish our times with him. Though he is gone now, his place in our small world of dreams will always be surrounded by that wonderful "aura." He was a person who didn't disappoint us when he first stepped out of his pictures—he was a real live dream come true. —Abbye "Pudgy" Stockton

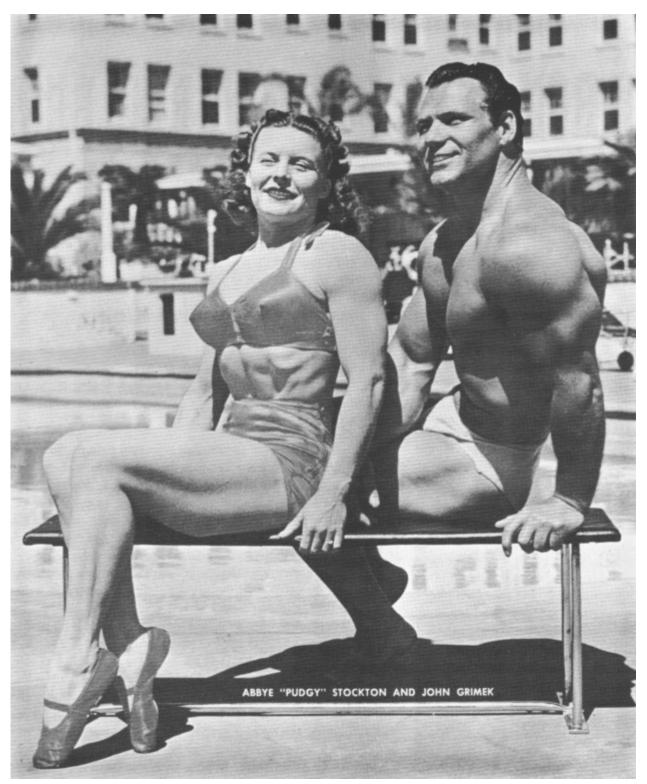


ur memories of John Grimek are so special, we cannot convey in words the inspiration, respect and sheer unbounded admiration we have for this man, who so positively influenced the beginnings of our own physical advancement. His influence resulted in the acclaim that Pudgy has received as being instrumental in the women's world. Each in his or her own way, John and Pudgy helped people to recognize that physical activity is the basis of *everyone's* personal well being and the key to a fulfilling life!

I, Les, "Mr. Pudgy," want you to know that after Pudgy had been inspired by John, she became a pioneer in women's bodybuilding and weightlifting, for which she received trophies and accolades in recognition for her activities. However, when asked which award was the best she ever received, she is always quick to answer, "After Mr. America Steve Stanko saw me perform for the first time, he said, "Pudgy is the female John Grimek!" She went on to say that, "This was the greatest compliment I could ever receive and I cherish it as my greatest memory."

John, as two of your many, devoted disciples, we can only say that you will live in our hearts forever!

—Les Stockton



The king and queen of Muscledom. Pudgy Stockton appears with John Grimek on the cover of Muscular Development in February 1967. When the history of women's bodybuilding is written, Stockton will undoubtedly be compared to Grimek. Both Stockton and Grimek were pioneers who helped establish their sport, both enjoyed great popularity with Iron gamers as well as the general public, both helped bodybuilding gain public acceptance, and both possessed physiques which were dramatic and graceful.

Pudgy exuded femininity and John was the Quintessence of Masculinity.

STRONGMEN I REMEMBER BEST





This photo of John Grimek was taken at Sig Klein's gym in approximately 1931. The heavy leg development that so impressed Klein is quite apparent in this photo. Drawing above by Harry Paschall.

by Siegmund Klein

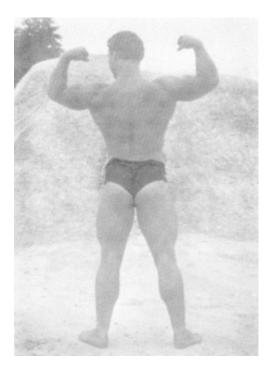
Reprinted from **Strength & Health** August 1956

Since my gymnasium is located right on the northern edge of Times Square, I am fortunate that most strongmen visitors to the Big Town make my place a port of call. So, I have met most of the Muscular Greats in the weight world during the more than thirty years I have spent in New York. Naturally, I often think back and sort out the celebrities who have climbed the stairs to my iron haven, and sometimes I wonder, "Who was the greatest of them all?"

Who, among all these hundreds, and perhaps thousands of visitors will be considered the greatest when a history is written? Who will be remembered fifty years from now as we remember Sandow today? And when I think of these things there is no hesitancy in my mind, and as I lean back in my chair I seem to see again, and live again one late afternoon in 1930 . . .

It was just past five o'clock and the gym was tilling with my evening pupils, when a sturdily built young fellow came walking through the door. I could tell he was a barbell man, but otherwise he was a complete stranger. I greeted him and he walked over to my desk, where I was seated, going over my records.

As he stood there, leaning with one hand on the desk, I suddenly got the impression that here was a young man entirely out of the ordinary. Perhaps it was because my eyes wandered to the hand planted on the desktop. It was not an unusually big hand but it was so shaped that it gave a definite impression of strength and power. My eyes followed the hand upward, and noted the thick powerful wrist which showed below his coat-sleeve. My curiosity



Another Early Photo of John Grimek taken in July of 1934 at Perth Amboy, New Jersey. According to the back of this photo, John Weighed 200 Pounds on this day.

was aroused.

"Would you roll up that sleeve a minute?" I asked. He smiled a bit diffidently, and protested mildly, "Oh, you have seen better arms than mine," but I persuaded him to remove his jacket and roll up his sleeve. The arm thus displayed could only be described by a phrase I have heard somewhere before . . . it was like the arm of Vulcan cast in bronze. The forearm swelled from the powerful wrist, and the biceps and triceps were moulded like a sculptor had chiseled them from stone. I thought, what a model this man would have made for Michelangelo.

Eager now to see if the rest of his physique matched his mighty arm, I asked him if he could change into trunks and join

us in a light workout. It took a little persuading to get him to agree, but finally he donned a pair of trunks and walked out into the gym. The rest of my pupils stopped exercising immediately, for they, too, had never seen such a herculean build.

He picked up a 180-pound barbell, placed it behind his neck and began to "warm up" by doing a few deep-knee-bends, but his version of this time-worn exercise was something I had never seen



JOHN WAS ONE OF THE FIRST BODYBUILDERS TO WORK ON TANNING HIS BODY. IN THIS PHOTO, ALSO FROM THE 1930S. HE APPEARS TO HAVE LIGHTLY OILED HIS SKIN TO BRING THE MUSCLES INTO GREATER RELIEF.



FROM THE BEGINNING, ONE OF THE MOST UNUSUAL ASPECTS OF GRIMEK'S PHYSIQUE WAS THE GREAT DEPTH OF HIS RIB CAGE.

before or since. He went down into an extremely low position, on flat feet, almost sitting on the floor, and then when his powerful thigh muscles propelled him upward, it seemed like they were so tremendously strong that they actually hurled him right off the floor and a full foot or more straight up into the air. Honestly, as he kept going higher and higher, I was alarmed that on his next leap his head would crash into the ceiling!

All of this was so light and effortless that it seemed he could keep it up all night. The group of club members looked at each other and then at me. My mouth was open wider than any of theirs! At each bend and leap, all

the massive, mighty muscles of back and legs seemed to coil and recoil like a well-oiled machine. None of us had seen a musculature like this; none had ever seen a man who was quite evidently so powerful that a mere 180-pound barbell was as light as a wand. It was simply as if there was no weight there at all!

By this time all of us were wondering who this magnificent athlete was, where he had come from, and what he had done to create this amazing panoply of muscles. So we asked him and he told us he lived across the river in Jersey.

The name. . . John Grimek.



AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THIS IS THE FIRST PICTURE OF JOHN GRIMEK EVER PUBLISHED IN A MUSCLE MAGAZINE. IT APPEARED IN *STRENGTH* MAGAZINE IN OCTOBER 1929. THE CAPTION IDENTIFIES GRIMEK AS A SILVER MEDAL WINNER IN STRENGTH'S MONTHLY POSING CONTEST.

The King is Dead



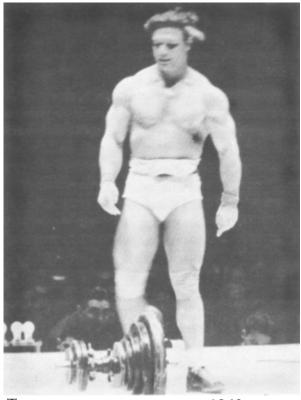
Alton Eliason

"The King is dead." Such could be the words echoed throughout the weightlifting world. Dennis Reno's newsletter arrived yesterday with the sad news of Johnny Grimek's death. So great was his impact on our world that those who called him a friend will reminisce in the future about where we were when we first met him, and where we were when we learned the sad news of his death.

My wife and I first met Johnny and Steve Stanko on May 25, 1940. Marge and I had been invited to dinner at Ray and Virginia Van Cleef's apartment in New York City, prior to the National Weightlifting Championships and the Mr. America contest at Madison Square Garden. I had opened my gym in 1939 in New Haven and our friendship with Ray and Virginia was of recent origin. I can remember each minute of that dinner as if it had taken place last night. Ray had not mentioned John and Steve having dinner with us, so their arrival was most exciting. I was barely 23 and Marge was carrying our first child. Steve was a reserved, bashful chap, character traits especially pleasing to Marge and ones which made him a special person to her forever after. A rather humorous thing happened that evening when Steve took John's salad by mistake and John said, jokingly, "Steve, if you're so hungry you could at least have eaten your own salad first." This brought a blush to Steve's face, but an understanding to us country folks, as lacking in knowledge of Emily Post's rules of etiquette as Steve.

Later that evening John mildly reprimanded Ray for having written an article for a British magazine praising John Davis as a coming super lifter. John said, "Steve is the strongest man in the world and you should have written about Steve, not Davis." Those were the early, not friendly days, days that later changed for the better.

According to Ray and John, Grimek had been desperately reducing weight in an effort to make a world press record in the 181 lb. class that weekend.



This photo was taken at the 1940 National Weightlifting Championships the day after John Grimek and Alton Eliason ate supperat Ray Van Cleef's home John Weighed 183.5.

But by then I think he had decided he couldn't get down that low because at the meal he made no efforts to restrain his appetite. This was probably a mistake, for if my memory serves me John weighed in at 183 even after that big meal. [Ed. note: He weighed 183.5.] In any case, that 1940 show was Johns first selection as "Mr. America."

He and Ray had by then been very close friends for years. In fact, Ray & John's friendship led John to persuade Bob Hoffman to hire Ray to serve as the managing editor of *Strength & Health*. Earlier, it had been Ray who encouraged and helped Johnny become an artists' model long before JCG's affiliation with Hoffman. One thing I have always greatly regretted is that before I met him, and unbeknownst to me, John posed for some time at the Yale Art School, which was less than half a mile from my gym.

From that beginning at Ray Van Cleef's home came a lifetime of friendship with John. While Hoffman's memory was legendary, John's was almost as capable. He never failed to remember us by name no matter how long between visits, and he seemed to

remember each visit vividly.

I'd like to recount one further incident as it helps to reveal John's character. What happened is that Bob Nealey from Maine appeared on the scene in Connecticut back in the early 1940s. Bob received considerable publicity in S&H back in those days for his performance of the "Good Morning" exercise, as it came to be named, and for his other activities as chairman of the Maine Weightlifting Association and as an active lifter. He had moved to Greenwich, Connecticut, with his wife, who had secured a teaching job at a private school there. Bob was going blind yet still made a few bucks writing pulp stories for Street & Smith and other publications. When he first arrived he was very complimentary, praising me for the job I was doing as the weightlifting chairman, but this soon changed and he threatened to have me removed by Dietrich Wortmann, the head of U.S. Weightlifting. He did this with letters, which speak for themselves, but the manner in which he tried to destroy my friendship with Grimek took the cake. At one of our association meetings Nealey attended we were discussing a meet and show I was planning. I mentioned trying to get Grimek. One of the fellows, a close friend who was posing at the Yale Art School and training at my gym, said that John's coming was not likely since he had heard that Yale had a warrant for John's arrest for stealing a student's overcoat when he left. I discussed this with Ray Van Cleef confidentially and he assured me it was untrue. And, knowing Johnny as well as he did, I gave it no further thought. A couple of years later when visiting York I walked to Grimek's desk to greet him and he said, "What the hell's this business of my stealing a coat at Yale?' I was stunned momentarily, but managed to ask where the story came from. He said that Bob Nealey had told him that I was spreading that story up in Connecticut. I explained to John that the story had not originated with me and that I knew nothing about it until Bob Fleming had mentioned it at the meeting. Johnny went on to say how preposterous the story was as he never wore a winter coat and wouldn't if it had been given to him. Ray had mentioned to me at the time we discussed it that John never wore a coat in those days, which I could relate to as I didn't either. I tried to explain to John how erratic Nealey had become. I think it probably began when he started going blind. Nealey's wife wrote me an apologetic letter sometime after, and that was the last I ever heard from them. Bob died many years ago, but I still recall how angry John was at the idea that anyone

would think he would wear an overcoat. I think that bothered him more than to have anyone think he would steal one. Finally, I'd like to share sections from two of John's letters as they deal with an interesting issue.

December 6, 1987

Greetings Alton,

You mention your confrontation with Kiphuth [Editors' note: Bob Kiphuth, the legendary swimming coach at Vale]. Yeah, on the ship going to Germany for the 36 Olympics he and Bob often had a round about weights... yet, a few years later he became adamant about w/training and had ALL his swimmers using weights. Even published a book on weight exercises. In time he knew that stronger swimmers would have more powerful strokes, so advocated training, and then became a noted authority on w/training for swimmers. There are so many of those guys around today. Never trained but got on the bandwagon and became an authority. Oh well, who gives a darn, eh?

—John Grimek

January 31, 1941

Dear Alton:

Sorry I have to be so late in answering your kind letter dated some time ago. But I was away when the letter arrived and had to get a lot of things done when I returned, letting your letter wait till I got the opportunity to answer it properly. But it seems to me that if I let it go any longer, I won't answer it till next year.

It is interesting to know what you had to state, and when I brought up this fact to Bob Hoffman, he was sorry that we didn't know of it when we saw Kiphuth at the AAU convention in Denver, otherwise he said that he would have discussed the subject with him then.

It may interest you to know that in my recent article I didn't name Yale as the college, but Princeton. It was after I had turned the article over that that was changed, and even then not to my knowledge until I saw the magazine. I happened to leave when the proofs of the magazine came back.

I spent some time at Princeton and found that the coaches there were not against lifting as some might have thought, and I was under the impression that it was Princeton that I saw pictured in *Life* Magazine using light dumbells to improve their stroke. Of course I may be wrong, since I cannot recollect what college those students represented.

When I was at Illinois, the coaches there didn't like w/l at first but when I continued to lift weights around there and a sudden interest began to appear, nothing was said about it to discourage it, but rather to favor it. I used to indulge in gymnastics with the fellows there and altho' I wasn't a champion at it, I nevertheless did give a fair account of myself, weighing by far more than anyone there.

So, in closing I want to express my thanks to you for your interest and I'm glad you took the time to write me about it.

—John Grimek





by Angela Grimek

Reprinted from Health and Strength, July 19, 1956

John Grimek added a note of his own to his wife's report on her family. He said:

This was some job the editor set me. Getting my wife, Angela, to write an article for H & S took a lot of doing.

I had to be sure she made notes only in her relaxed moments. If she had recorded them when the kids were on the warpath, or when I was making her lose her patience, these revelations would have been unprintable.

One thing we all admit. She is an excellent

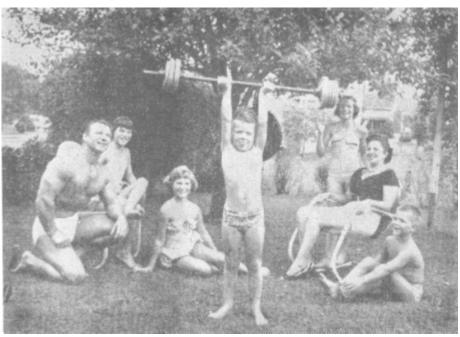
wife and a wonderful mother. We are always making demands on her but she copes with everything—even to taking my pictures when I don't want to use the self-timer (the method used, by the way, to snap these pictures). We have nothing but praise for her.

What's it like being married to John Grimek, the "Monarch of Muscledom?" I know: it's a fulltime job. Our live children are the most active bunch I have ever seen. [Ed. note: At the time this was written, their sixth child, John, had not been born.] They take some looking after.

In the past John himself has seemed to have been away travelling more than he has been at home. Last year he turned down more invitations than he accepted. His travels always mean that we received gifts from those far-away places. But we enjoy having him at home more than all the presents he can bring.

Meals are a Problem

Mealtimes are one big problem. John has an enormous appetite. The kids eat well, too, but they



Young Steven Grimek, age five, shows that lifiting is a family talent. Here in their backyard is the Grimek family in 1956: (L-R) John, Bonnie, Reggie, Steven with weight, Patricia, Angela in Chair, and Robert.

sometimes have finicky tastes which make it easier to eat in a restaurant where there is a large choice. But you can imagine the cost! Anyway, John has yet to find a restaurant that can do justice to his appetite. Sometimes he goes on a restricted diet—and it is surprising how little he can get by on then. But when he goes all-out he can never be filled.

At such times I, too, eat more. I only realize it when my clothes begin to feel tight. Then I know it's time to ease up. But the "hog" (our pet name for John) just eats and eats and still remains trim and muscular. I can't imagine anything more exasperating. I enjoy eating as much as anyone. But mother isn't getting, and won't get fat! So I watch with envy while my hogs enjoy luscious desserts and other pound-gainers.

I exercise at least once a week, and more when time allows. If possible, I like to get in three or four sessions, using regular barbell exercises given me by John. If I didn't exercise, I know I'd have more trouble keeping my weight down. But I do all my own housework. That means looking after six, making six beds, washing and ironing. Washing isn't so bad—I

have an automatic washer—but ironing is my pet peeve. The girls try to help me with the lighter items but their slowness makes me impatient and I finish the job myself.

Of course, it gets boring sometimes to hear so much "shop" talked. Yet everyone who visits us naturally wants to talk bodybuilding. Every enthusiast who passes through York wants to see John and when we lived in the city (we are in the suburbs now) the phone never stopped ringing. Now we're not listed in the directory and we get a little more time to ourselves, especially at weekends. You can understand John's reluctance to discuss training. He works with it all the week and on Saturdays and Sundays he likes a change.

Wherever he goes people in all walks of life never fail to ask him how he got his muscles and how he keeps his waist so small. So when we go away on holiday we prefer unpopulated places where we can be alone.

So Many of Them!

We appreciate the enthusiasm of John's fans, of course. And he has a keen sense of his duty to them.

But at times I wish there weren't so many of them! However, like other wives of famous men, I have gotten used to having so many visitors. Maybe I do have one gripe. I know that John refuses many propositions that would pay him thousands of extra dollars a year. But he refuses to work harder than necessary or become involved in too much worry.

However, when all is said and done, there is nothing to take the place of health and happiness and the ability to enjoy what life gives.



NO WONDER THE FAMILY'S NICKNAME FOR JOHN WAS "THE HOG." EITHER GRIMEK UNDERSTOOD THE NEED FOR PROTEIN EARLIER THAN MOST IN THE BODYBUILDING GAME OR, LIKE ANGELA SAID, HE SIMPLY HAD A HUGE APPETITE.



The news of John Grimek's passing brought a tear to my eye, as I'm sure it did to the eyes of the generations of bodybuilders and lifters he inspired. Like perhaps no other person in iron game history, the "Monarch of Muscledom" had an impact which rippled through time and space, indelibly affecting every muscle aspirant in its wake. Grimek's influence had a domino effect, spreading to people in all walks of life. He had a major impact on three people I know very well—a Catholic priest from Nebraska, a Louisiana judge, and me.

I'll never forget the first time I met Grimek. It was in the late Fifties when I visited York for the first time, as a little known lifter from New Mexico. John Terpak introduced me to John, who was hard at work hunched over his typewriter. Grimek never looked up; he just shook my hand over his shoulder, and kept typing.

Later, however, when we met in the gym, he was as friendly as can be, telling me he remembered the lights of Albuquerque rising up out of the desert as he topped the nine-mile hill west of my hometown.

It was exhilarating to rub shoulders with Grimek, Steve Stanko, Terpak and others I'd read

about in *Strength & Health*, especially in the old Broad Street gym which held the memories of all the greats who'd trained there. But I didn't realize until recently the vicarious influence Grimek had on me by way of Jim Schwertley.

The bigger-than-life stars of muscledom featured in the magazines inspire countless wide-eyed readers to take up bodybuilding. But some are incredulous at first. I was—until I spotted Jim Schwertley.

This was several years before I met Grimek, about 45 years ago, but I still remember seeing Schwertley dressing in the locker room of the Albuquerque YMCA after a workout. His pecs and abs rippled as he pulled on his shirt—and his arms. Oh, those arms! To my young eyes they looked like hams bursting out of his sleeves. Seeing Jim convinced me that weight training really could accomplish miracles. It was like seeing Popeye in the flesh. The memory still makes me want to train.

It wasn't until a few days ago, however, when I told Jim the sad news of Grimek's death, that I learned about the pivotal influence John had on Schwertley about a decade before Schwertley made a believer of me. I'm sure the same thing happened in one form or another to thousands of people directly, and perhaps millions more, like me, in the form of a chain reaction.

Here's the story, in Jim's own words.

Experiences with John Grimek by Father Jim Schwertley

My first impression of John Grimek was a profound one, an event that jump-started my weight training that has continued unabated for 53 years, though I have been a priest for 37 years.

It was early September 1945. I had been training for a few weeks with the old York Barbell Course Number One. At age 16 I toiled alone in my room anxiously waiting for muscles to bloom. There had been little progress with the freehand exercises, push-ups, and chins I had been doing the previous year to blow up my meager 105-pound frame. I had gained 20 pounds that year, to 125 pounds, but my biceps only stretched the tape to 11 1/2 inches, and my chest to 35 inches. I was not surging with confidence that I could do much better with weights, but I grimly pushed and pulled with and through the exercises three times a week.

Then it happened. On a drug store shelf I spotted a copy of *Strength & Health* magazine from which I had ordered the weights two months before. Lo, there he was, John Grimek, perched on a pillar, a Herculean figure, gracefully reaching up with his left arm as if to shade his eyes, or perhaps salute strength gods. A mighty right arm braced on the pillar, sinewy legs stretched out along the floor. I was awestruck. I had never seen such a magnificent build. The symmetry, the huge chest, the wasp waist, the cantaloupe-sized deltoids. It was a turning point! I felt a surge of energy. I bought the magazine and devoured its contents. I was on my way, and I have not missed more than a week of workouts in a half century. I have often looked at the pillar pose for inspiration and still consider it

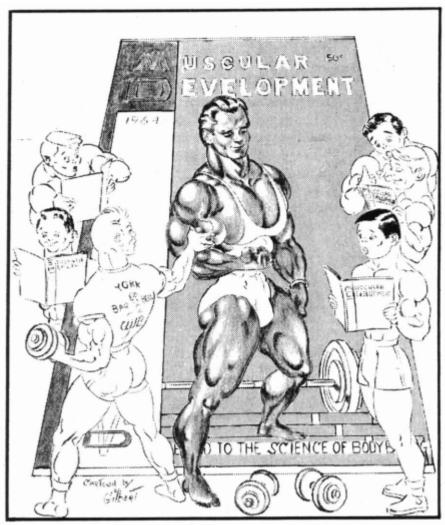
the greatest physique shot I have ever seen. Even in an era of more scientific training methods, advanced nutrition, supplement awareness, and use of steroids, I do not believe anyone could match it for overall magnificence, even to the facial handsomeness. It was and is a photographic parallel to the statue of David by Michelangelo.

Two years later I saved some money digging ditches in the summer and took a train to York to see the great one. It was like a pilgrimage. Unfortunately, Grimek was not in town but I got to see the other hulks and lifters, and was particularly impressed by Steve Stanko, who rivaled Grimek in size but not in shape and symmetry. Bob Hoffman was there, intently watching his charges doing their explosive lifts.

I got the chance to meet Grimek personally in 1950. There was a contest in Kansas City where he was scheduled to be guest poser. I went there from my hometown of Omaha, Nebraska. The contest was conducted in a boxing ring without ropes, with meager lighting. I had been in some contests in Nebraska before and this setting was even worse. At length Grimek entered the gym wearing a suit and tie, walking with a rolling, bouncy stride, very light-footed. When he came out to pose, he ran toward the boxing ring and leaped up on it, disdaining the stairs, no mean feat. His posing was majestic, fluid, classical, powerful, and included splits and other agile moves. The place erupted with applause. This guy is quite a showman, I marveled.

Afterward I went to the dressing room and met him. It was surreal. His impeccable shape and symmetry were awesome. It was as if God had said, 'I think I will make a perfect specimen." That was Grimek. His abs were not visible but his waist was trim and tight. He exuded power and grace. It appeared as if he had been dunked in a vat of milk. He had no tan but his skin had a glow to it, sort of a white aura. I have not seen anything like it. He seemed a bit shy standing there answering questions of a group clustered around. He seemed to have a gentle, friendly nature and made it a point to completely answer all questions.

Three years later in 1953, I was competing in regionals, and once in a national physique contest, going against



THIS CARTOON BY GILBERT ILL APPEARED IN THE MAY 1964 ISSUE OF MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT. JOHN HAD JUST BEEN NAMED EDITOR.

people like Mickey Hargitay, Malcolm Brenner, Irvin Koszewski, Steve Klisanin, and Raymond Schaefer. The latter two won Mr. America contests, and Hargitay later won Mr. Universe. Such competition was a big challenge to a 5-8, 180 pounder with a Koszewski type of build. So I consulted Grimek in writing for training advice and also Olympic lifting tips. He always answered with advice and

encouraging words.

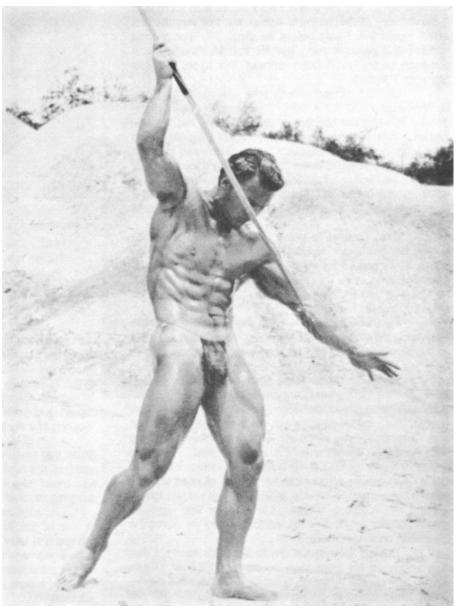
Not long after that I entered the seminary and quit competing, but continued training, starting a weight program in the seminary as I had done in the Air Force in Albuquerque, New I did not see or contact Mexico. Grimek again for 30 years. I heard he had retired but still worked as an editor of the magazine. From time to time I would read his comments in answering training questions in various magazines. I thought the publishers could add a lot of class to their magazines if they would reprint the pillar pose on their covers instead of the soft porn shots they often use.

In 1984 I was at a convention in Newark, New Jersey and thought of going over to York to visit Grimek. This time I called to make sure he was there and he said he remembered meeting me and corresponding some 30 years before. I was skeptical that he would remember such a limited contact until he responded to my comment that I had gone to York in 1947 to see him but he was out of town. "When was that, in 1947?" he asked. "In early September," I said. "Oh yes," he replied. "I was in Milwaukee that week giving an exhibition." Wow, I thought, that's quite a memory.

I had problems getting to York, as I got lost in Philadelphia, but arrived at length, entering the York building, the new one, now an office, museum, and gym. It contained all the Mr. America photos and artifacts of past glories. But the building itself was shiny new. Grimek was seated behind a desk, typing. He looked vigorous and massive, remarkable in skin and muscle tone for a man of 75. He chatted amiably, mentioning that he had an injury to both shoulders caused

by a fall on an icy sidewalk while carrying some things. It prevented him from doing bench dumbell presses and fly motions, which were favorites of his. He said he could still squat with 600 pounds. [Ed. Note: Partial squat.] I looked at him skeptically, wondering if he was serious. He was. Somehow I believed it. He really looked like he could do it.

Showing me around the gym and museum,



FROM THE BEGINNING, GRIMEK SEEMED TO INSTINCTIVELY KNOW HOW TO DISPLAY HIS MASSIVE BODY TO BEST ADVANTAGE.

offered to drive me over to the old York Barbell Company building, now abandoned. I had to get back to the convention as I had to give a speech the next morning, so we parted. I told him about my experience with the picture of him leaning on the pillar. He seemed pleased, though I am sure he had heard that before. I mentioned that it would be interesting to have someone make a marble sculpture of it sometime.

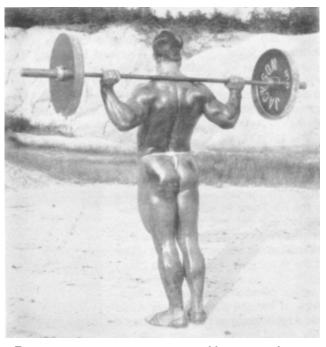
I met Grimek's wife Angela in 1988 in Los Angeles at World Gym. She was there with Grimek for the Mr. Olympia show. My old friend Peary Rader was there with them that day. I did not know it then, but that was the last time I would see Peary before he died. He was a good inspiration in previous years with his *Iron Man* magazine, a common sense publication without the hype, as was *Strength & Health.*

My next contact with Grimek was in 1989. I was in Washington DC for a talk. Realizing York was fairly close, I rented a car and drove up to see him and his wife Angela. They came to meet me in front of their old parish church and we went to breakfast. He said he was troubled by a sore arch irritated years ago by having done backlifts. I do not remember whether John said he lifted 3000 or 4000 pounds in the lift. But it made little difference to a mortal like me. In either case it could give any lifter a case of fallen arches.

John seemed to enjoy talking as always and as we left the restaurant parking lot, he was almost hit by an approaching car, which he didn't notice due to preoccupation with the story he was telling. 'Look out, John," I yelled. He swerved and avoided a collision. "You've still got good reflexes," I said. He smiled.

My last visit was in 1992 when I drove up there from Annapolis where I was attending a graduation. I went to his home which to my surprise was only about a mile from the old York building. On the way, I wistfully stopped at the old red brick building; the place Bob Hoffman turned from the York Oil Burner Company to the center of muscledom for about three decades—the world famous York Barbell Club. It looked worn out, rusty-red in the afternoon sun. It reminded me of the old Roman Coliseum, dripping with history, a monument to a majestic past. I walked around it sadly, looking at the boarded windows. I checked out a small grassy area where I had slept all night under a bush 37 years before, having arrived in York too late to find a hotel with rooms available. It was Labor Day weekend and there was no room in the inn for the pilgrim. Even the bush was no longer there.

Driving down the street to Grimek's house, I saw him sitting on his front lawn awaiting my arrival. Once again, with careful attention to detail, after my 1947 experience, I had called to announce my coming. Grimek still looked massive in a short-sleeved shirt, unlike any 83 year old man I had ever seen before, or since. We went to lunch with Angela. He chided me for eating a salad.



BEFORE HE WENT TO WORK FOR HOFFMAN, JOHN POSED FOR A SERIES OF PHOTOS USING A WEIGHT SET MADE BY THE JACKSON BARBELL COMPANY.

NOTE THE DEEP TAN AND POWERFUL SWEEP OF HIS QUADRICEPS.

"Rabbit food," he said. I reminded him that gorillas also ate the stuff.

Grimek offered to show me Bob Hoffman's grave but I was once again pressed for time and had to leave. I didn't get to meet any of his family, or his friend Jules Bacon, the Mr. America of 1943 who John said still trained at the Gold's Gym and was a volunteer instructor there. John said Bacon was an usher in their neighborhood church and went there early in the morning to unlock it. "Sounds like my kind of parishioner," I said.

Angela said when I spoke to her after John's death that they had been to dinner with Jules Bacon that evening, the night of John's heart attack. "Everything was fine then," she said. John died at 11:00 PM. An era covering most of this century ended.

I saw John at a distance when he was introduced at one of the Arnold Classics in Columbus, Ohio, but I missed him later in the big crowd. I kept in touch at least once a year and several years ago sent him a framed copy of the pillar pose, which had been my initial inspiration decades before and had remained so. He wrote back in appreciation.

My last contact with John was two months ago before his death when I called asking how he was doing in recovery from his hip operation. He said it was progress-

ing but that he had a lot of soreness in his legs making walking difficult. He said he might not be able to get to London later in the year for the reunion of the Mr. Universe winners.

I had planned to visit him this summer while on vacation and perhaps meet Bacon and maybe some of John's family. So when my friend Clarence Bass called to inform me of John's death, I was especially shocked and experienced a greater sense of loss than I would have otherwise. I realized our next meeting would have to wait for another time in another world. He was indeed a mentor to me and to countless others. That influence will

ATTENDANCE K

continue.

My friend Judge Dan Sawyer, a resident of Shreveport, Louisiana, was in regular contact with John Grimek for more than 26 years. After first telling me that he couldn't possibly put into words all that John meant to him, he did so brilliantly.

Another Memory by Judge Dan Sawyer

We are all hero oriented. Everyone carries in his mind the image of an ideal and when he sees that person he knows who it is. In my early teens John Grimek represented what I wanted to be. I told him once, "I worked hard enough to have been a John Grimek over and over." Compared to him I was like a candle at high noon, but I am ten thousand times better for trying. In the process I developed a life long quest to become better in every way and there are hundreds more who are better men because he lived.

He had life in perspective. His achieve ments, as we know them, were not his goal. He told me, "It seems everything I did turned to muscle, but the gym is not a place to develop the ego, but the place to develop character and health . . . that is what it is all about."

Whatever were his lifetime achievements, his real greatness was that he was kind and thoughtful and one of the finest gentlemen any of us ever knew. The English language has more words than any other, and is known for its precision, yet it still does not contain the words to describe him.

As the poet said, "The paths of glory lead but to the grave." However, there will always be a certain magic in the name John Grimek. He still gives us hope, and his life will float forever through time blessing and inspiring those who follow.

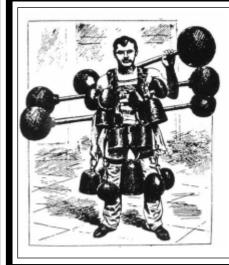
Final Thoughts

In later years, John always responded to my letters— I loved it when he called me "Clancy Ripped"—so I knew something was wrong when I wrote recently for information to be used in my new book and heard nothing. There will never be another Grimek. An era has passed, but John will live on in the memories of Father Jim, Judge Dan, and many more like them.



MARK BERRY PUBLISHED THIS PHOTO OF THE VERY YOUNG JOHN GRIMEK IN *YOUR PHYSIQUE AND ITS CULTURE* IN 1935.

BERRY WROTE: "ONE OF THE BEST BUILT MEN OF ALL TIME. AN INCREASING NUMBER THINK HE IS THE BEST BUILT."



IRONCLAD

John Grimek's Physique Competitions

by Joe Roark

Address all correspondence to: Joe Roark, P.O. Box 320 St. Joseph, Illinois 61873 JXROARK@msmail.oandm.uiuc.edu

John Carroll Grimek: Born June 17, 1910, Died November 20, 1998

Before John began physique competition, he had, of course, experience on the weightlifting platform—including being a part of the 1936 USA Weightlifting Team at the Berlin Olympics. His six physique competitions encompassed a period from his 30th year to his 39th year. Results, and certain aspects of these contests vary from report to report. Some of these variations are noted below.

In February 1938, John penned his first work for Strength & Health magazine: "An

Ideal, and Then Success." It was about George Kiehl.

1. York Perfect Man Contest:

November 18, 1939 Age 29

Results can be found in Strength & Health, January 1940, pg. 30.

up to 5'6":

1. Elmer Farnham 2. Tony Terlazzo

3.___Stolarsk
4. Charles Grim

And seven others

5'6"-5'9":

1. John Grimek

2. Carl Hempe

3. Jules Bacon*

4. Jack Channing

1939 York Perfect Man Overall Winners:

Over 5'9"

1. Constantine Kosiras

2. Dave Asnis

3. Roland Essmaker

4. Gord Venables

1. John Grimek

2. Constantine Kosiras

3. Elmer Farnham

Judging: 7 pts. Muscular Development, 5 pts. Muscular Proportion, 1 pt. Skin, Hair, Teeth, 1 pt. Posing, 1 pt. Posture and Carriage.

Posing: Thirty seconds each allowed for front pose, back pose, and optional pose. Total: One minute and 30 seconds

Judges: Otto Arco, Jack Ayres, Bob Jones (also emcee), Sig Klein, Elmore Kohl.

* In a phone conversation with Joe Roark on December 1, 1998, Jules insisted he had only competed against Grimek once—at the 1941 Mr. America.

2. AAU Mr. America

May 25, 1940 Age 29 (five months before he married Angela)

Madison Square Garden, NYC

(1940 was the World's Fair year)

Format: Best bodyparts were held on Saturday afternoon, Mr. America that evening. No music. Grimek entered only Most Muscular and Arms in subdivisions.

Results: 61 contestants (*Strength & Health*, July 1940 pg. 6, 22); Over 70 contestants (*Strength & Health* November 1948, pg. 47.)

- 1. John Grimek 99.25 pts. (Also won Most Muscular and Best Arms)
- 2. Frank Stepanek [Leight] 97.50 pts. (Also won Best Chest)



APRIL 1999 IRON GAME HISTORY

3. Lud Shusterich 88 pts. (Shusterich won Mr. NYC on 1-27-1940)

4. Chick Deutch (Also won Best Abs)

5. John Gallagher (See also S&H, Sept. 1940, pg.

6. George Lapausky (See also S&H, Nov. 1940, pg.

Other competitors in alphabetical order:

Dave Asnis

Monroe Brown

Jack Channing (See also S&H, August 1940, pg. 9)

Elmer Farnham

Carl Hempe Gene Jantzen

Melvin Kahn (S&H for July 1942, pg. 47 says Kahn

won Best Abs) Terry Robinson

Tony Terlazzo

Joe Thaler (Also won Best Back)

Herman Weinsoff

Charles Whitlock, (See also S&H, May 1941, pg. 24)

Grimek told Joe Roark during a phone conversation June 27, 1985 that there was a Best Legs subdivision. But who won it?

All competitors except Grimek and Stepanek used "make up"-

—that is, oil and suntan powder. Judges: Strength & Health, July 1940 pg. 48 says there were seven; Strength & Health, July 1942, pgs. 15 & 25, says there were ten. We know of the following judges: Col. Charles Dieges, Bob Hoffman, Col. Kilpatrick, Sig Klein, Bernarr Macfadden, Dan Parker, and Gord Venables (See also Strength & Health August 1947, pg. 25). Emcee: Al Franzen

Point System: This also varied by report. Compare: Strength & Health, July 1940 pg. 48:

Muscular Development	5
Muscular Proportions	5
Posing	3
General Appearance	2
Total	15 points

And: Strength & Health, July 1942, pg. 25: Muscular Development Muscular Proportions Posing plus general appearance 3

Since 15 points were possible for each judge, the total possible score was 105, indicating seven judges.

Miscellaneous: On October 20, 1940, John married Angela Liberto.

3. AAU Mr. America May 24, 1941 Age 30 Arena Sports Palace 45th & Market, Philadelphia, PA.

Show began at approximately 10:30 PM. By now, John and Angela had been married about seven months.

Results: Approximately 68 contestants (Strength & Health, November 1948, pg. 47)

1. John Grimek 146.5 pts (S&H, July 1942, pg. 47, says 147.5 pts). Grimek did not enter the body parts contests.

2. Jules Bacon 71 pts

(S&H, July 1942, pg. 46 says Bacon and Leight were initially tied with 125 points)

3. Frank Leight 58.0 pts

Also won Best Chest, Best Built Policeman

4. Elwood Holbrook

5. Lud Shusterich (Also named Most Muscular)

6. Terry Robinson

Other competitors in alphabetical order:

Paul Como had won Mr. New York City on 2-15-1941 (See *S&H*, April 1941, pg. 10)

Paul Davis (Also won Best Back)

Roland Essmaker

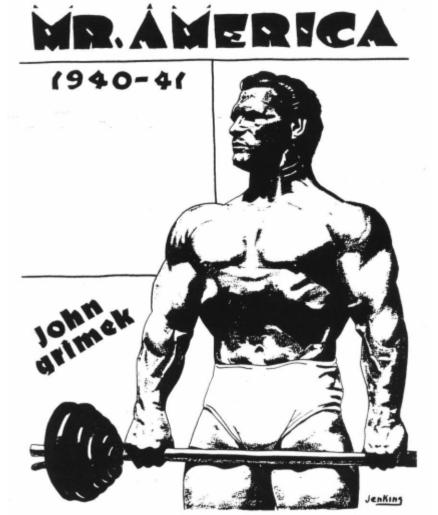
Melvin Kahn (Also won Best Abs)

Constantine Kosiras

Tommy O'Hare Joseph Peters Steve Stern (Also won Best Built Fireman)

Kimon Voyages Elmer Witmer

Harold Woomer



Judges: Jack Ayres Cy Bermudes Willie Clark **Emmet Faris** John Fritsche Art Gay Bob Hoffman Jeff Keen Sig Klein Lewis Perry

S & H July 1942 pg. 16 adds:

Paschall, Harry Ray Van Cleef Whitfield, Karo

Says there were 66 contestants

S&H Sept. 1943 pg. 19: Mentions 9 judges

Judging: Same points as 1940 with 150 points possible. 5 pts. Muscular Development, 5 pts. Muscular Proportions, 3 pts. Posing, 3 pts. General Appearance. (See also S&H July . 1941, pgs. 11 & 26.)

Format: Twenty seconds each allowed for front, back, and optional posing; total one minute of posing.

Miscellaneous: John had planned to compete no more after 1941. His family had begun with the birth of Patricia In March 1945, and Bonnie on Easter 1946 ("Bonnie" because of its similarity to the Easter "bunny").



May 4, 1946 Age 35 Turners' Hall in Philadelphia, 8 PM

Hall located at Columbia Avenue & Broad Street

This contest was prompted by a challenge to Grimek from Dan Lurie, who then declined to face Grimek, citing fairness issues in judging. Had he competed, Lurie would have been in Class B. Following the contest, Grimek gave his trophy to Joe Shaw, saying he did not want to retain the title and competed only because circumstance warranted.

Results:

Class A: Under 5'3.75"	•	Class B: 5'4"-5'6.5"	
1. Dick Bachtell	48 pts.	1. Sam Loprinzi	
2. Joe Thaler	37 pts.	2. Dan 'Ape' Bax	
3. William Goldberg	30 pts.	George Waselinko	
0	•	4. Elmer Ward	
		5. Joseph Nadzier	
		6. Walter Johnson	
		7. Anthony Gobeo	

Class C: 5'6.75"-5'8.25"	
 Kimon Voyages 	48 pts.
2. Jules Bacon	47 pts.*
3. George Lapausky	36 pts.
4. Donald Ray	34 pts.
5. Russell Green	30 pts.
6. John Stewart	23 pts.

 John Grimek Joe Shaw Joseph Masyle 	49 pts. 35 pts. 31 pts.
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Class D: 5'8.5"-5'10"

49 pts. 40 pts. 39 pts. 37 pts 30 pts. 26 pts. 25 pts

Class E: Over 5'10.25"		Overall:	
1. Steve Stanko	49 pts.	1. John Grimek	48 pts.
2. Joe Lauriano	46 pts.	Steve Stanko	46 pt
3. Marshall Grenuick	42 pts.	Sam Loprinzi	41 pts.
4. Constantine Kosiras	36 pts.	4. Kimon Voyages	40 pts.
5. (Tie)Fred Harmening	30 pts.	5. Dick Bachtell	38 pts.
6. (Tie) Henry Struczewski	30 pts.		
7. Leonard Heinz	29 pts.		

I Jules Bacon told me on the phone Dec. 1, 1998 that he did not compete in this contest and does not understand how he was reported as having been a contestant. He says he faced Grimek only once—at the 1941 Mr. America.

Actually, after Class E performed, Lurie did compete against Sig Klein and Walter Podolak, each posing separately, then as a group. This was a pro event.

48 pts. 1. Sig Klein 2. Dan Lurie 43 pts. 41 pts. 3. Walter Podolak

Next the five class winners in the amateur contest appeared on stage individually, then as a group. See overall results above.

Class 1: over 5'11.75"

1. Steve Reeves

Judges: Ottley Coulter, Hall, McMahon, Antone Matysek, and Bill Oliphant. **Judging:** 50 points possible. Each man assumed three different poses.

Miscellaneous: By now Robert John (named after Grimek and Bob Hoffman) had joined

the family. Born on Feb 28, 1948.

Health & Strength Mr. Universe August 13, 1948 Age 38 Scala Theatre, London, England

Open to pros and amateurs; 11 (or 16) countries represented; 43 contestants.

Results:

 Class 4: Under 5'5.75"
 Class 3: 5'6"~5'8.75"

 1. Mahmoud Namdjou
 1. John Grimek

 2. Don Dorans
 2. Andre Drapp

Class 2: 5'9"-5'11.75" 1. Charles Jarrett

2. Ted White 2. Reub Martin 3. Oscar Heidenstam

There were also competitors from India, South. Africa, Burma, Belgium, and Northern Ireland.

Judges: K.D. Arax, Dr. Bankhof, George Greenwood, George Hackenschmidt, Tromp Van Diggelin

Judging: 40 pts. Harmonious Proportion, 40 pts. Muscular Development, 5 pts. Posture, 5 pts. Muscular Efficiency, 5 pts. Vitality, 5 pts. Organic Condition.

Posing: Each contestant posed by "straight standing, front, back, and side pose." **Miscellaneous:** Hack said to Grimek after the contest: "Grimek, you have won the greatest honor you can ever win. Give up this competition and continue to inspire all the youth of the world with your marvelous physique and great teachings." *§trength & Health,* November 1948)

6. Pro Mr. USA

March 26, 1949 Age 38

Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles at Jefferson & Royal.

15 contestants

In the audience were Shirley Temple, and Van Johnson.

Photo of JCG with his trophy is on cover of May 1949 *Strength & Health* magazine. The photo was taken in Santa Monica, California at the Miramar swimming pool.

Results:

1. John Grimek	\$ 1 ,000*
2. Clancy Ross	\$250
3. Steve Reeves	\$100
4. George Eiferman	\$100
5. Armand Tanny	\$50
6. Floyd Page	

Other competitors in alphabetical order: Walt Baptiste, Phil Courtois, Roland Essmaker, Bob McCune, Walt Marcyan, Norman Marks, Jimmy Payne, Leo Stern, Harold Zinkin

Judges:

Iron Man May 1949 pg. 7
Cliff Byers
Don DeMarce
Don Haley
Peary Rader
Phil Raisch

Strength & Health May 1949 pg. 26
Cliff Byers
Don DeMarse
Don DeMarse
Dan Haley
Peary Rader
Peary Rader
Bill Rasche

Posing: One minute allowed with a three second warning when time was about up. **Miscellaneous:** The Grimeks' other children would be born after John retired from bodybuilding: Steven: September 1949, Regina: April 1954, and John: November 1959. In January 1964, John became editor of the new magazine Hoffman was publication.

lishing — Muscular Development.

John Grimek's Competitors: An Incomplete List

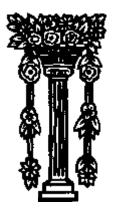
Grimek's Age	29	29	30	35	38	38
Contest	York	Mr. America	Mr. America	Most Muscular	Mr. America	Pro Mr. America
Year	1939	1940	1941	1946	1948	1949
Competitors	Place	Place	Place	Place	Place	Place
Asnis, Dave	?	?				
Batchtell, Dick				A 1/5 o v		
Bacon, Jules	3m		2	C2		
Baptiste, Walt						?
Bax, Dan				B2		
Brown, Monroe		?				
Chaning, Jack	?	?				
Como, Paul			?			?
Courtois, Phil						
Davis, Paul			?			
Deutch Chick		4				
Dorans, Don					2s	
Drapp, Andre					2m/3ov	
Eiferman, Geo.						4
Essmaker, R.	?		?			?
Famham, Elmer	1s/3ov					
Gallagher, John						
Gobeo, Anthony					B7	
Goldberg, Wm.				A3		
Green, Russell				C5		
Grenuick, M.				E3		
Grim, Charles	?					
GRIMEK, JOHN	1m/1ov	10v	10v	D1/1 ov	1m/1ov	1ov
Harmening, F					E5tie	
Heidenstam, O.					3t	
Heinz, Leonard				E7		
Hempe, Carl	2m	?				
Holbrook, E.			4			

Guide to the table: s = short, m = middle, mt = medium/tail, t = tail, ov = overall, tie = tie, ? = competed but placing not certain.

Class Designations: A: 5'5.75"; B: 5'4"~5'6.5"; C: 5'6.75"-5'8.25";

D: 5'8.5'-5'10"; E: 5'10.25" or taller.

Jantzen, Gene		?		1		
Jarrett, Chas.		:			1mt	
Johnson, Waiter				B6	IIIIL	
Kahn. Melvin		?	?	D0		
Kosiras, C.	1t/2ov	:	:			
Laupausky, Geo	11/201	6	?	E 3		
Lauriano, Joe		0				
		0	0	E2		
Leight, Frank		2	3	D4 /0		
Loprinzi, Sam				B1/3ov		
Mahmoud, N.					1s	
Marcyan, Walt						?
Marks, Norman					-	?
Martin; Reub.					2t	
Masyle, Jos.				D3		
McCune, Bob						?
Nadzier, Jos.				B5		
O'Hare, Tommy			?	D3		
Page, Floyd			•			6
Payne, Jimmy						2
Peters, Joe			2			:
Pinto, Russell	2		·			
Ray, Donald	:			C4		
Reeves, Steve				04	1t/2ov	3
Robinson, Terry		2			11/201	3
Ross, Clancy		i	6			0
Shaw, Joe				Do		2
Shusterich, L.		3	F	D2		
Stanko, Steve		3	5	E1/20 V		
Stern, Leo				# E 1/20 V		2
Stern, Steve			2			f
Stewart, John			•	C6		
Stolarski,	3s			 00		
Struczewski, H.	- 3 S			E5tie		
Tanny, Armand				LJIIE		5
Terlazzo Tony	2s	2				3
Thaler, Joe	ω	7		A2		
Venables, Gord	2			n-2		
Voyages, Kimon	:			C1/40v		
Ward, Elmer				B4		
Waselinko, Geo.				B3		
Weinseoff, H.		?		DJ		
White, Ted					2mt	
Whitlock, Chas.		?				
Witmer, Elmer		 -	?			
Woomer, Harold			?			
Zinkin, Harold						?
∠ırınırı, Flat∪lü		1		II		II :



Thought He Was Immortal

JIM MURRAY

When one of my training buddies, Bill Zorichak, called to tell me he had seen an obituary for John Grimek in an area paper, *The Trentonian*, I couldn't believe it. I guess I really thought JCG was immortal. I hadn't seen him for a couple of years, but the last time Jane and I visited John and Angela in York I remarked after we left that John still looked like a superbly fit man of 40. He was past 80!

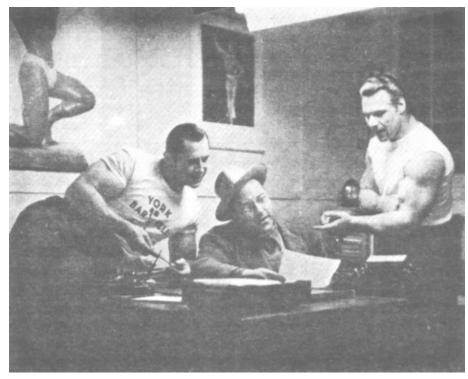
The first time I saw JCG was at the 1941 National Championships and Mr. America contest in Philadelphia. Jim Lorimer and I were 15-year-olds entering our sophomore year in high school and if any one thing sent us home determined to keep training

hard with weights it was seeing John in action that night. There were a lot of splendid specimens in that contest, but Grimek clearly stood out as the winner from the moment he first appeared on a stage rigged in the middle of a boxing ring.

When I landed a job as managing editor of Strength & Health in 1951, I had the incredibly good fortune to share an office with John in the old York Barbell Company building on Broad Street. He was already 41 and 40 was old to a 25-year-old, but John didn't seem like a man of 40. He was a superbly muscled athlete who could have been my own age or younger—especially when it came to his enthusiasm and time I had listening to his stories about all the people I had been reading about since I was a teenager!

But one image that keeps coming to mind is of being in the S&H office at a few minutes before quitting time. John would get up from his desk and quietly leave the office. A few minutes later it would sound as though there was a blacksmith at work in the next room, which was the battered old York gym where so many champions had trained. John was in there working his way up the rack of solid dumbells. He would start with a pair of 60s and work up in 10-pound jumps, doing 10 to 20 reps in a dumbell incline press that was almost a flying exercise as he lowered the bells wide to the side and pushed them up to clang together at the top of the press. He did the exercise on a crude wooden bench that had a slight incline and he would finish with a pair of overweight hundreds—weighing two to four pounds heavy—that were rejects from the foundry. That rhythmic clanging went on for a total of about 75 reps in all. The ringing of those bells signaled it was time to work out.

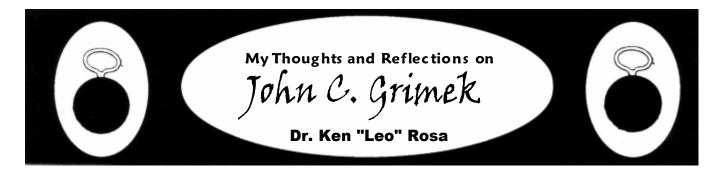
I wish I could hear it again. But even though I can't, I believe my first reaction on hearing of John's passing was correct. He is truly an iron game immortal.



sense of humor. What a great At *Strength & Health* magazine's offices in the 1950s. Three famous time I had listening to his stories

CHAMPIONS GATHER TO DECIDE EDITORIAL POLICY: STEVE STANKO,

GORD VENABLES, AND JOHN GRIMEK.



It seems that I have always had an interest in muscularity and strength. When I was a boy I wanted to compete with Supersnipe for who was the boy with the most comic books in America. I wanted to grow up to be like Tarzan or Batman or Captain Marvel or The Phantom. To the boy that I was, their strength and mighty physiques were what I wanted. One day, while I was in a store trying to decide which of the many tempting comic books I wanted, my gaze was suddenly riveted to a magazine that had photographs of a man on the back cover who looked more powerful than any of the comic book characters. This man was doing some type of exercises with strange iron things. I knew they were iron weights but I didn't know that they were called dumbells and barbells. The magazine was Strength & Health. The man was John Grimek. I had about as much chance of ever meeting John Grimek as I did of meeting Lord Greystoke or Clark Kent. Or so I thought.

Some time passed. It was 1945 and we were now living in the Bronx. I was still a boy and interested in boxing. Jake LaMotta, the Bronx Bull, was my hero. Until the day that I walked past a news stand and saw another Strength & Health magazine, with a cover that stopped me dead in my tracks. The man in the photograph had a physique that took my breath away. I didn't know that it was possible for any human being in real life to have muscles like that. Once again, it was John Grimek, this time in the now legendary side pose leaning against a pillar. He was showing left biceps, right triceps, super thigh and calf development and everything all in that one pose. I was totally stunned. I bought the magazine for 15¢ and decided that I wanted to look like that. Optimism was in great abundance back then. My parents gave me the \$16.00 to send away for the York 7 in 1 home training equipment. When it was delivered a couple of weeks later I plunged into working out after school in our basement.

November 1947, the New York City Siegmund Klein Strength and Physique Show advertised participation by John Farbotnik, Pudgy Stockton, Klein himself, the 1947 Mr. America Steve Reeves and John Grimek. John Grimek! The opportunity to see John Grimek in person was reason enough to go.

I bought my ticket, took my seat in one of the last few rows of the St. Nicholas Arena and watched in total fascination as one by one Sig Klein then John Farbotnik then Pudgy Stockton then Steve Reeves went through their posing routines. Adding to my absolute, complete and utter entrancement was John Grimek, well dressed in a beige suit, siting a few rows in front of me, smiling, relaxed, appearing unconcerned and chatting amicably with those seated around him. Wow! There was Grimek, the main attraction, seemingly indifferent to the fact that he would be posing last and would be measured against those who had preceded him, including Steve Reeves. Seeing him in person, it was easy to see why Grimek was referred to as "The Glow," as his skin almost literally glowed. The color of his suit complimented his brown hair; and added to the impression created by his ruddy complexion, his strong-looking neck, and his broad and powerful shoulders. He was a picture of health and strength. The Glow. It was an impression I will never forget.

Finally Grimek did pose and there was no doubt that he indeed was the king, the monarch. After the show ended and I was in the subway on my way home the compelling picture of John Grimek drove everyone else from my thoughts. I plunged into my training with a new determination, resolve, and ferocity.

Six years later I was living in Santurce, Puerto Rico, training hard and in pretty fair shape. My friend Roberto Santana was then Mr. Puerto Rico and owned the best gym in town, Roberto decided that a

promotion for his gym would be to bring John Grimek down to do a few training seminars and a posing exhibition. So he contacted Bob Hoffman and Grimek in York, Pennsylvania and made the deal to bring John down to Puerto Rico. I remember vividly, as if it were yesterday, that the newspapers were proclaiming the arrival of Mr. Universe. Santana and I and many other bodybuilders as well as reporters were waiting in the airport when John arrived. Then there he was wearing a tight-fitting polo shirt and surrounded by a crowd of enthusiastic fans. He looked vibrant, healthy, youthful and strong. There was a charisma, a magnetism that was palpable. Once again, he glowed. The reporters and cameramen all wanted him to "make a muscle," which John good-naturedly kept declining to do. Finally he struck a quick and stunning double biceps pose. The flashbulbs all went off. Everyone wanted more, but John said, "that's it." He smiled a lot at everyone and signed autographs. After a while, little by little, the crowd thinned out until I was the only one left standing there, a few feet away from John. I was extremely shy in those days and I was in such awe of him that I didn't dare to even say hello to this legend. John apparently sensed this because he looked at me and said, "Hi." I was dumbfounded. He noticed me! He said hello to me. I couldn't get over it. A day or so later, Santana arranged to give Grimek a motorcade parade through San Juan with John sitting up on the back seat of an open convertible waving to the crowds, Wearing a tight polo shirt, John leaned back on one arm to brace himself and he was waving with the other arm. I was in the car right behind Grimek's car with a clear view of the triceps of his straight, bracing arm. Astounding! That triceps development is indelibly etched in my memory.

John was staying at the famous Caribe Hilton Hotel when I first became aware of the phenomenal Grimek memory. One morning we were in the area of the hotel's pool. John looked intently at the swimming instructor/lifeguard and suddenly exclaimed, "I know you. You're George Johnson. I remember you on the USA swimming team in the 1936 Olympics." Everyone, including George Johnson, was amazed. Of course, John Grimek had been a member of the USA weightlifting team in the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. (At this time, George Johnson still lives in Puerto Rico.)

One day, Roberto Santana took John, along with several young gym members and me, for an

outing at the popular Luqillo Beach. We all had a great time with Santana doing some muscle control and Grimek stripped to the waist one arm pressing Roberto's then two-year-old daughter overhead. We took movies of the event and I have a cherished copy. In Puerto Rico, John Grimek is remembered reverently by Iron Game people of Roberto Santana's vintage, and my own.

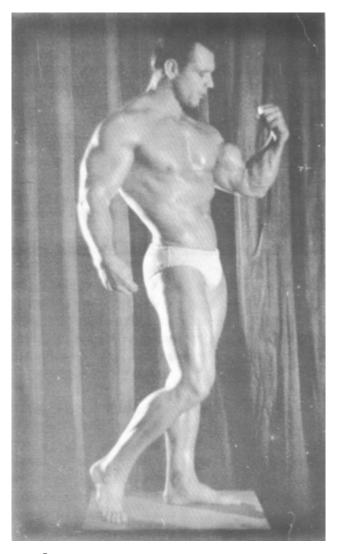
The next time I saw John Grimek was in 1964 when I visited the York Barbell Company. He was sitting at his desk, wearing a polo shirt and his arms looked huge. I was still in awe of him. He seemed to understand and was most gracious. I'll always remember that.

Nineteen seventy-six was when I again went to see John at the York Barbell Company. I was told that I could find him downstairs working out in the gym. My excitement mounted when I entered the gym and there indeed was Grimek doing flys. His ribcage looked immense and deep; he was his usual friendly self We had a camera with us and John allowed us to photograph him as he exercised. He commented that he had injured his hip and lamented that it prevented him from doing squats. He looked powerful with arms still huge at 66. I'll always remember that, too.

In 1986, John was the honoree of that year's Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen reunion. I was there. By that time I now had years of experience doing my own radio program and writing magazine articles. I was no longer the shy kid I had once been. Before the Oldetimer's reunions, I had always addressed John as "Mr. Grimek." With no less respect I now had the courage to call him John, and we had a conversation as two adults rather than as an adult and an adolescent in a man's body, which had been me. John looked wonderful in a white blazer, which gave evidence of his still-athletic-looking physique. He still looked healthy and the glow was still present. At age 76 he looked happy, relaxed and marvelous. I now interpret the glow to have been his vital life force. In healthy childhood, youth and adulthood, it can be very strong. The life force is stronger in some individuals than others. In some people it is so strong that it apparently can produce what can appear to be a glow. Grimek had that. In my conversations with John I mentioned Puerto Rico and Robert Santana. John staggered me when he remarked, "You had some pair of arms." I couldn't believe it. John Grimek had actually noticed me back in Puerto Rico. He remembered meeting me APRIL 1999 IRON GAME HISTORY

and he actually thought that I had good arms. John was smiling and having a wonderful time in the company of his physical culture colleagues. Later that evening, he gave a stirring speech, which inspired everyone. He spoke of how, in his day, some competed, some just worked out but everyone trained for the sheer love of the sport. He said that in times past we were friendly with each other, not trying to denigrate other guys. Back then there was a camaraderie non-existent as of 1986.

John was also the first honoree to be inducted into England's Oscar Heidenstam Foundation Hall of Fame in 1992. He was even more entertaining in his London speech. Most of them remembered him from



ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE ASPECTS OF GRIMEK'S CAREER WAS HIS ABILITY TO STAY IN SUCH IMPECCABLE PHYSICAL CONDITION YEAR AFTER YEAR.

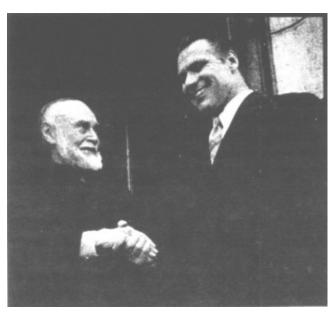
when he was chosen Mr. Universe after a rousing battle with Steve Reeves. John's remembrances of Britain three years after World War II drew some laughs and much applause from an appreciative audience. He was older now but still looked impressive. He told me that night that he now pedaled his stationary bike for leg exercise.

John enjoyed spending time in England in the company of British friends like Reg Ireland, Malcolm Whyatt, Dave Gentle, Ian MacQueen, Tom Temperley, Cliff LeMaistre, and Colin Norris. I also remember the enjoyable conversations we all had in the afternoon before the evening's festive proceedings as we lounged around the hotel lobby exchanging stories and looking at photographs of people like Andre Drapp, who Grimek said should have received more recognition.

It was an honor for me to have been invited, along with my friend of many years, Dr. Serafin Izquierdo, to the fiftieth wedding anniversary of John and Angela Grimek. It brought tears of appreciation to my eyes when the polka music began and John immediately went looking across the large room for Angela. They met on the dance floor, which they had all to themselves. It was beautiful to watch as they danced. Everyone cheered and applauded.

John Grimek represented a time when bodybuilding meant health and strength manifested in an outstanding physique. It was when an outstanding physique was developed by hard training, proper nutrition, and sufficient sleep. John Grimek represented a time when all bodybuilding was natural bodybuilding. There were no chemical monsters during John's time. How would the chemical monsters of today have fared against Grimek? If we had a time machine we could put all the chemical monsters in it and transport them back to 1949. Because there were no anabolic steroids in bodybuilding at that time it would mean that they would be compelled to be natural. Grimek had a genetically superior structure, and he almost invented modern posing. Today's chemical monsters, deprived of their drugs, would lose to John Grimek, in my opinion.

John Grimek has now left us and a part of our youth has vanished as well. For he remembered that we all are but flesh, a wind that passeth away and cometh not again. God bless you, John Grimek. There will never be another.



John Grimek blushes after being kissed goodbye by the legendary French physical culturist. Professor Edmond Desbonnet in 1949.

Many years have passed since I first heard of Professor Edmond Desbonnet, founder and publisher of *La Culture Physique* magazine. His untiring efforts as a writer were prolific and he wrote many books on training and lifting. His books were filled with interesting biographic sketches about famous strongmen 'round the world. His efforts pioneered and popularized physical culture in France and had a marked influence on the rest of the world.

Although I'd corresponded with him for years, I still never found the opportunity to visit him on the several occasions I was in Europe. In 1938, for instance, we stopped in Paris on our way home from Vienna and I felt certain this occasion would fulfill my wishes, but the usual complications arose and I was forced to abandon the idea.

Ten years later, in 1948, when I was invited to London for the Mr. Universe contest, I saw that Professor Desbonnet was listed as one of the judges, and I felt certain I would finally meet him. Upon arriving in London, however, I was disappointed to learn that he had been forced to cancel his trip. I still entertained hopes of seeing him on that trip to Europe, so shortly after my victory in London I tried to get plane reservations to Paris. But it was an Olympic year, and I learned that all flights had been booked.



"MY VISIT TO DESBONNET"

BY JOHN C. GRIMEK

From: Strength & Health, February 1950

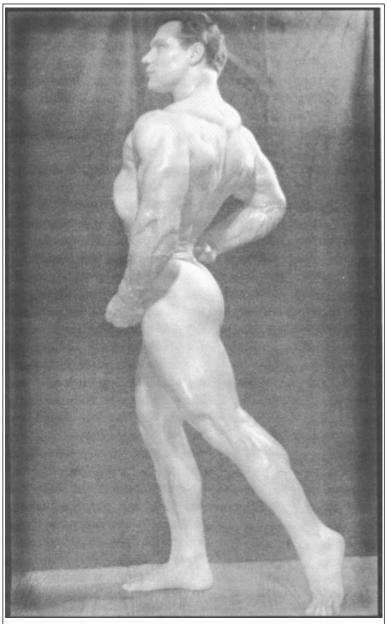
Once more my ambition to see him was stymied.

A year later, when I accepted the invitation to appear in London again, I made up my mind to see him. After completing all the shows arranged by the London organization, I arranged a flight to Paris for the coming weekend.

Once in Paris, I contacted a friend and, after a bit of adventure, we arrived at the Professor's villa, where we were warmly greeted. Desbonnet looked just as I pictured him, except even more alert and better than I expected. He admitted that he was in the middle eighties. He then introduced us to Madame Desbonnet, who, at 75, could easily pass for a woman in her fifties. It was amazing to see two people so unmarked by their years.

Professor Desbonnet doesn't speak English fluently, but my friend Paul Moor, who is quite a linguist, undertook to act as interpreter and did a very commendable job of translating. The professor showed me hundreds of wonderful and heretofore unpublished pictures, scores of medals, plaques, statues, and other trophies. I saw thousands of books and magazines, which occupy two huge rooms in a garage he remodeled just for that purpose. His home was filled with original paintings, etchings, and other prizes. Numerous cabinet files were crammed with

photos, original letters, and other manuscripts. The Professor told many interesting and original tales about strongmen he had known. He even produced coins, some made of early bronze metal, which the great Cyclops tore for him, and which cost the Professor several thousand francs because of a bet he wagered.



In his photo album, *Masculine Perfection*, Grimek entitledthis pose "Power Personified"

We were so fascinated by all this that we lost all conception of time and to my amazement we spent hours there. I began apologizing for the long intrusion but he waved aside the issue by suggesting I remove my shirt and flex my arms for him. I knew I was obliged to do this after traveling such a long distance,

so began disrobing.

Under such circumstances I'm always subjected to an eruption of "gooseflesh" and, as I slipped off my shirt, the gooseflesh was larger than my muscles. After I flexed an arm, the Professor's eyes opened wider and he attempted to finger-span the girth. Failing to do this he brought out a tape and passed it around the arm. It measured over 49 centimeters, larger than any arm he'd ever measured with the exception of the arm of Apollon, the ponderous French giant. Desbonnet also inspected my torso, back, loins and legs. I told him it had been weeks since I'd done any kind of training, but that I could stay in good condition with a minimum of physical activity. His compliments appeared to be sincere. When the "gooseflesh" came out larger than before, we laughed. We then drank a champagne toast; one to his enduring health, the other for my safe trip back to the States.

Before departing Desbonnet presented me with a heavy bronze medal of unique design as a token of my visit, and as we neared the door he said something which I didn't understand. Paul, our interpreter, quickly explained that I was to be the recipient of a traditional French farewell: a kiss on each cheek. Our interpreter now quickly turned into a cameraman and photographed me, blushing, after the experience. Before we finally departed, the professor's hardy handshake reassured me of his sincere friendship.

The sun was wending its way behind the hills and night shadows had begun to lengthen as we left the villa to retrace our path back to the Gay City. I felt my time had been well spent, and its indelible imprint is etched deeply in my memory . . . a mission finally completed.

"Best of Them All"

Terry Robinson

Grimek was the best of them all. Our generation was a fortunate one to have had a man, a leader, a great weight lifting star like John Grimek. I delivered a eulogy to John on November 22 at a big show in Los Angeles, put on by Mike Glass. There were over 200 people in the audience, including Joe Weider, Bob Delmontique, Jack LaLanne, Al Berger, Frank Zane, Dave Draper, Carlin Venus, John Balik & many others. As I spoke, tears welled up in the eyes of everyone present, and in my own. That morning, I had spoken to John's wife, Angela, who was at her daughter Patricia's home in York.

On October 17th only a few weeks earlier, we were all together in New York City for the annual dinner of the Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen Association. As always, John sat at our head table and posed

for photographs and gave his autograph. I turned to Jules Bacon and said, "Gee, I wish they'd leave John alone so he could eat." Jules smiled and said, "This happens wherever we go." And then I thought that that was the price a man pays for fame and John was a world famous man. Yes, world famous.

Whenever John came to visit me in Los Angeles (he usually came together with Dr. Charles Moss and Moss' wife, Marge), Angela always told me that John liked to come to my club because he saw a lot of movie and TV stars. But while it's true that we had a lot of show people, the real truth is the stars wanted to meet John Grimek. He was their idol just as he's the idol of everyone in the Iron Game. And happy they were when they met John. I remember Pat Boone and John Ritter telling me how thrilled they were, and actors Norman Fell and Henry Silvia telling me, "That guy's a legend."

John Grimek helped more people in the world to a better physical life than anyone I ever knew. When Mario Lanza needed weights for his home, it was John he contacted, even when Lanza was in Italy. Lanza himself was honored to meet John, and I was honored to be near him in the 1940 and 1941 Mr. America contests. (Editors' note: Terry was on the stage with John as a competitor. See Joe Roark's article on page 26 for details.) We all knew Grimek would win. He was the best and he was also our idol.

The Bible preaches a life based on life not death, and John will rest now, but never die.



One of the last photos of John Grimek ever taken was snapped by Iron Mike D'Angelo the morning after the 1998
Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen Association Dinner.
From the left: Jerry Appel, Terry Robinson,
VIC Boff and John Grimek.

APRIL 1999 IRON GAME HISTORY

Jim Lorimer

The First Great Bodybuilder



John Grimek represented the United States as a member of the 1936 Olympic Weightlifting Team, competing in the 1936 Berlin Games in the heavy-weight division. When Grimek won his second Mr. America title in 1941, he had competed and placed third in the heavyweight division of the National A.A.U. Weightlifting Championship earlier that same evening.

John Grimek was thus a man of his time, and also a man ahead of his time. As was the case in the Thirties and Forties, he was first a weightlifter and then a bodybuilder. His was also the first image and talent to give significant impetus to the sport of bodybuilding.

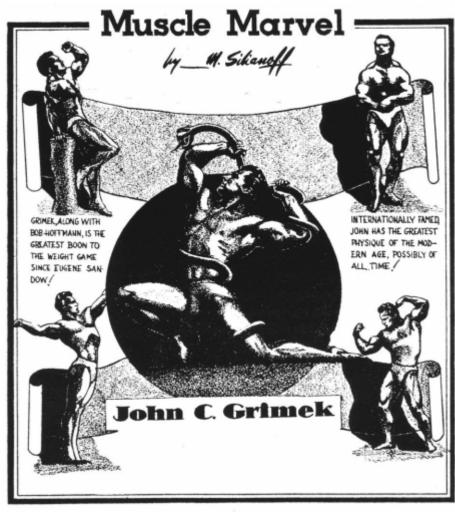
I had the privilege of seeing John win his second Mr. America title in Philadelphia in 1941. The story is well known, and I can attest to its truth, that he was so far ahead of anyone else in posing ability and physique symmetry, that the A.A.U. felt it necessary to pass a rule prohibiting competitors from winning the Mr. America title more than once.

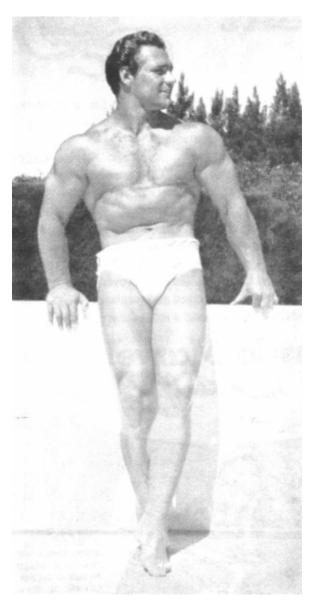
Since John came back in the late 1940s to win the Mr. Universe, Mr. World, and Mr. U.S.A. titles, against such greats as Steve Reeves, it is clear that John Grimek was unbeatable and the first real icon in the sport of bodybuilding.

Over the last six decades I've had numerous contacts with John. He was an Olympic level competitor in weightlifting; he was the first truly great competitive bodybuilder; he demonstrated unparalleled posing talent; he was never defeated as a bodybuilder; he was the editor of *Muscular*

Development magazine; he was, in his later years, a competitive ballroom dancer; and he was always a gracious and true gentleman.

In recent years, John and Angela Grimek would travel to Columbus, Ohio annually to attend and participate in the activities of the Arnold Schwarzenegger Classic Weekend. They would always lead the dancing at our Saturday evening dinner-dance. From the reception John received each year in Columbus—in his 80s—it is clear that his status as the "First Great Bodybuilder" is forever established and will always be recognized and respected. John Grimek is indeed a legend—and a most deserving one.





JOHN GRIMEK TOOK MOST OF HIS OWN PHYSIQUE PHOTOGRAPHS USING A SELF-TIMER ON HIS CAMERA. EVEN WHEN RELAXED, THE BODY HE CREATED IN-SPIRES AWE AND RESPECT.

I'm sure that most of us can remember when the American Medical Association condemned the idea of weight training. To most doctors, not so long ago, anyone who trained with weights was thought to be a total lunatic.

Today, with close to twenty-five million members enrolled in health clubs in the United States, the fitness industry is a mega-billion dollar business, and the attitude of the A.M.A. has been shifted into reverse. They now talk of nothing but positive benefits

Tribute to a Titan

Tom Minichiello

from weight training. Today, you'll see senior citizens, male and female, business executives, and yes, doctors also—people from every walk of life passing through the doors of the local gyms. No matter what the sport, today all athletes have weight training in their routines, a total reversal of yesterday. Some of today's best equipped gyms are located in hospitals—they call them "Wellness Centers."

It has taken a few decades for this acceptance of weight training into the American way of life. How did this turn-a-round come about? Who were the individuals responsible for bringing to light the many benefits of weight training?

This past November 20, 1998, we lost one of the iron game's most influential individuals. During his long lifetime he inspired millions of young men the world over (myself included) to seek strength and health through the use of weight training. John C. Grimek was and will remain a giant in the physical culture community.

Certainly, Grimek's influence on so many people contributed significantly to the total turn-around by the A.M.A. and the acceptance of weight training by coaches in all sports and by the overall public.

It was not only John Grimek's magnificent physique and his art at displaying his body that influenced generations of men... it was also his ability to excel in other sports as well. He was a great weightlifter, representing the United States in the Olympic Games. He was also a talented strongman, and he was great at hand balancing and tumbling. What's more, he was a fine swimmer, and he had fantastic ability at muscle control and unbelievable flexibility even though his body was the most massively muscled of his day. In short, he embodied



GRIMEK CALLED THIS POSE "SUN-BRONZED" FOR OBVIOUS REASONS.

qualities that would immediately eliminate any fairytale of the so-called musclebound weightlifter.

John Grimek exerted enormous influence as he displayed his athletic talents at YMCAs and schools throughout the country. His writings for *Strength & Health* and *Muscular Development* magazines became an encyclopedia of information to all who wanted to seek improved health and strength. He was a man who was doubly gifted. He backed up his strength and athletic ability with a vast knowledge of weight training and he passed this on to millions of people worldwide.

I was fortunate to see the John Terlazzo show at New York's Carnegie Hall in 1949. I had seen competitions before this at the Roosevelt Auditorium and many of the YMCAs in the New York area, and I first thought it odd to have a physique and strongman exhibition at a location noted mainly for its involvement in the world of music.

In any case, it was truly a great show, with strongmen lifting and the bodybuilders competing. The highlight of the evening came when John Grimek gave his posing exhibition. After his display of muscle control and presenting his physique in a posing routine that would have certainly excited Michelangelo himself, John Grimek proved to anyone watching that he belonged on that celebrated stage of Carnegie Hall.

Seeing John Grimek's posing demonstration was music . . . not to the ear, but to the eyes.

Years later, my wife Eleanore and I became friends with John and his wife, Angela. We worked together at many of the AAU Mr. America competitions throughout the country. After knowing him, I was truly more impressed with him than before. Whenever anyone would approach John Grimek for his autograph or to ask a question on training, he would always, always accommodate the individual, and he did it enthusiastically. He was a gentleman to everyone. Those of us who were fortunate enough to know Grimek would know that along with his awesome physique, he gave us his marvelous "personality."

Earlier in this short piece, I was inaccurate when I said that we recently "lost" John C. Grimek. It would be more accurate to say that his presence will be forever felt in every gym, and on every posing platform. His name is carved into the history books of physical fitness and athletics and his accomplishments and deeds will be studied and honored by future generations of students of the iron game.

As he takes his rightful place in the pantheon, we are all better for having his influence on our lives. John C. Grimek will always live at the pinnacle of iron game history.



Dear IGH:

I was saddened to learn that the great John Grimek had left this vale of tears for Olympus. The death of this genial bodybuilding god, however, serves to remind all of us that even the strongest, smartest, and richest humans are mortal.

Although I never had the pleasure of *personally* meeting John Grimek, I was inspired by his photos and I learned from his articles in the various muscle magazines. Likewise, I believe the Monarch of Muscledom inspired millions to build better bodies through weight training.

I did have the opportunity to correspond with John a number of times over the years. He was always cordial in responding to my requests for bodybuilding information. In fact, he was kind enough to edit and publish my first bodybuilding article ("In Search of the Perfect Man," *Muscular Development*, June 1983).

Although we will all miss his presence, I know the world is a better place because John Grimek passed this way!

Grover Porter, Ph.D. Huntsville, AL

Dear IGH:

I am stunned to hear the news of John Grimek. While his mobility was limited, he seemed in great spirits and great health at the banquet. If it had to be, I guess passing (quickly) was the best way; he deserved not to be bedridden for an extended time. This is such sad news but I am so happy that my son and wife and I got to meet him at least once. This is a sad day.

Norman Komich Beverly, MA

Dear IGH:

I'm sure you know by now that John Grimek at 88 has died. John wrote a regular column for *MuscleMag International* after he left *Muscular Development* magazine. To us, he was a true champion, and a wonderful man. I never tired of hearing his stories, and his pictures and writing inspired me back in my early teens, and continue to inspire me to this day.

Robert Kennedy MuscleMag International

Dear IGH:

I met John at Sig Klein's Bent Press contest the first weekend in May, 1941. I was an eager, enthusiastic 16 year old. (I am an enthusiastic 74year-old now.) Anyway, he was so approachable and pleasant and I had a chat with him.

Four weeks later the Senior Nationals were held in Philadelphia. I was there and had the chance to see Stanko, Davis and Abele lifting. Afterwards I went backstage where the Mr. A contestants were preparing for the posing. I went to where Grimek was and spoke to him. He did not tell the pesky kid to go away, don't bother me. He was courteous and pleasant; as a matter of fact I helped him apply a bit of oil on his body. I have such great memories of the whole affair that have lasted these 50 odd years.

I didn't see Grimek again until I moved to York in late 1944. I went to work for Hoffman and then I would see John five times a week, three of those times in the gym. They were interesting years. Visitors came from all over the USA and from quite a few foreign countries. Very memorable. John was a tremendous person physically, a unique example of outstanding development. And equally, or more so, a human being of warmth, kindness and friendliness.

Since I was a seaman for over 40 years, I did not see John very much but I would call him periodically for gab sessions, which I enjoyed and believe he did too. I will miss my friend of so many years. Perhaps we will get to work out in the Big Gym in the sky someday.

Pete Marozas Watertown, CT

Dear IGH:

It was with great sadness that I read of the death of John Grimek. I have many fond memories of John going all the way back to the days of Bob Hoffman's birthday picnic parties at Brookside Park in Dover, Pennsylvania. Bob lived just across the road at that time.

John's picture first appeared in the old *Strength* magazine around 1928 or 1929. It is a Thinkerish type pose in which he is sitting on a tin bucket or something. I gave him my old copy as he had lost his and wanted a copy. However he still had the little medal he won for it. The very same picture appears in Roger Eels' *Vim* published much later. Should you wish to reproduce it the *Vim* picture is much sharper. It shouldn't be too hard to find as *Vim* didn't last long.

If we could take away all the steroids and enhancing drugs of today and bring back Grimek at his very best he would still stand out, head and shoulders above everyone else, or as Bob used to say, "like a sore thumb."

Charles Spencer Snow Hill, MD

As mentioned above, the first published photo of Grimek appeared in Strength magazine in October 1929. The caption identifies Grimek as a silver medal winner in Strength's monthly posing contest. It is reproduced on page 16 of this issue.



Dear IGH:

I very much enjoyed watching your commentary on the History Channel's "Quest for Health/Quest for Muscle" episodes that appeared a few weeks ago on cable TV. As well, the last two issues of *IGH* have been incredible. Thank you both for all of your hard work. Please find my enclosed payment to continue my Fellowship Subscription status.

Regarding the recent passing of the great John

Grimek, I too was deeply saddened, having just enjoyed his presence at this year's Oldetime dinner. I am most grateful to Vic Boff for giving me and others the opportunity over the years to meet and spend time with this incredible man.

The effect of John Grimek's legacy on weight trainers of all ages has been enormous, more far-reaching than I ever imagined. It was August 1998 when my wife and I were produce shopping at a nearby farm when a gentleman, probably in his late 70's, approached me with a big smile on his face and commented with great enthusiasm about the York Barbell t-shirt that I was wearing. The first words that came out of his mouth were "John Grimek, he was my hero when I was a kid!" Right then and there, there was a common bond between this stranger and me as we spoke for quite a while about John Grimek and the glory days of lifting before steroids. I find it truly amazing when one human being has the ability to affect so many lives in a positive way. John Grimek was one of those rare individuals. My prayers go out to him and to his wonderful wife Angela and their family.

Lou Tortorelli Howell, NJ

The television documentaries Lou is referring to were produced for a History Channel series called Modern Marvels. The first, "Quest for Health," discusses the early history of exercise and looks at people such as Bernarr Macfadden. The second show, "Quest for Muscle," is a history of the use of resistance exercise in both athletics and bodybuild-The Todd-McLean Collection was the major source of images for the show and your editors are interviewed. Also interviewed/featured are Jack Lalanne, Joe Weider, Barbara Harris of Shape, Lou Ferrigno, Pudgy and Les Stockton, and exercise historians Jack Berryman and James C. Whorton of the University of Washington's Medical School.

The History Channel normally reruns its shows several times in a given year. Video copies can be purchased by calling 1-800-408-4842. They can also be ordered on-line at http://store.history channel.com.



Dear IGH:

It is my pleasure to renew my patron subscription to *IGH*. I only wish the issues were published more frequently but I understand full well this is not possible. Every issue gets read cover to cover, is filed, and gets pulled out again and again for further review. There are only a handful of worthy magazines or journals put out these days about weight sports, and among them yours is unique in its academic and historical bent. I applaud your commitment to the journal and wish you further success with it. My compliments for the appearances of yourself and Jan on the History Channel special on physical culture. It was fascinating and a lot of the photos and film clips I had never seen before. I have already passed it around to others who have voiced similar compliments.

Regarding your request for anecdotes regarding the late John Grimek, I wish to contribute a few of my own. I first became aware of John Grimek when purchasing my first issues of *Strength & Health* and *Muscular Development* in the late sixties. Those shots of the 50-plus year old Grimek sitting at his desk reading letters, truly radiating "strength and health," and possessing a powerful physique are forever etched in my mind. After that time I learned in bits and pieces that Grimek was a rare combination of physique, strength, and athletic ability, all achieved while *drug free*, which further elevates him in status above modern bodybuilding "champions."

Many years passed until I got to see him in person at the Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen Dinner in New York City in 1994. I didn't know he would be there so was quite surprised by his presence. It was truly meeting a living legend. In fact, when I shook his hand I told him, "to me this is like meeting Babe Ruth." I meant it then and I still feel that way now. I was impressed by his friendliness and easy accessibility. He was surrounded all night by well-wishers, or strangers like myself who wanted a little of his time. The smile never left his face as he greeted old friends and made new ones alike. He was the complete antithesis of the spoiled prima donna "superstars" of today who charge money for every second of their time and advice. As a joke he stood up and spread apart his suit jacket to allow for a photograph. He inhaled and one of the most impressive ribcages I've ever seen came rising up, and this on a man in his early eighties.

I attended the most recent Association of Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen dinner in October, 1998 and John Grimek was in attendance again. Little did I know that a few short weeks later he would not be with us, As luck would have it I had an old *Muscular Development* magazine with me, which had a training article featuring Grimek. I introduced myself along with a friend who had come to the dinner. He invited us to sit with him for a few minutes. He autographed his training article and once again displayed that friendliness and genuineness that so many hundreds of others have noted.

There was a photograph in another part of the magazine of him, Stanko, the Mighty Atom, and several other people I could not identify. John was able to tell me the exact date the picture was taken, the occasion and the identity of all the people in the photo. He spoke about York and Bob Hoffman and the apparent injustice done to him when Hoffman died and control of York bypassed him. He said, "I could have been worth millions but what would I have done with all that money anyway?" without any trace of bitterness.

Class tells. The legend of John Grimek will endure and inspire future generations of weight-men.

Robert Conciatori, MD. Whitestone, NY

APRIL 1999 IRON GAME HISTORY



Dear IGH:

This is in regards to our phone conservation on yesterday about our dear friend John Grimek. As you can see, I've enclosed several letters from John that I think your readers might find of interest.

First let me introduce myself: the name is pronounced Fayjack. I was born in Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania on May 23, 1916. So you can see that I am an old codger per the calendar, but actually going on 35 physically. This is due in large part to my oldest brother and Bernarr Macfadden. My brother John was a disciple of Macfadden (who I met in Florida in 1938. I was a guest of Dr. Frederick Tilney and we went to the air races at Miami Airport where Bernarr had box seats.) As a baby I remember crawling among John's barbells and dumbells. Lead shot type. We used to run four to five miles mornings and also had a gym. We were clean livers, so consequently my liver is clean. Most of my family lived into the eighties due (in part) to my Mother's genes. She lived to be 90; her Mother died at 103. My brother John died at 84, sister Ann at 84, plus three of us boys are still living.

Mike Fajack Manhattan Beach, CA

A Letter from John Grimek dated March 17, 1983 Hi Mike. . .

Got your letter but have been tied up with a

number of things . . . shows, etc. But we gave Milo Steinborn a surprise party for his 90th birthday, which was on March 14.

Thanks for the news clipping of Reeves. We pushed his *Powerwalking* book, and hope he is doing well with it, but I don't hear too much about it otherwise. Not much pros and cons, so it may not be much of a seller.

You got quite a gang, too, eh?

We have, or should say, had, six children: three boys, three girls . . . the girls arrived first. One lives in San Jose, and the girl who lives in York is now visiting with her four children. The oldest girl was married, now divorced. The oldest boy was married, one child—girl, and he's divorced but has his girl every weekend and gets along with everyone. The second boy has three girls but wants a boy, so named his last girl "Stevie". . after himself. The youngest boy, a monster, weighing around 260, is 10 years younger than any of the others, and he's not even thinking about marriage—yet. Other than that, things are going along well and we're fairly busy.

Am hoping I can find the time to make the trip to LA for the Olympics, so may see you there. Doc Moss, whom you met (I think) when I was in Santa Monica, was just here for Milo's birthday and went back only yesterday ... enjoyed his stay and is going back to all that rain and mud. You guys are sure having plenty of that, eh? Sorry. I know my daughter and her family must be ready to come back. They don't like that kind of vacation . . . Who does, eh?

—John Grimek

A Letter from John Grimek Dated January 15, 1985 Hi Mike. . .

Thanks for the LaLanne clipping. We got several of them. He started that several years back and seems to continue it on his birthday . . . it gives him publicity, and that's what he wants . . . good for him.

I just got back from Calif. again (was out in Sept. too). Our daughter who lives in San Jose just lost her husband, and she was so depressed and needed company. We flew out to comfort her, and we just got back yesterday.

As a matter of fact they were visiting us over Christmas, and went back to a New Year's party in S.F. And shortly after that he died . . . so it was a shock to all of us because the guy was in fine shape around here. But that only proves one can't predict what will happen in spite of feeling tops.

Otherwise, things are running along well, and Bob comes in just about every day, stays for awhile then leaves. He looks well, is a bit bent over compared to what he used to be, but he looks better in the face than he did ten years ago . . . guess he's more relaxed. But his mind wanders. He doesn't get dizzy spells, but he does ramble mentally . . . and he can get mean. And when he's mean,

which isn't him, he's nasty. But that comes and goes. The truth is, he doesn't even know it. But that comes with age and though he's on medication, it doesn't do him any good

in fact some of those medicines make him worse. He's better off without them, I think.

Excuse rush— am busy.

-John Grimek



Your article on John Grimek was a bell-ringer. In 1977 when my son Lance was 14, John and Angela invited him to stay at their home. John trained him, took him to movies and treated him like a member of their family. When Lance came home, I sent John a check for that wonderful experience which Lance will treasure as long as he lives. John sent the check back saying he and Angela enjoyed Lance's stay very much.

Until the Air Corps summoned me in 1942, I kept a full-length picture of John with the American flag on his trunks in my bedroom. John was my idol.

Bob Hoffman's articles were my inspiration to work on heavy Olympic lifting until Lance, my very talented son, had me change over to bodybuilding in September 1990. In 1992 I won the National Physique Contest for the 60 and over class spotting my age group nine years.

Yours for health and longevity,

Frank Stranahan West Palm, FL

Dear IGH:

John was the bodybuilder who started my life-long career. I first saw his photo in a 1945 Strength & Health magazine and from that time on I was hooked on weights. I started a home gym in my garage which I later developed into a full-time business from 1950-1985 (Jake's Gym in Altoona, PA—which is still operating under my name although I sold it in 1985.)

In the late 1940s, I made my first of many

trips to the York Barbell Company. I was never lucky enough to hit at the right time to catch John working out, but my training buddy, Phil Wilt, was working in York as a lineman for the power company for a couple of weeks and he stopped by the old York Gym one evening and found John training alone. John asked him if he wanted to work out with him, which of course he did. John said he would welcome having him as a training partner as he didn't have anyone to train with, so for a couple of weeks my buddy trained with the most famous bodybuilder of the century and I died of envy.

I did meet John one day at his office and asked to take his picture but he kindly declined. Later, though, he sent me a letter and apologized for being so busy and sent me an autographed photo.

In 1968, I was given a special official's ribbon to get backstage at the Mr. America contest. John Terpak gave me the ribbon after I delivered a collection of several hundred exercise and health books for the Bob Hoffman Foundation Library. Grimek was very busy setting up most of the display backstage so we did not get to visit much.

Personal observation. At first, John's informal dress clothes always seemed oversized, his baggy pants and shirts not tight-fitting till he moved. Then, his enormous muscle size seemed to till up the slack. He was of average height and I never saw him pose at the many *Strength & Health* picnics unless someone managed to talk him into displaying his magnificent calves and forearms. His waist always seemed trim and with his large chest set him out from the crowd.

I did see one thing that surprised me. At one of the picnics at Dover, Pennsylvania, John and lifting champion Steve Stanko were smoking cigars as they served Hi Proteen to us. I was rather shocked as I was a dyed-in-the-wool physical culture nut and smoking, drinking and junk food were off limits. But, of course, I could forgive the great John for this kind of minor indiscretion. Even though my encounters with the greatest bodybuilder who ever lived were brief, I will always treasure them.

Ernest "Jake" Webb Huntington, PA

Unfortunately, after Bob's death, John Terpak sold Bob's book collection. The collection remained at Bob's wife's (Alda's) home and Alda had been told by Terpak that if she would allow the books to be removed they would be placed in a "museum" dedicated to Bob's memory. Instead, the books were sold.

Recent deaths in the iron game include that of Joe DiPietro, the former 123 pound world and 1948 Olympic champion in weightlifting. He was 84. Also, John Terlazzo, former gym owner and writer for Muscular Development magazine died in York at 83. Doyle Kenady, former world superheavyweight powerlifting champion, died in Oregon. He was only 50. Also, the photographer Artie Zeller died at 69.

Dear IGH:

When I started lifting weights in the Thirties, people considered us strange and said we would be musclebound. There were no gyms like today so we worked in our backyards, cellars, garages or wherever we could find some space.

Our weights were made from balance weights that we "borrowed" from railway crossings. Strength & Health magazine was our bible and we looked forward to it each month. When it came, we read it from cover to cover and knew all about the York boys and their lifting records by heart.

His poses were like living sculpture, not like the guys of today who strain and contract every muscle just for the sake of bigness. It is probably best to describe him this way. He had muscular massiveness that tapered just right to his wrists, ankles and waist. When he posed, he either had knowledge of art principles or knew instinctively how to show the body in a meaningful action with the light featuring a particular muscle group just so. He was a true work of art.

A few years ago at one of the Oldetime Barbell Association get togethers I was fortunate enough to express these thoughts to him in a private conversation. It was like talking to an old friend.

Roger LaManna Westlake Village, CA



HOW STEVE REEVES TRAINED

by John Grimek

Reprinted from *Muscular Development* November 1964

Yes, we saw Steve Reeves change from a "skinny" bodybuilder to a Mr. Universe winner in just seven weeks! It was in 1950 when we invited him to come and train with us in York, and since he expressed a desire to compete in the Mr. Universe contest again, York Barbell Club was willing to sponsor him.

Of course it was only a year earlier when he placed third in the Mr. USA contest, which I won, and openly declared for the third and final time that I would no longer compete in any more physique contests no matter who hurled the challenge at me. I further stated that if any further challenges would be issued, Steve would be the man to accept them on my behalf. Because of this, Steve kept me well informed about his training progress, and I gave him whatever encouragement he needed. I knew, of course, that he wanted to compete in the Mr. Universe contest again, and I assured him that York Barbell Club would send him over if he would stay in shape. He was very interested and he kept in contact with me regularly. Then several months lapsed when I didn't hear a thing from him, and being busy at the time I dismissed the thought from my mind. Therefore it was quite a surprise when a few months later, on Memorial Day to be exact, he and George Eiferman suddenly arrived in York. We discussed his training and about the coming Mr. Universe contest. He was very enthused and anxious to get started. We had dinner and then found them a place to stay since both were a little tired from the long trip and wanted to start training the following day.

The next day just before noon he and Eiferman walked into the old barbell building where the York gym was located, eager for a good workout. George Eiferman, of course, had trained with us many times, but this was Reeves' first visit to "Muscletown." Nevertheless he didn't have any trouble acclimating himself to the surroundings, but later asked whether a special T-bar could be made for him so that he could utilize the Hack squat principle. This proved to be no



problem for machine shop manager Jules Bacon. Jules was able to make this gadget for him and Reeves was able to utilize it for his leg work. Later we fashioned a long cable rowing pulley device which he wanted to exercise his latissimus dorsi and arms. But he took a special liking to our home-made incline bench on which he performed his curls, and about which he later wrote a small feature—"My Favorite Exercise"—for *S&H* magazine—August 1950.

After about a week of training he began to regain some of his shape. Earlier some members of the gym, who saw him on his arrival, were not impressed by his development. It was obvious that he had done little if any training for some time (during the time I lost contact with him) but now he was beginning to shape up again. A number of visitors, who used to drop in at the old gym and watch us train, remarked their disappointment in the Reeves' physique. And even I had to admit, upon seeing him change into his training clothes, that he did not look like the Reeves that I had competed against only a year before. This Reeves looked like he had lost everything except his legs, which still appeared fairly impressive in spite of his weakened condition. But his arms, shoulders, chest and back lacked any semblance of previous muscular-

The accepted opinion of the fellows in the gym was that he didn't have a chance of even placing in the Mr. Universe contest let alone winning it. I, too, had my doubts at this time, but we underestimated Reeves' ambition and drive. Each workout he took he put everything into it, and continued to do a little more each week, so that after a few weeks he showed amazing improvement. He seldom sat around talking and killing time. Instead, he went from one exercise to another. He would repeat each exercise until he couldn't do another rep, and on several occasions while he was doing his incline curls I saw him kick up the weight with his knees and then strongly resist as he lowered the weight. He put a lot of concentration into

each and every movement and after he was finished training he achieved a terrific congested condition and looked twice as big!

During training he had no regard for time but worked until he had completed his routine, which took anywhere from two to four hours. Of course he came to York to train, so all his time was devoted to training and resting and this paid off for him because he did win the Mr. Universe title as he planned.

Training in York agreed with him. Within four weeks he began to show remarkable improvement, and at the end of the fifth week he began to look like his old self again: big, massive with good muscularity.

His training in York included a lot of variety. However, each week he would increase his training, doing more reps, more exercise, more sets or a combination of all these. By the end of the sixth week the Hercules of Muscledom had recovered his large, sinewy arms, and a fuller, rounder chest. His back looked wider and more massive. Even his shoulders looked thicker, and his abdomen showed more detail and muscularity. Those who saw him training noticed the dynamic effort he put into every workout. He knew the time was getting short before he would be vying for the Mr. Universe title, so put everything into his training. There was no more whispering in the gym about whether he could win the title. agreed that it would take a darned good man to beat him now . . . if he could be beaten! Yet only seven weeks before it was very doubtful if he could place in the first five . . . how did this change happen?

I already mentioned that he trained with clock-like regularity. As a rule he employed high repetitions, and usually starting with a weight that was near his limit and gradually employing lighter weights but still using maximum repetitions. I also pointed out that he seldom if ever sat around talking between exercises but

shifted from exercise to exercise, sometimes repeating the exercise in sets or using a similar movement for the same muscle area, or switching to a completely different exercise altogether. He would rest only after he finished his training and had his shower... then he would carry on with the fellows.

One of his favorite exercises in Muscletown was the curl on incline bench which he did regularly in every workout, and after a few weeks his arms showed the effect of such curling. He also favored the long cable rowing exercise, a gadget we made for him. However, he did the exercise differently from the way most of us performed it. He would bend his body forward and maintain this position while he pulled the bar to his chest by arm and lat power alone, and then resisted the pull of the weight even slower. And though he wore training clothes his lats and biceps bulged while he performed the exercise.

The other favorite exercise he enjoyed was the Hack lift. He fixed the platform exactly the way he wanted it, and then after Bacon made the long T-bar for him he was able to utilize this principle and improve the detail in his legs. No doubt he enjoyed working out in these surroundings as well, or better for that matter, than any other place he ever trained because he really put in plenty of effort.

And now that he was achieving his best possible shape we spent several evenings a week developing a suitable posing routine for him. In time we worked out a very good posing routine which, no doubt, helped him to his victory.

But now the time was up and, to our way of thinking, Hercules was ready. He took one final workout and then asked us to appraise his posing. As we watched him shift from one pose to another it was evident that here was the winner. The improvement he made was amazing. He had worked hard and long these past seven weeks and now he was ready for the *Big Competition*.

The following morning I drove him to New York where we spent the night with friends, and on the morrow took him to the airport and saw him off. Couple days later I got word of his victory, and was back in New York to greet him at the airport, congratulating him as he disembarked. We were just as happy over his victory as he was, so we threw a banquet in his honor to celebrate his victory. He seemed de-

lighted. After a couple months of loafing and taking an occasional workout, he bought himself a Ford convertible and began the long drive back to California. He soon started to get his first break in movies and stage productions after this.

Yes, we have watched many Mr. Americas and Mr. Universes train in our old gym, but none whipped themselves into championship shape in less than two months except Reeves. And this happened in York in 1950.





John Grimek Master of the Dance Al Thomas, Ph.D.

Al Thomas completed this long essay in less than 24 hours after hearing of John Grimek's death. In our opinion, Thomas' writing—decades of writing—about the muscular body is very profound. He brings to bear on the subject a combination of absolute love for the game, analytical precision, and a unique writing style. Because Al looks deeply into his subject, his work is often complex and not easily accessible. So be it. We think his essay about the passing of our great good friend John Grimek is well worth the work.

he death of no other athlete-hero from my youth has touched me as deeply as the death of John Grimek.

Sitting here at my Smith Corona a

Sitting here at my Smith Corona a few hours after the word of John's death echoed-back to me across the intervening miles, I can't help thinking that the echo is really across years, rather than miles, and that the sadness I feel is almost as much for myself as it is for John: sadness for my lost youth and the evergreenness of a little boy's infinite capacity for hope, for all that the magnificent Grimek embodied of even that puniest of boy's capacity for wonder. Needless to say, this isn't an unusual or original feeling. I've heard it confessed as often as I've talked to survivors who're attempting to comprehend the seemingly disproportionate impact upon the young boy still alive in them (the young boy grown old and bald) on the occasion of a hero's death.

This, I think, has something to do with John's being a bodybuilding hero, rather than a baseball or football or boxing hero. Those heroes, I had in plenitude. I remember how I grieved as a boy when this or that one died—and ringside bells clanged, and prayers echoed across infields and gridirons, and multitudes rose and pressed their eyes shut and locked their hands

behind their backs.

But when such a hero dies, he's remembered in the heart-racing context of wonderful catches or hits or touchdowns. He's remembered for events that occurred in time and space: events that touched you as a boy, that made you happy, that made you cry, events that you penciled-in to your copybook and yet-more deeply into the copybook of your memory—but penciled, there, as numbers, not <u>as</u>, or <u>in</u>, corpuscles. These had been men who <u>did</u> things, who played games: these, after all, had been game players, and game players are remembered for what they <u>do</u>. Above all else, doing-ness defined them as men worthy of having their numbers penciled-in to your copybook of memory.

(Though it may be heresy to some, lifters of the various sorts fall into a similar category. They too are game-players who're remembered for the unforget-table magnificence of what they <u>do</u> and have <u>done</u>. They may come closer, of course, than those other game-players to being penciled-into our corpuscles, rather than merely into our copybooks; but, then, it's quite possible that we're a bit prejudiced in this concession, coming into the Body Game, as we ourselves have, by way of [honest to god] weightlifting. Close as

they are to the corpuscular domain, however, lifters are still game-players—remembered and even revered for the heroism of their doing-as-doing by their fellowwarriors: game-players.)

To the aficionado, the hero of bodybuilding—as a function of the symbolism of what he IS, rather than simply a computation of what he DOES—is someone other, someone apart from other sorts of athlete-heroes in their placement on Olympus.

(This, needless to say, applies only to the real ones, not to the ever-growing legions of narcissists with their "I'm Number One" forefingers stabbing the unoffending lavender ambience.)

John's death stabs us to the heart on this day of mourning, this day of phone calls from the four corners of the Game, from old boys needful of sharing their sadness and retelling remembered anecdotes of the gruff one's legendary kindnesses: that reflexive Grimekian generosity which is the charm, the very essence, of that almost-boyish innocence which is always noted as the defining core of the epic hero's character, whether in the sweat of battle or of princely derring-do. Behind such-a-one's gameday face, there was always the at-once manly and boyish innocence and generosity which proved so often to be his undoing as no merely mortal opponent on a battlefield or a greensward could ever have proved himself to be. (This, of course, would prove to be an innocence for which our hero, John, would pay, and pay dearly, before he took his final blow.)

As boys we wanted to be able to slug the bad guys who picked on us the way Joe Louis slugged Max Schmeling. We wanted to be able to hit a baseball the way Joe DiMaggio did. We wanted to be able to lift a barbell with the quick grace—the unhurriedly shallow clean and the quick, round-armed jerk—of John Davis. But we wanted to be John Grimek: to carry Grimekness about on our bones. In the final analysis, Louis and

DiMaggio and Davis were men who could <u>do</u> things and do them supremely well. Grimek was a man who <u>had become</u> something. He carried-about on his bones that which he'd crafted as his own living flesh, that which he'd become: he hadn't merely achieved mastery in a sport or a game with its origin in a human brain, even though he was a supreme athlete. That which John achieved—single-handedly, with nothing to draw-upon but his boyhood dreamings in Perth

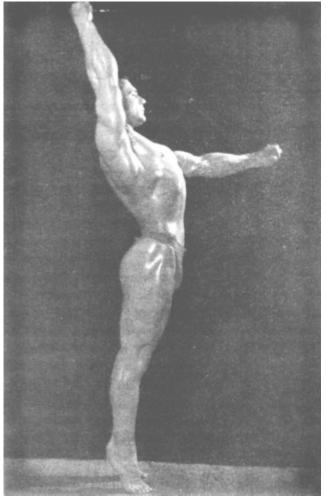


BOB HOFFMAN CHOSE THIS PHOTO OF JOHN FOR INCLUSION IN HIS CLASSIC, HOW TO BE STRONG, HEALTHY AND HAPPY.

GRIMEK CALLED THE POSE "RADIANT HEALTH."

Amboy, New Jersey—was, in effect, the culmination of a process that had its origin, not in a human brain as a game of some sort, but somewhere at the origin of our species, as far back as Adam and Eve, long before their famous Garden had been revamped to include an outfield.

This difference between <u>doing</u> and <u>being</u> is a real one. The Grimek-connection was a visceral one, premised on flesh and bone and muscle: a corpuscular nexus that was more and deeper—far <u>other</u>—than the inevitably abstract connection between a boy and a hero, when that connection is premised merely on a hero's ability to bash somebody's jaw or to hit a baseball or (however tough this call is for a Body



ALTHOUGH OF AVERAGE HEIGHT, JOHN COULD STRIKE POSES, SUCH AS THIS, WHICH MADE HIM APPEAR TALLER. THE IMAGE IS THE EPITOME OF BALANCE.

Game audience) to clean and jerk a ponderous set of railway wheels.

Plunk Babe Ruth and John down into a province somewhere in China's hinterlands. Grimek would be Grimek. The one, the only. The Babe would be an ungainly fat man with skinny legs. John wouldn't have to explain to some China-man what he did to hard balls with a big ash stick in a town called New York. The China-man would know that he was in the presence of such-a-one as meant something in the very fleshness of his such-a-one-ness: in his very flesh as flesh. The China-man would know that he was in the presence of a such-a-one (whoever this particular such-a-one might be, elsewhere) who was the embodiment of something wonderful, something from legend (perhaps), something (in any case) infinitely-other and yet, at the same moment and in the same breath, the embodiment of something true and good and (in this case, at least) powerful: something to which the Chinaman would be tugged: something in the presence of which he'd feel unaccountably at-ease as a function of this something's localizing of some larger presence or force: a localizing-effect provided (in this particular scenario) by that monumental edifice of heroic manflesh called John Grimek.

But the name wouldn't be important to the China-man or anybody else: The presence, the force, localized in that heroic flesh would be the same presence or force, whatever its designation (its name) in another land across some great sea; or in another epoch, across some great expanse of centuries. Unlike the "such"-ness of a hitter-of-baseballs, the "such"-ness of such a body (and that body's tenant) is eternal, beyond mere space and time. Such is the glory of our Game, of Grimekian flesh-as-flesh, and the HOW-ness of such flesh's eloquent meanings, its "symbolings."

Legends from across time, and from every nation or tribe on earth, are replete with man-gods who come (at least) sufficiently close to pass as Grimekian. These are legends and nations and tribes, of course, to whom baseball (not even to mention its chief icon) is totally unheard of: totally other (as a concept, even), absolutely at odds, aesthetically, with anything that the communal mind of such nations or tribes could, or would, ever have conjured-up a need for.

Our China-man would have felt himself to be, even without the words (which are always extraneous

to such epiphanies), in the presence of some unknown, but somehow anticipated, word (or concept or myth) made flesh, despite the un-Chinese-ness of the flesh in which that word (or concept or myth) was embodied, given-meat.

I've read that everybody remembers what he was doing when he learned of J.F.K.'s assassination. I don't. I remember precisely, however, the instant of my first seeing JCG: where he was standing in the shadows of that warehouse-gym at the bottom of Broad Street, what he was doing, what he was wearing, and what he was talking about. Above all, I remember my thought. It was that my skinny, literally heart-sick, pathetically weak body could, and would, one day look like the body possessed by the man who glowed, there, in that late-afternoon's gloom. At that instant, I knew that my days of being beaten-up were numbered, as were my endlessly debilitating illnesses and my self-defeat and my cowardice. I'd been reborn. Of that, I had no doubt.

The difference between myself and such heroes as Joe DiMaggio and Joe Louis was a difference in degree. Correcting it required that I learn how to bat a baseball. I learned that, but was still the same sickly boy, with an improved swing. It required that I learn to throw a punch; I learned how to, and found myself on a boxing team, no less, but was still the same sickly boy, with a better jab.

The difference that I came to grips with on that epiphanic afternoon in the holy city of York was a difference in <u>kind</u>. It required, not just honing the particular skills of this or that kind of do-ing; it required being reborn. It required, not a mindset, but a "spirit"-set that was, in essence, almost as much a matter of religion as it was a matter of physical culture.

It required my confronting (at that tender age) a truth, the full import of which would remain beyond my powers of comprehension for many years to come: the utterly amazing truth that a despised sub-culture, such as bodybuilding, could and would yield deeper insights into the almost-sacred mystery of muscle and body than the academy or the church or psychology or sociology—and that the chief priest in this "religion" was the man whom I'd confronted in that gloomy room on Broad Street.

If he was, indeed, the chief priest, I wondered,



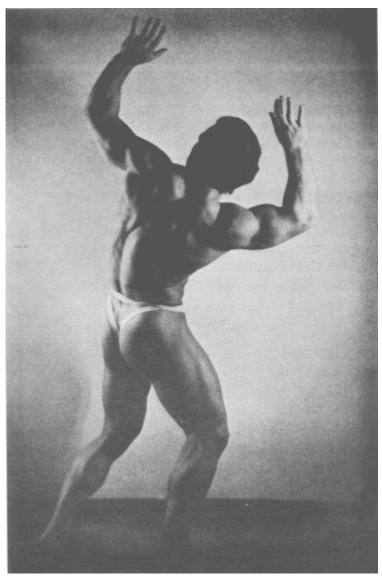
IMPRESSIVE FROM MANY ANGLES, GRIMEK COULD MOVE FROM A STRAIGHTFORWARD POSE TO ONE IN-VOLVING COMPLICATED ACTION.

then, whether we (I was presumptuous enough to include myself among the "congregants") were to be numbered among the minor clergy. How ironic it was that Heaven had consigned this "divinely heightened" sense of the body's special reverence to us, as "vulgarly unsophisticated" as we (NOT John, of course) were perceived to be by the World out-there (not to mention, of course: innocent and child-like and "holy"): devoted to the task of laboring-under crushing workloads in dark gyms, in the (seemingly) "silly" quest of marvelous strength and even more "silly," if (even) more marvelous, muscle.

Marvelous muscle, indeed. Long before Freud, we had always known that everything is symbolic, a homerun no less than a Grimekian body. But the

moral—the aesthetic and spiritual—divide between a homerun (and all that goes into it) and a Grimekian body (and all that goes into it) is too profoundly wide, and too obvious, to brook debate.

Granting all the human limitations (the moral, aesthetic, and spiritual limitations) of the homerun



Unlike many modern bodybuilders who seem to feel as if every muscle must be flexed and rigid when they pose, Grimek could tell stories with his body. In this photo, in which most of his muscles are not completely flexed, the image suggests "protection" or "defense." Even so, it is at once dramatic and powerful.

hitter and of the great body's tenant, it's clear that any consideration or judgment of the artifacts themselves (the homerun or the ultimate body) must come-down far more profoundly on the side of the ultimately-deep body than on the homerun, even at its game-winningest.

Contemplating the body of this man who invented the body as it's known today among those to whom the body (as physique) is important, both as the body-beautiful and the body-astemple—we are reminded, as by none other among Nature's artifacts, that unless the Spirit (or idea) is "beautiful in flesh," it can't "walk among us" and (without encompassing flesh) can't be apprehended, in the acting-out or fulfillment of its role in some grand plan.

Despite the thoroughness of our having been conditioned to be embarrassed by and about the body, the body (and most profoundly the heroic, Grimekian body) often provides the only answer to the question "How?" when that question is applied to our Deep Self's release of feeling (its release of the deep meaning called feeling), as opposed to the shallower, more conceptual meanings (or answers) communicated conceptually, at the level of mind (from mind to mind).

The body, and especially the body in its ultimate (Grimekian) manifestation, is far too complex as a natural symbol (a symbol in nature, that is) to permit being shrugged-off as a or the "mere body." The only access into many of life's truths is the access provided by the body as a vehicle, often, of spirit's (the universe's, God's, Nature's) descent as a powerfully resonant force into our personal force fields. One thinks in this context of the body-as-temple and of the Grimekian body as the profoundest incarnation of that metaphor: the most compelling (the most overwhelming) of its modern incarnations in physical culture: the incarnation that is still most redolent with complexity—the incarnation that, as an art construct, is still most demanding to the percipient (the observer) in his

confrontation with such a body as a creation of art, as an artist's creation.

Understanding the complexity of Grimek and his impact is not easy in this age of the specialist. A woodsman judges a man, according to Robert Frost, by the way he handles an ax. A possessor of real Body Game <u>aficion</u> measures another, in this matter of <u>aficion</u>, by how he responds to the test that Grimek provides: the test, indeed, that is Grimek.

When young John embarked upon the cultivation of his physical genius, he learned—needless to say—how to do many things very skillfully. athletes learn how to do things very skillfully. It comes with the athletic territory. But, whereas other athletes go on to engage in competition that's a concoction of the codified abstractions which are the basis of all games or sports, young John, as a function of cultivating and fulfilling his physical genius, didn't "go on to play a game." Even though he was, of course, a splendid athlete and game-player, John is that which he is in our hearts and minds because he went on to BE something, to become something. And what he became (what he did in the process of becoming something and, ultimately, being something) had absolutely nothing to do with "codified abstractions" of any sort as its "basis."

How, in the presence of such ineluctable truths, can anybody—God forbid some in our very own Game, no less—talk behind-their-hand about Our Game, deferring in the process to the "proper" games, the small "g" games, replete as they are with million-dollar rosters (not just among their athletes, but among their supporters, their "fans"), not to mention county-sized country clubs?

The cultivation of the body is the <u>sine qua non</u> of things-corporeal. Between the body and the realm of games is a culture-wide divide. The body is not a sport or a game. Bright folks never misperceive the bodies of baseball players as temples of God. The metaphor simply doesn't work.

Grimek, in his complexity-of-effect, reminded us that—putting aside arguments about the world of facts and the world of metaphor-truths-the body (especially as symbolized in its ultimate enfleshing) is created in the image of its Maker. It's the focus of that which many call the "Divine" in this earthly realm of shadows. It's many things, but it's not a game—or at least not <u>only</u> a game, despite the joy it provides the vehicle for, on occasion.

Grimek, in his complexity-of-effect, reminded us that the notion of the body's "holiness" or "templeness" has been an inevitable one to wise people whenever the body is contemplated more complexly or feelingly than as a machine for stroking a tennis ball or bashing a jaw.

Grimek, in his complexity of effect, reminded us that— in this matter of values-placement, above—the criterion of "holiness" is coeval with body (body and blood). Body—as a symbol here: the ultimate Grimekian body—is the vehicle for passing generations down the stream-of-blood, from our first parents to our biological ones. That "infintely-hurtable-column-of-blood" called body is as "holy" as any artifact of Nature can be. And body is the very reason-for-being of our Game: The Grimekian body as physique: The ultimate enfleshing, the ultimate incarnation, in its inevitably spirit-tugging and monumental complexities as a symbol: The ultimate body's monument-ness.

Ultimately, then, it's to the Body Game as "forum" and to Grimek as its expositor and incarnation that the student turns in his pursuit of insight into matters-muscular and into the Aristotalian notion that essence is revealed through and as matter: as thing, as body, as concrete-particular (and concrete-universal): for our purposes here, as Grimek, accoutered in the most meaning-redolent (and most complex) of masterly-crafted flesh: as that Grimekian flesh which is a reminder, as such crafted flesh always is, of human complexity.

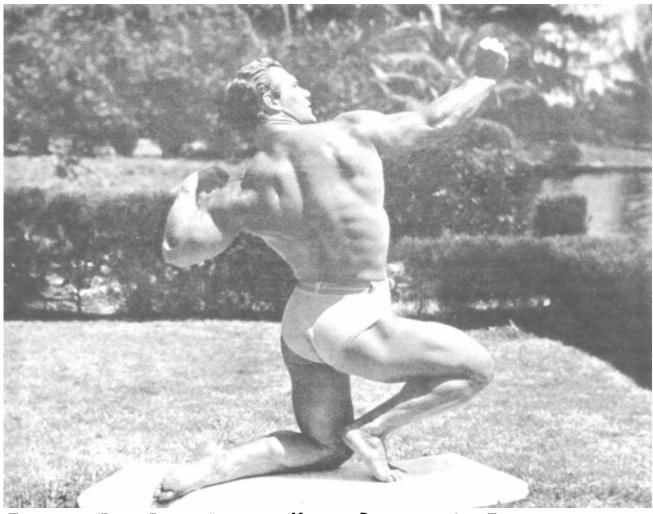
Is it any wonder, then, that it's to Grimek and the Grimekian in our Game that we turn—not to the academic repositories of wisdom—when we wish to unearth that which inspires awe and terror in ultimately-developed body and muscle. Is it any wonder that we don't turn to games or to their millionaire players: diversions (they and their games) from everything that's emotionally regenerating about flesh

and the body. In them, there is no answer to <u>what</u> muscle "means" in its most massive enfleshing: no answer to <u>how</u> it "means" in the most massive of its enfleshing.

In these pursuits of meaning, it's the sensitivity of Body Gamers to the meaning of the body (the "purity" of its classic embodiment in Grimek) that sets even the <u>least</u>-distinguished of them <u>apart</u> from, and <u>above</u>, the <u>most</u>-distinguished citizens of the academy and of gamedom.

The Grimekian paradigm reminds us: Try as

one might (and many try), even the most obtuse Body Gamer can't escape a confrontation (even if only in the form of a collision) with the mystery of body: the confounding problem posed by what the body is and, poetically at least, how and what it "means." Not even the wisest Body Gamer can answer these questions, of course, except by that most pointed of answerings: pointing. The wise man proves his wisdom by pointing to the answer, to the man, to the eloquently-muscled "text" that's right-there, evident to all: the resplendent flesh whose tenant is the Maestro of all



Through his "Posing Platform" column in *Muscular Development*, John Taught a generation of bodybuilders the aesthetics of posing. He believed that the setting was one of the most overlooked elements of physique photography. Here, his use of the bench and manicured garden allowed him to create the impression of a piece of classical statuary.

such Aristotelian embodiment (text-incarnate, teaching-incarnate): Grimek the Grand.

All of this comes, needless to say, with the reminding proviso that (whatever the vagary being suffered in a given moment by the tenant of this text-in-flesh: whatever that "tenant's" manifestation of an all-too-human-ness) the text itself (the body, that is: that "text" which is body itself) is never subject to vagaries, including those of its "tenant's" "all-toohuman-ness." It is always perfect, or as "perfect" as it is (in its shadowcastingness). Whatever the lapse of its human possessor (its tenant), the text-in-flesh, the symbol-body itself as body, is never anything but "perfect" in all its symmetries (however "unique" they may be): its moral symmetries, its aesthetic symmetries, its spiritual symmetries. These are symmetries, in each case, that beggar (as moral lesson or as aesthetic lecture or as spiritual homily) any and every moral or aesthetic or spiritual argument that is communicated (from conceptualizing mind to mind) in words (words-as-text): mere words as the vehicles of mere concepts. All of this comes, then, as part of a Grimekian paradigm which reminds us more "purely" than any other text-as-flesh (any other body, as text) that the immemorially-crafted human body is silent Nature's (sometimes-silent Nature's) most eloquent homily.

I sit here on this sad day, thinking about John and the journey that so many of us took in his comradely and generous company, a journey into understanding the beauty and power of the human body, as metaphor and reality. Certain bodies—and I think John's more than any other—reward their admirers' contemplation with a sense of the perfect balance struck between the earth and the butterfly wing of spirit. They reward us with a sense of the mystery and beauty of humanness itself the tragedy of our being brought to life in the most sublime of human flesh; the sublimity of our being brought to life-in-spirit—that very spirit, no less, whose most confounding reminder to us is that self-same sublime, if tragically doomed, flesh (that flesh which is all the more eloquent in the doom of its magnificence, in the magnificence of its doom).

I'm reminded, we're reminded, by Grimek the Grand—by our friend, John—that in its utter magnificence, this carcass of ours, each and all of ours, is no game.

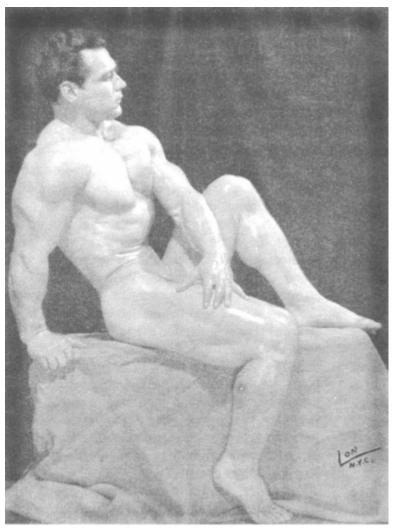
Or, if a Game, the most marvelous one.

It's hard to gainsay the term "religious" when confronted with the need to describe or define the experience provided by a man such as John, presuming that there are, or ever again will be, men who are—as profoundly as he was—a whole and fully-functioning hand in a latter-day realm and epoch of fingers or, in this age of specialization: parts of fingers.

John's was the most catholic of effects, requiring more fingers to number them than even his "fully-functioning hands" possessed: Not just the inventor of posing (modern physique display)—he was, and remains, its noblest practitioner. A stage strongman. (To an audience who missed the opportunity to see Grimek in this role, the film shorts "Whatta Build" and "Muscletown, U.S.A.," among others, are recommended.) An odd-lift lifter. A weightlifter (Olympic lifter). A handbalancer. An adagio performer. A muscle-control artist. A performer renowned for his flexibility (virtually a contortionist in some of his feats). A field events performer (by nature, rather than extensive training), proficient in the throwing and jumping-leaping events.

A man, indeed, of many strength-athlete parts. But of course the most stirring of them all was that part (or those parts) represented, and fleshed-out, by muscle: Grimek-muscle in its unprecedented, its matchless, it almost preternaturally-graceful and classically dignified movement across a stage or dais: the art and the artfulness possessed by the genius-tenant of that unprecedented, that matchless flesh.

John was the genius-balleticist who brought to a still-dim region in the dancerly arts—a region beyond even the imagination of Balanchine—movement that was so poetic in the majesty of its massiveness that it still awaits a choreographer who is truly equal, not in device, but in imagination, to its spiritual-emotional limnings—to the heroism and innocence of its (already-almost-century-old) Grimekian genius, here at the turn of the Millennium.



THIS PHOTO BY LON HANAGAN DISPLAYS THE INCREDIBLE THICKNESS OF GRIMEK'S BONESRUCTURE AND MUSCULATURE. FIFTY YEARS AGO, SUCH DEVELOPMENT WAS UNPRECEDENTED.

John was that grand artist, from Perth Amboy, with nothing to steady and sustain his youthful genius: with absolutely no tradition to draw upon, except that magical tradition—that real, poetic, true, authentic tradition—rooted deeply in his ever-private mythologies and, yet more deeply, in his Holy-Kingdom-Within.

During the years of his youth, a few miles across the water in the Big City, a whole generation of painter-artists had Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase" to take inspiration from. But, alone, John

had only Perth Amboy. Alone. Alone, that is, except for his interior Kingdom: Interior to him, it must have seemed—but to nobody else.

Without disciples in this marvelous genre, John had to be his own Duchamp, but up-there on his dais, he moved with an un-Duchamp-ian dignity, with a classicism as pure and uncluttered as a Roman column. The pleasure to be experienced in John's movement across a stage was the pleasure of art, of high art: now joyful, now excruciating; now delicate, now heroically bold. It was the high art of an important and moving dancerly innovation—if not invention—that hasn't moved one inch since those grand days of John's clear and massive-limbed and experimental rejoicings in this—his—stirring new genre.

I think, finally, that John was better than the Game deserved—or deserves. He was, he will remain the personification of more than the (increasingly-commercialized) Game possesses as the wherewithal (the moral and aesthetic "stuff") to be personified. Grimek-body (and hardly less the spirit to which Grimek-body gave substancing form) was, and will remain, an artifact for the aristocrats of our Game.

Grimek-body will remain the cherished artifact of those who (despite the delight that's to be seized in the celebration of a particularly beautiful or accomplished

finger-joint) still prefer—"stubbornly," perhaps, prefer—the (Grimekian-) fully-functioning hand, however far short one of its finger-joints may fall, compared with one of those late-90s specialized finger-joints: one that's being celebrated as that moment's sine qua non: a celebrated speck of muscular-dust, at whose front-door the aesthetic universe stops (but for an instant)—"hushed and admiring"—and then off, headlong, in pursuit of another, and yet-another, glittering finger-joint. (One hears considerable praise, these days, for the top-half of a highly-regarded little-finger's first-

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joint.)

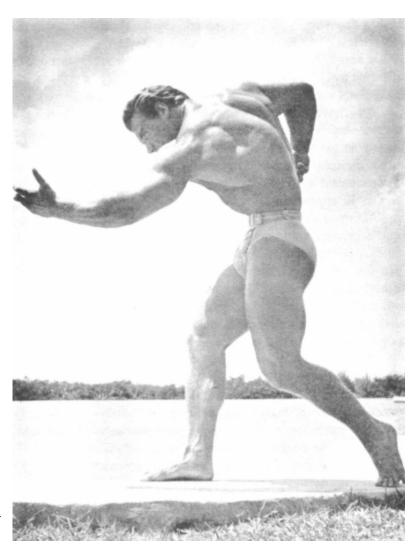
Many hours after learning of John's death— more than twenty hours after I sat myself down to capture and give form to my whirlingly-sad feelings and thoughts—I've come to the reckoning, both painful and mysterious, that a man, not my kin (a man who'd often of late been piqued and sometimes even angered by me) could, by his death, confound me so mightily: could touch me, and all the thousands of us, so profoundly, with so much real and wonderstricken sadness, even pain.

In Shelley's words, we gather "to weep, to weep for Adonais, [who] is dead," cognizant as we all are that the hero-force in John, like that in Shelley's Adonais, cannot but arise, emblossomed in a flesh of so beautiful a leafage that we will always be reminded, even in its ceaseless unleaving, that "there is no death, though eyes grow dim." His grandest of flesh will return to that grand earth, from which it sprang: his substance and form, that earth's chief ornament.

What but power and magnificence and transcendence were emblemed in that powerful and magnificent and transcendent Slovak flesh: the truth and even beauty of which—despite (or because of) its massive grandeur—bespoke more loudly than any other notion: deathlessness. (As, of course, Adonais flesh—or even just-plain adonis

flesh—bespeaks, more than any other, lessons, not of spirit's <u>ascension</u>, but of its resurrection-and-<u>descent</u> into the most magnificent of human clay.)

John, needless to say, always yelled, literally yelled, when he didn't actually "cuss me out," for such seemingly "high faluting crap." "Crap" was one of the nicer words, never far from the tip of his tongue, when he took me aside for yet-another of his growingly-more-heated than just-plain-fatherly remonstrances about such stuff and (much more often) about my "far-too-damn-often-use" of him as a comparison, of



THE "DANCERLY" ASPECTS OF JOHN'S POSING ARE REVEALED IN THE GRACE AND DYNAMISM OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH.

some sort, worked-in to one or another of my articles: "Are you going crazy, goddamn it, Thomas?"

(As an unoffending little boy, I was always "Al." As I grew into those hoary-headed, and ultimately bald-headed, decades, when, in his view, I "should have known better than to have written [suchand-such]," I became, on those occasions, just-plain "Thomas" or "Thomas-goddamn-it" as in "Are you going crazy, Thomas-goddamn-it? Every time I read one of your damn articles, it's about some girl. But, no. It's about me. No, wait a minute; it's not about

me. It's about some girl? On and on. By the time I get to the end of the damn article, I don't know who the hell it's about, her or me! What's wrong with you? But forget me. How about the poor girl's feelings in all this about me?'

(In those decades when women hated big "musclebound muscles," it was John's charm and even gallantry in the presence of the "ladies," even more than his dancerly grace on a posing dais (surely never his monumental muscles), that turned women's heads whenever he appeared.)

"Do you think that any girl wants to look like me or to be compared with me? 'This one's a female Grimek.' What the hell is a 'female Grimek' anyhow? 'That one moves with the grace of a John Grimek.' We both deserve better. Come on, Al. I know you mean well. Come on." (As quickly as it rose, his thunderhead of wrath dissipated and—in a blinking—was gone: vintage Grimek-anger.)

At such times, granting John's need to vent his understandable steam (in this case at my argumentative procedure), I'd say, in defense of myself and that procedure, that a body—whether an ultimately-developed masculine body or the commensurately-developed female version of it— provides an audience with an insight into the private and most-personal mythology of that body's tenant, male or female. That so-called "mythology" is incarnated in and by the very body-ness of the human body, in and by either the male or the female body, and no more powerfully in and by the male body than in and by the female one—when, that is, the female body is as grandly-symbolic, according to its own heroic patterning and agenda, as the heroic male body is.

When discussing an ultimately-developed female body—a manifestation far <u>less</u> familiar to any audience, even a bodybuilding audience—I would often fall-back upon his own ultimately-developed body (the sense of beauty and power that it released in an audience's nervous system) because his body was a manifestation (a fleshing-forth) of this concept that was profoundly familiar to any bodybuilding audience: familiar to it and much-admired by it.

My last totally amicable exchange with John on

this topic occurred about four or five years ago when we were both seated together on the speakers' platform at one of the Oldtimers' Banquets.

John, himself, not I, maneuvered us onto the topics of dance and dance's function in physique posing, and, inevitably of course, he began to meander into some muted observations about his long-time, and often deep-rooted, annoyance at my seemingly incorrigible preoccupation with using him as a point-of-reference whenever I saw tit to mount a discussion of the (sometimes) dancerliness of posing and of the art that he had brought to it, as contrasted with that generally vulgarized and vulgarizing "up-date" of it, developed by one or another of its current practitioners, both male and female.

There, at that noisy and whirling table, I wanted only peace with this truly grand old man: my hero of muscle and of strength for over half a century: I smiled, at once sheepishly and boyishly, hoping against all hope that we'd—that John would—soon tire of this topic, so dangerous to our long-comradeship, however reconcilingly-muted he'd seen fit, so far, to portray his long-time discomfort with me, my writings, and my thought.

There, at that noisy and whirling table, however, I was fated to experience the sweetest of my latter-day exchanges with my youth's hero of heroes: the most reconciling, the most vindicating, the most gently orchestrated, and the most profoundly surprising exchange of all. The most out-of-character.

There at that table, with hands from all sides being thrust at him, clutching napkins and old magazines and programs to be autographed

 \dots there, with faces being thrust-up against his own face for photographs to be snapped of them with the great John \dots

.... there, with all the crazy hubbub that only John, among all the Misters (Olympia or Universe or America), could generate

.... there, in all that whirl, the grand old man of Our Old Game: that "fully-functional hand' who, for the last time in our history, still brought-together (in one fully-functional hand) all the fingers which (by that night) had been so irrevocably and so-finally

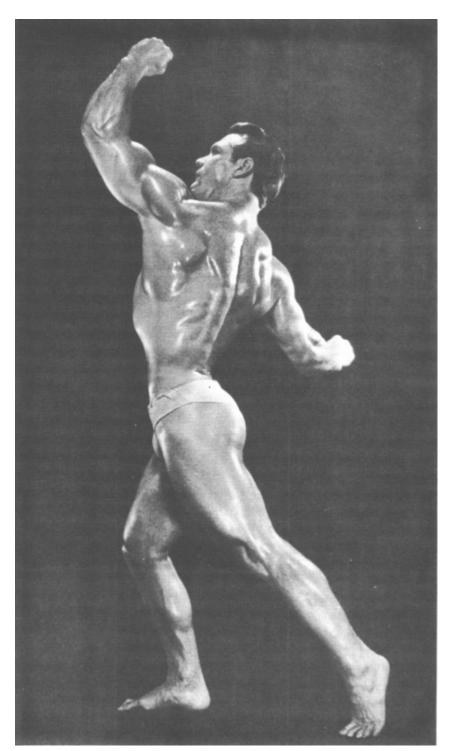
separated—in response to a totally new Game's demand (its appetite) for specialization at the expense of the old and humanizing and all-comprehending Grimekian generalist: that concrete universe (and—universal) whose body and the sense of its church-ness united and unified all the multitudes of races and nations (those hours each week) when they joined in spirit (and as questing spirits) in holy pursuit of muscle and strength and the doings-of-muscle-and-strength

.... there, in all that pandemonium, being just-what-he-was: Our Old Game's last and greatest hero (being mobbed, as usual)

.... there at that table, John Grimek (I suppose the most correct term would be) "confessed' to me (and not even very quietly) that I "HAD NOT BEEN THAT WRONG" in all my articles and "pronouncements," over all those many years, in which I'd celebrated the (albeit masculine) dancerliness of the poser-Grimek

.... there, at that table, John had (what else to call it?) "confessed" that I "HAD NOT BEEN THAT WRONG," when I'd "gone on and on, long-windedly, of damn course," about those dancerskills of his which had to have grown-out of a deep urge, a deep-Self urge (from those long-ago days of the sensitive, if powerfully-accoutered, boy who was still alive in him): the deep-Self urge to dance, to be (among all his other Herculean destinies) a dancer.

"Except that it was sissy, Al. It seemed sissy to me. Back in those days, where I came from, it seemed



"Posing is an art," wrote Grimek in an article in the February 1964 *Muscular Development*," the art of body display." Most physique contestants are interested in it, he argued, "but only a few qualify to earn the distinction of mastering this art."

too sissy to me."

And, in that instant, not John, but I, was embarrassed. However so, or why, and strangely-enough—John didn't seem to be the least bit embarrassed at all this, having merely stated the quiet fact of the feeling about dance and dancers, back where he came from. I didn't draw him out. There may have been much to draw-out, but I had my own abysses, opening-up right-there between my own two feet, and knew that I wasn't the one to embark upon the drawing-out of the great Grimek on that strange and wonderful Oldtimers night.

In that fondly remembered confidence, I learned that I hadn't "been that wrong." And that was enough.

In our latter years, when I ventured a comment that John thought inappropriate, or worse, he'd bespeak his thunderheads of anger unmistakably and, then, as quickly as they'd come, they'd go. I've often wondered, in these years at the closing of our lives, whether these tempests had simply passed as tempests do—or whether John had shooshed-them away for old-time's sake, for all those past times which are so sweet in my memory: Such as that late-afternoon, long ago, when Bob Hoffman had directed John to "scoot that skinny pest outta here," and John had said, in that way of his, "Come on, Bob. He's okay. He just likes to hang around. He'll be a mouse and won't get in anybody's way." (And, mouselike, I scurried, forthwith, into a dark comer and stopped breathing.)

I conjured-up my first question to elicit John's wisdom—but more than his wisdom, a bit of his life and its breath, in short, to capture the great one's attention—when I was fourteen. He learned my name, totally uncredentialed as I was and would remain (as nobody else at York ever bothered himself to do for another fifteen years), and, having learned it, never forgot it over the next fifty-five years.

He even remembered the name of my buddy (Andy Rumberger, of all the unlikely names to remember), the next (and only) time they ever crossed paths again, a year and a half later. (An amazing feat of —what else but?—real interest in the (sometimes) tedious and pathetic sillies who repaired to York in their need, and in their need for repair.) The gruff-one was an excellent repairman.

The irony in all this was that the only man in the holy city of York whose remembering meant a tinker's

dam to any of the pilgrims who journeyed there was Grimek (and his "remembering"). It was to be remembered by John that pilgrims made their long hejira to And they were never disappointed. that Mecca. Rather than permitting himself the remoteness that seems to be considered the primary reward (other than salary) of superstardom, the superstar of the York Barbell "industry" was the most available, by far, of all that industry's employees. "The Glow" would smile, and say your name, and touch your shoulder, and even remember something you'd said (whatever it might have been that you'd conjured-up to get his attention) on your last visit. And this made the ten-hour hitch-hike worth it. It would have made crawling there on your hands and knees worth it.

(As an aside, relative to this matter, above, of the money-incentive to stardom: One wonders how many times Grimek's York Barbell salary would have to be multiplied to equal that of even a second-level bodybuilding "luminary"—one of those specializedspecialists, mentioned earlier—here at the end of the millennium.)

Young boys go to bodybuilding seminars and have to shell-out many dollars to hear the mumblings of the current-month's May-fly muscle-luminary. In an earlier day, we would "go to Grimek," not to a bodybuilding seminar. We would go to Grimek (at the Broad Street Gym, or at the picnic, or even at his often-besieged home) for advice and counsel which was destined to become the holy text of muscle in the first two-thirds of our century. Needless to say, his advice and counsel were (What else "for God's sake"?) free in those uncommercialized days.

When it comes to photos of the currently "hot" muscleman-champs, those "glamour" shots that cost young fans a sawbuck or two—we think back to John at Brookside Park or on Broad Street or Ridge Avenue, wherever: this man undoubtedly posed for more shutterbugs than any other Body Gamer in history, dozens of thousands, without ever extorting (or even entertaining the thought of extorting) a recompensing dime, much less a sawbuck or two, for the "effort" of putting his arm around the shoulder of some kid from Pittsburgh or a "humble pilgrim" from St. Louis.

Such doings went with the territory, the territory that was John Grimek. Such doings became the constituents of the exactly-right hero (the exactly-right

doer-of-things) who, in the very process of doing all these things, was transformed into a sort of archetype (a primordial image) of heroism, "laid down" at the core of his time's collective psyche. At the same moment, of course, these doings were the very ones that were expected (that became the price expected) of the hero whose image had, at last, earned itself ensconcement within the primordial depths of his admirers (congregants in what amounts, almost, to a sort of secular "church"), rather than merely "fans."

These are but a few of the many good memories from those "good old times": memories that, I hoped, played a part, somehow, in John's permitting his storm clouds to be shooshed-away, after he'd delivered himself of his very-real annoyance about the notions in my writing that embarrassed and angered him.

But sometimes I wished that such relentings were less a function of his sympathy for that kid, back in the old days, and much more a function of being moved or even touched—if only slightly and against his better judgment—by one of my "long-winded goddamn explanations and goings-on" about his absolutely seminal role in the thought of any writer who is truly interested in the human body as metaphor and as machine. (Grimek, after all, in his own powerful writing and in the object lesson provided by his own body, made as powerful a statement about the beauty and function of the body as anybody who was writing in those years, the Grimek years.)

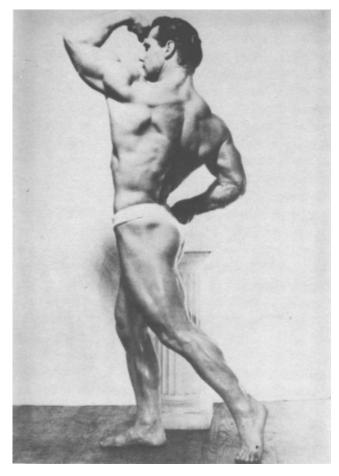
After John's "confession" at the Oldtimers' Banquet, I sensed that his relentings had their origin, to one degree or another, in a creative, necessarily inaccessible region that had to exist in him, a region that exists in all artist-incommunicados: An inevitably hidden garden in a far-corner of his deep-Self to which this supreme artist-of-the-body must have retired and where (after York and all its churches had fallen asleep) he would dream the dreams of power and mass and grace: the dreams of a ballet-of-power never before dreamed (much less seen)—drawing (in his hidden place) upon the artistic, almost spiritual, powers that come to massive life in the tectonic massiveness of John's art.

Drawing, there, upon the oldest and most deeply-rooted archetypes of god-like power and grace and masculine beauty, John dreamed (would have dreamed, must have dreamed) himself into existence as

Grimek: into an un-Perth Amboyian—wholly Grimekian—apotheosis, which in the back-perspective of the future, will come to be celebrated as the first (and being first: greatest and most seminal) of an, at-once, new and ancient avatar: an incarnation, here at the millennium's end, of the almost-archetypal complexity of grandly-muscled human body as text. (A grand-enough word made ultimately-grand flesh.) And a reminder, to boot, of the grandness of such magnificent flesh when it is its own excuse for being.

As the sad news of John's death fills us, pathetic little boys grown old and bald, our shakenness is a function of the irrevocable goneness—for the unconsidered instant—of this man: The momentary gone ness of the very source of those pathetic little boys' dreams of power, and the power of dreams (the almost holy wonder of dreams as dreams), incarnated, with such good fortune for us, little boys grown old, in the majestic clay of John Grimek.

For now, John, adieu. And Amen.



"That Man's Just Too Strong for Words to Describe"

The Weightlifting Exploits of John C. Grimek

John Fair, Ph.D.

Iron game lore rightly recognizes John Grimek as one of the greatest bodybuilders of all time. Less appreciated, but no less significant, is the fact that he was also one of the strongest weightlifters of his era. Although he was national champion in 1936 and a member of the Olympic team that went to Berlin, Grimek's awesome strength has largely escaped the attention it deserves. While his physique clearly surpassed such contemporaries as Sig Klein, Clarence Ross, Alan Stephen, Dan Lurie, and Steve Reeves on the posing dais, his strength has never been compared with others of his ilk on the lifting platform. Perhaps there is no truer test of one's upper body strength than the old-fashioned military press, a lift in which Grimek was particularly adept. Furthermore he never consistently trained for proficiency in the competitive lifts and never shirked an impromptu challenge.

This kind of approach was once central to the amateur ideal. It coincided with the nineteenth century concept of the sporting gentleman and served as a basis for the inception of the Olympic movement. By Grimek's time this noble ideal of the "natural athlete," spurning such modern practices as record-breaking, specialization, coaching, and even training, was fast disappearing. Still, despite his lack of concentration on the Olympic lifts and his preoccupation with bodybuilding, Grimek successfully competed against some of the most powerful weightlifters of his day. Nowhere, however, was his reputation as a strength athlete more rightfully earned than in his encounter with a Swedish stevedore/fisherman in San Francisco during a western exhibition tour with the York gang in 1940. For Bob Hoffman, this showdown provided

support for his philosophy that bodybuilders should also be strong and that muscles were meant to be useful.

Even before his association with York and his fateful encounter with the redoubtable Swede, Grimek had discovered ways to make his muscles useful. As a young weight trainee in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, he showed outstanding development, especially in the limbs, and was soon in demand by professional photographers in the New York City area. Later he found employment as an artist's model for studio classes at Princeton University, the University of Illinois, and at an art institute in Chicago. He earned \$80 a weekextremely good wages in the early years of the Depression—but he had to work 80 to 100 hours per week. At Princeton he recalls meeting Albert Einstein, the great physicist, who "looked like he slept in his clothes." Although Grimek never matriculated at a college, he felt that he had spent enough time in classes to get a degree. In January 1934 he entered his first contest, the New Jersey Championships in Newark, where he easily won the heavyweight class with a 710 total.² Only several months later, as a heavyweight, he entered his first national championships, conducted in Brooklyn by Dietrich Wortmann, the national AAU weightlifting chairman. It was a momentous occasion, featuring the likes of Bill Good, already four-time national champion as a light-heavyweight, and the colorful J. C. Hise of Homer, Illinois.³ Although Grimek's 242.5 press was the highest of the meet and surpassed John Mallo's American record by 11 pounds, he failed to register a total, owing to inadequate training on the quick lifts. Still he impressed

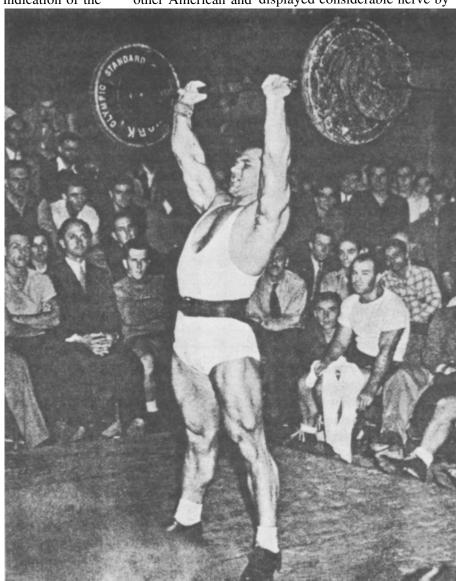
Hoffman "with the huskiest physique we had seen. Broad, brown, shapely, terrific is the best way to describe it." In the following year at Cincinnati, Grimek took second to Bill Good, but his 1072 (five lift) total was to Hoffman "the best indication of the

great strength in that world famous physique of his." He felt that Grimek would eventually make the 253 press and 302.5 clean & jerk he unsuccessfully attempted—if only "his form could be improved."

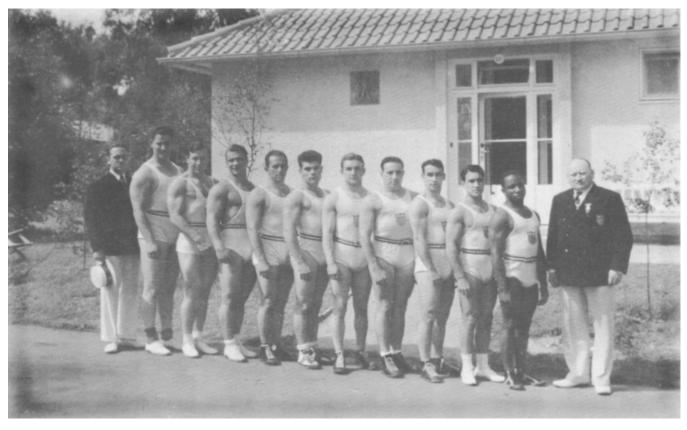
With the 1936 Olympics approaching, Grimek decided to do just that by moving to York to train with the team. The results were spectacular. At the senior nationals in Philadelphia he registered his best press yet in competition at 258.5, up sixteen pounds over 1935; and his 220 snatch and 308 clean & jerk were six and twenty-two pounds higher respectively. Most importantly, Grimek's 786.5 (three lift) total exceeded that of Dave Mayor by eleven pounds and Weldon Bullock by sixteen, though the latter lifters outweighed him (at 183.5) by forty-three and thirty-three pounds respectively. Had he weighed only two pounds less he would have eclipsed the lightheavyweight world record in the press by nine pounds. With Bill Good missing all his presses (as a light-heavy) Grimek made the highest total of the meet and with his national record press he was entitled, at least for awhile, to the designation of America's strongest man.

In light of these accomplishments, Grimek's Olympic experience was anti-climactic.

Although he pressed a creditable 253, he finished a distant ninth to Germany's Josef Manger, who pressed 291.5 and made a three lift total that was 121 pounds higher than Grimek's. Still, John lifted more than any other American and displayed considerable nerve by



This photo was taken on December 22. 1940 at the Los Angeles Athletic Club during the York team's western trip and then appeared in *Strength & Health* in February of 1941. In the original caption, Hoffman writes, "We are still receiving letters from men who journeyed far to see Grimek when he was out West and they all repeat one statement, that his pictures 'don't do him justice.' Grimek in action, they say, is 'awe inspiring."



Taken in the Olympic village in Berlin in 1936, this photo shows the members of the United States Weightlifting Team. On the far left is Mark Berry, then in order: Dave Mayor, Bill Good, John Grimek, Stan Kratkowski, Joe Miller, John Terpak, Walter Good, Bob Mitchell, Tony Terlazzo, John Terry, and Dietrich Wortmann.

competing against some of the physical giants of sport. At the 1937 senior nationals in Detroit, Grimek reduced to the light-heavy class to stake his claim to the world press record, but this time he was too light, at 176 pounds bodyweight, and three times failed to secure the judges' approval for his 250 pound attempts. By the following year some of the great true heavyweights in American lifting were appearing. At the 1938 junior nationals, John Davis showed signs of future greatness by winning the light-heavy class with an 810 total. The seniors featured a gutsy Louis Abele with 815, a revitalized Bill Good with 845, and the meteoric rise of Steve Stanko, whose 850 total included a 347.5 clean & jerk. It was "the highest lift ever made on the American continent," exclaimed Hoffman. [Ed. Note: In 1921, Milo Steinborn, in front of judges George Zottman and Alan Calvert cleaned and jerked 347 3/4, weighing 200 pounds.] Grimek's 250 press was good enough for an American record but too late for a world mark, and he missed all of his clean & jerks. Furthermore, other lightheavyweights were now surpassing his sub-800 totals, including the likes of not only Davis but Stan Kratkowski (805) and even John Terpak (815). Pound for pound, Grimek was one of the strongest men in America, but he was inconsistent ("an in and outer" was Hoffman's description), and until he mastered his form in the quick lifts, he would never become a true world class lifter.

Part of John's dilemma was whether he even wanted to be a serious weightlifter. Throughout the 1930s, prior to the Mr. America contest and the advent of Joe Weider, there was no active promotion of the cause of bodybuilding for its own sake. Iron gamers

who wished to pursue it had few competitive opportunities outside weightlifting and had to be satisfied with Hoffman's aphorism (a la Jowett) that a welldeveloped physique was merely a pleasing by-product of strength. For a while at least weightlifting seemed to be the best way of maximizing Grimek's great potential as a strength athlete. Indeed he made a concerted effort at the 1938 North American championships to become a lifter of true international calibre and qualify for the world championships in Vienna. He "had really trained for this contest," observed Lifting as a light-heavyweight, he astounded everyone by pressing 261 pounds. Although it broke a long-standing world record by seven pounds, Grimek could not be credited with it because he had eaten a meal after weigh-in and tipped the scales at 185. With a 245 snatch and 325 clean & jerk, John's 830 total gave him the distinction of being one of the few lifters ever to beat (by fifteen pounds) the remarkable John Davis, who would dominate world weightlifting in his era as much as Grimek would dominate bodybuilding. It also showed Hoffman what Grimek could do under a serious training regimen. Bob noted that Grimek's "constant practice at jerking has given him unbelievable power and pretty fair jerking ability. . . . with his style, Herculean strength and constant practice he may some day be successful in jerking 400 pounds." That this formula had already reaped handsome dividends was evident from the fact that Grimek had already "made the highest light heavyweight total scored in the world this year."9 Imagine how weightlifting competition would have been transformed had Davis and Grimek become dual contenders for the world heavyweight crown over the next decade!

Unfortunately Grimek did not stay the course. He could manage no more than an 803 total for fourth place at Vienna, while Davis won with 852.5. 10 Possibly disheartened, Grimek trained little over the next year, and did not enter the 1939 seniors in Chicago. Then when Terpak hurt his back and was unable to score points for the York team at the North American Championships in Toronto, Grimek agreed to compete with only several days notice. Although Hoffman chided him for his desultory training, he was impressed

that Grimek, as a light-weight, nearly totalled 845, "which is a lot of weight for any man, especially one who drives a yellow roadster around and rarely trains. . . . the man's just too strong for words. He handles poundages over 300 easier than most lifters handle a hundred pounds less." So great was John's natural strength, and neglect of proper technique, that he continental pressed his jerks. "Although he's a powerhouse," noted Bob, "330 is still too much for him to press, particularly when he is competing in the 181 pound class, and that's about what he tried to do with it, for all he did was thrust out one foot a bit and try to press." Grimek's finest hour on the platform, however, occurred at the 1940 Senior Nationals at Madison Square Garden where he pressed 285, snatched 250, and clean & jerked 325 for an 860 total as a heavyweight. Although he placed a distant third, behind Stanko and Abele, he had the distinction of being the only weightlifter who also competed in the ensuing Mr. America contest, which he won. 12 This scenario of strength with an extraordinary physique was immensely appealing to Hoffman.

By this time it was obvious to Grimek that he could never take full advantage of his great natural strength as a weightlifter until he met or exceeded the bodyweight of his competitors. But to put on thirty or forty pounds, in an era when lifters ate regular food and did not take drugs, meant that Grimek would lose much of the sharpness of his physique and would likely develop an extended midriff. Whatever hopes he cherished as a bodybuilder would thereby be jeopardized. Hoffman understood this conundrum and appears to have provided wise counsel.

I frequently say that a man can't have everything, John Grimek has more than his share and has done more than his share for weightlifting. His physique is the finest, I believe, in the world at present and I doubt much if the greats of the past could match him. . . He became a weightlifter to prove that there is power in a shapely physique. But there is one thing I can't believe. That a man can have a build like Grimek and be world's weightlifting champ. He's not a big man, although he was heavyweight cham-

pion in 1936, made the highest American total at the Berlin Olympics, stepped out there like a man and pressed 253 for a first attempt, yet he looked almost like a little boy compared to the continental heavyweights who outweighed him by as much as a hundred pounds. A work horse is stronger than a lighter horse. Grimek would be stronger if he was heavier, but he would not have his present physique. I think his physique does weightlifting and the entire cause of weight training more good than would his winning of the world's championship.¹³

Had Grimek chosen to focus on weightlifting, the world would have been deprived of his classic physique at the height of his powers. Bodybuilding would never have been the same.

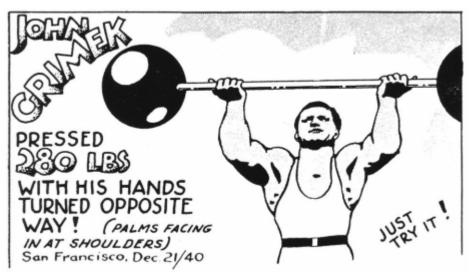
What helped deflect him from this course was Hoffman's zealous promotional activities. Grimek's physique proved irresistible to Bob who sought to "use" it to advertise his products and publicize his philosophy of fitness in *Strength & Health*. John was fast becoming a vested interest of York Barbell. Unfortunately, while Grimek's awesome image brought much favorable attention to York, it eventually aroused the ire of the AAU and raised questions about

his eligibility to lift. Although there is no record of his being expelled, Grimek recalls that he was "always in trouble with the AAU—always on the carpet because of publicity for the magazine." Pre-war publicity of Grimek's physique culminated in pictures of him in a dancing pose with Gracie Bard on the front cover of *Strength & Health* April 1940, the most popular and best-selling issue to date. This was followed by Grimek's Mr. America triumphs in 1940 and 1941. So far was he ahead of any other bodybuilder of that era that a rule, aimed at Grimek and Hoffman, was adopted prohibiting previous winners from entering the contest.

It was at this climactic juncture, with Grimek on the verge of becoming an unassailable physical icon, that Hoffman contrived a unique way to promote weightlifting, *Strength & Health*, York products, and himself. In December 1940 Bob, John, Gracie Bard, and Tony Terlazzo embarked on a fourteen-thousand-mile western trip. York's oldest revolving bar, made in 1929, was strapped to the front bumper, and the car, with Bob's typewriter in tow, was packed full. The gang presented exhibitions and clinics in Columbus, Denver, Boise, Spokane, Seattle, Portland, and various locations in California. In San Francisco, however, Grimek, as an archetype of both strength and

physique, was challenged from an unexpected quarter.

Karl Norberg was born on January 5, 1893, seventeen years earlier than Grimek, in the village of Grimes in north Sweden. Coming from a family of fourteen, he learned the meaning of hard work early. At age 12 he was doing a man's work in a sawmill, putting in 12 hour days, six days a week. Later he worked on the railroad and in logging camps and served in the Swedish Army Engineers during World War I. Upon migrating to the United States in 1927 he pursued similar lines of manual labor in northern California until 1934 when, in the heart of the Depres-



GRIMEK'S 280 POUND REVERSE-GRIP PRESS WAS FEATURED IN GORD VEN-ABLES "INCREDIBLE BUT TRUE" COLUMN IN *STRENGTH & HEALTH*, JUNE 1941.



JOE WEIDER PUBLISHED PHOTOS OF GRIMEK BACK IN THE EARLY DAYS. THIS PICTURE APPEARED IN YOUR PHYSIQUE FEBRUARY OF 1941. IT SHOWS JOHN DOING A HARNESS LIFT AND WAS SNAPPED BY MARK BERRY.

sion, he found himself unemployed. Desperate for work, he joined many others seeking stevedore jobs on the dockside of San Francisco. Though known for his strength among family and fellow workmen since his youth, Norberg had never touched a barbell and had never publicly displayed his muscular might. Confronted by a job interviewer to prove his worth as a stevedore, "he reached down and picked up two 100 pound bags of sugar," according to a 1965 account by Vern Weaver, "and proceeded to press them overhead several times with ridiculous ease. The interviewer was so impressed he hired Karl on the spot." As was the case with Grimek, such impromptu feats, especially in the overhead press, constituted the truest tests of great natural upper body strength.

Later Norberg applied his special gifts in the more lucrative, though hazardous seasonal work of salmon fishing in the Bering Sea off the Alaskan coast. This dangerous and demanding occupation inspired the admiration of his fellow longshoremen during the winter months who respectfully referred to him as "The Noble Norseman" or the "Big Swede." It was with this reputation as a local strongman in 1941, as he approached the half century mark, that he was confronted with the likes of Mr. America, the epitome of physical prowess, in his hometown. Gord Venables related their encounter in his "Incredible But True" column of *Strength & Health*.

John Grimek tells me the naturally strongest man he ever met was in San Francisco. Two months ago Grimek was giving an exhibition at the Golden Gate City's Central Y. He announced that he was about to press 270 pounds. While getting set for his attempt there was a commotion in the audience. Several fellows shouted out that they had a man with them who could press more than Grimek. Grimek asked the man to come up to the stage. He was a little reluctant at first but the man's friends urged him to have it out with our "Mr. America."

He was Karl Norberg, a 48 year old fisherman, and a very rugged individual. Grimek agreed to go first and press 240, which he did with absurd ease. Norberg took the 240 but with his hands in the palms out position, like in a regular curl! With very slight effort he fast curled the 240 to his chest! (At this point his palms would be facing in.) He continental pressed this poundage. There was a deafening applause and some of the crowd shouted for Grimek to try a press in that fashion. Without hesitating Grimek made a fast regular curl with the 240 and military pressed it! More deafening applause. Norberg asked for 250. The exhibition that Grimek was

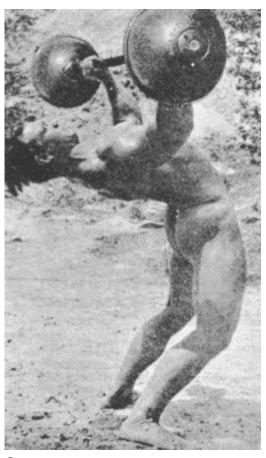
to give was turning into a contest. Norberg curled and continental pressed 250. Then 260! Grimek took his next attempt with 270 pounds which he like wise curled and military pressed. Norberg told John that 255 was the most he had ever lifted but he wanted to try that 270. Grimek says that it was incredible the ease with which he fast curled 270 to his shoulders but in pressing it he had great difficulty, there was considerable back-bending, leg bending and jerking but he made

John then took 280 which he curled and pressed to terrific applause. The audience shouted for the fisherman to take a turn, his friends wanted him to retire in view of his age, but Norberg was enjoying the contest and got set for a try at 280. He made a wonderful try but failed to curl the weight. 16

Several features of this remarkable performance quickly captured the imaginations of iron game buffs. First, neither participant had been training for this showdown. Grimek was no longer doing serious competitive lifting, and Norberg had only

just started lifting weights in 1939. It was a totally impromptu performance, so much so that Norberg had no idea of proper pressing form, and Grimek had to adopt his challenger's unorthodox palms-out style, thereby increasing the level of difficulty. Mr. America had everything to lose and the Swedish fisherman everything to gain through this chance encounter. But each acquitted himself well, and they developed a lasting mutual respect. It was one of the great moments in iron game history.

Unquestionably it was an incredible human interest story, but how authentic were the lifts? The most remarkable aspect of this display of muscular might was the poundages hoisted. While Norberg was



GRIMEK WAS UNUSUALLY FLEXIBLE, AS CAN BE SEEN IN THIS PHOTO FROM MARK BERRY'S **YOUR PHYSIQUE AND ITS CULTURE**. HE USED HIS FLEXIBILITY TO ADVANTAGE WHEN PERFORMING OVERHEAD PRESSES.

probably as oblivious to the amount of weight he lifted as he was to the form he employed, Grimek, as a competitor, knew exactly what was on the bar. Prior to his encounter with Norberg, his previous best press was 285, done during one of his serious training spells. On this occasion, however, he fast curled and military pressed 280 with his hands in the palms-out position and with no special training on this awkward movement. It is highly unlikely that Grimek could have done that much. A plausible explanation for this anomaly, aside from whatever liberties were taken on form, is that Grimek was using the stage barbell that Bob brought along for his bent pressing exhibitions. John Terpak estimates that it consisted of a shorter (six foot) bar, two hollow 25 pound plates with sheet medal covering, and specially machined smaller plates. Actual lifts performed on this bar were 40 to 50 pounds less than face value. If Norberg and Grimek were employing this

bar, as seems likely from pictures and descriptions, they were performing presses in the 220 to 240 range, still quite respectable for the times and the kind of grip being employed.¹⁷

With regard to who really won this test of natural strength, it is a bit like comparing apples and oranges. Although Grimek lifted more weight, he was nearly two decades younger than the Norseman and trained with some of the world's most elite lifters in York. Much has been made of Norberg's amazing strength in old age—that he held a pair of 80 pound dumbells at arms' length in the crucifix position at age 69, performed a 460 bench press in his 70s, and bench pressed 300 thrice on his eightieth birthday. But at

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the time he encountered Grimek in 1940 he was just 48 and presumably capable of even greater strength feats. Critical also in estimating relative superiority is the fact that Norberg outweighed Grimek, perhaps by as much as forty pounds. Considering that Norberg's lack of weightlifting experience was cancelled out by Grimek's having to adapt to Norberg's unusual pressing technique and that age and bodyweight factors cancelled out each other, Grimek in the final analysis probably deserves credit for the win on the basis of weight lifted. ¹⁹

As a result of their encounter, Grimek and Norberg developed a strong and lasting mutual admiration for each other. A quarter century later Grimek still regarded Norberg as "in a class by himself, regardless of age," and Norberg retained the June 1941 issue of Strength & Health in which their momentous encounter is recounted as "a treasured souvenir." On Karl's eightieth birthday they exchanged greetings, with Grimek generously referring to his former adversary as "one of the great strongmen of our era." Of course the same could be said for Grimek. Like Norberg, his natural physical assets were so extraordinary that it was never necessary to rationalize or compensate for any deficiencies. Still one cannot help wonder how much different their encounter would have been had Norberg been 25 years younger, Grimek 25 pounds heavier, and both been training regularly. Their respective approaches harked back to an earlier era—when the true test of a lifter's worth was raw natural strength. It was this quality, melded with physique, that gave the AAU Mr. America contest such a classical look in the golden decades after World War II and ensured Grimek's status as one of the most important physical culture icons of the twentieth century. What needs to be understood is that Grimek was a strongman, not a weightlifter, and that the most lasting legacy to his greatness as a bodybuilder is that he was as strong as he looked.



- 1. Interview with John Grimek, August 28, 1987, York, Pennsylvania.
- 2. See Bob Hoffman, "Weight Lifting Shows and Events," Strength & Health, II (May, 1934) 22.
- 3. A revealing examination of the life and lifting career of J.
- C. Hise is available in Joe Roark's Musclesearch, issues 8,
- 9, 11-12 & 15-17 (Aug./Sept. 1986—Feb./Mar. 1988).
- 4. Bob Hoffman, "National Weight Lifting Championships," Strength & Health, II (July, 1934) 27.
- 5. "Reports of Lifting Shows and Events," *ibid.*, III (July, 1935), 78.
- 6. Interview with Grimek and "Reports of Lifting Shows and Events," *Strength &, Health,* IV (August, 1936) 30, and (September, 1936) 30.
- 7. Ibid., V (August, 1937), 10.
- 8. Bob Hoffman, "Who will Win the Championships?" *ibid.*, VI (June, 1938), 47.
- 9. Bob Hoffman, "N. A. Championships," ibid. (September, 1938), 5.
- 10. Jay C. Gee, "Highlights at the Championships!" *ibid.*, VII (January, 1939), 5-6.
- 11. 'Weightlifting News," ibid. (October, 1939), 5.
- 12. Bob Hoffman, "1940 Senior National A.A.U. Championships," *ibid.*, VIII (July, 1940), 5-6.
- 13. "Letters from Readers," ibid., VII (October, 1939), 9.
- 14. Interview with Grimek. Also see Bob Hoffman, "Weight Lifting Around America," *Strength & Health*, IX (March, 1941), 24.
- 15. Vern Weaver, "Karl Norberg, the Noble Norseman," Muscular *Development*, II (September, 1965), 22. For other biographical accounts on Norberg see Hal Stephens, "Phenomenal Karl Norberg," *Iron Man*, 20 (May, 1961), 14-15; and Ray Van Cleef, "Karl Norberg, Superman at 70," *Strength & Health*, XXIX (July, 1962), 22-23, 51, 53-54.
- 16. Gord Venables, "Incredible But True," *Strength & Health*, IX (June, 1941), 20.
- 17. Interview with John Terpak, December 14, 1992, York, Pennsylvania. In an article on the gang's western tour Hoffman, through a series of specious rationalizations, virtually admits that his stage barbell was at least 20 pounds lighter. Bob Hoffman, "Lifting Around America," Strength & Health, IX (July, 1941), 13.
- 18. See Stephens, "Phenomenal Karl Norberg," 15; Van Cleef, "Karl Norberg, Superman," 54; and "Mail from Muscledom," Muscular *Development*, X (June, 1973), 6.
- 19. Grimek also retained his strength (and appearance) into old age. That he could "still squat four reps with eight plates" (405 pounds?) at age 84, as asserted by Lonnie Teper, strains credulity. See Lonnie Teper, "News & Views," *Iron Man,* 58 (April, 1999), 24. *[Ed note: JCG told us his heavy squats were partial squats.]*
- 20. Weaver, "Karl Norberg," 45, and Van Cleef, "Karl Norberg, Superman," 51.
- 21. "Mail from Muscledom," Muscular *Development,* X (June, 1973), 6.