



We are sorry to report that California's Dr. Charles Moss recently passed away. Dr. Moss was one of the stalwarts of the Oldeime Barbell and Strongman Association as well as a Patron of *Iron Game History*. His many contributions to the game will be sorely missed as will his kindness, humor and compassion for others. Our deepest sympathy is extended to his family and close friends.



Dear *IGH*,

The thirteenth annual reunion of the Association of Old-time Barbell and Strongmen was of particular interest to me because one of the guests of honor was one of my contemporaries, Joe Abbenda. I remember Joe well from 1958, '59, and the early '60s. I was also delightfully astonished when a handsome gentleman walked over to me and identified himself as Morty Friedman. Morty was one of our old Bronx Union gang forty-five years ago and I hadn't seen him in forty years. What great memories.

The Bronx Union YMCA was one of the unforgettable havens of Iron Game devotees back in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It produced some outstanding bodybuilders and professional wrestlers. But more about that at another time.

Dr. Terry Todd's introduction of Joe Abbenda brought back memories of many other bodybuilding luminaries of the period like Elmo Santiago, Ken Hall, Leroy Colbert and Arthur Harris. Terry recalled how Joe first announced his arrival on the bodybuilding scene by winning the 1959 Teenage Mr. America title. How well do I remember that this was the era of bodybuilders being obligated to also prove themselves to be competitive weightlifters in order to be approved by the A.A.U., which means that Joe Abbenda deserves even greater credit for having performed three credible Olympic lifts to satisfy the powers that were. Joe then went on to win the 1962 Jr. Mr. America title, and compete for the title that was the dream of every young American bodybuilder: Mr. America. During this period the most prestigious bodybuilding title was the NABBA Mr. Universe held in London. The British imposed no absurdly inappropriate weightlifting obligations upon bodybuilders whose muscular development qualified them to enter the competition. It was a banner year for Joe Abbenda. He went to London and became the amateur NABBA Mr. Universe. There was one more title to win and 1963 found him back in London where he was declared the professional Mr. Universe.

Joe Abbenda recalled how, prior to Schwarzenegger, there was no money in bodybuilding. For that reason and because he had won the titles he wanted Joe Abbenda went back to school and today

he is a respected attorney. Bravo Joe.

The guests of honor are living testimonies to the fact that iron game athletes who remain active can, to some degree, postpone the departure of youth. Al Berger, former *Strength & Health* coverman, belies the reality that he is approaching the 80 year mark. He personally trains his pupils in his fitness club in Haverford, Pennsylvania and is a sterling example of what he preaches.

Dr. Hy Schaffer is a chiropractic physician who is an inspiration to all who know him. He was an exceptional 132 pound weightlifter in the 1940s and had a fine physique. Dr. Hy is always on hand at the reunions and he certainly deserves the honor bestowed upon him.

Because the third honoree was Al Thomas, my good friend I was quite pleased when Dr. Jan Todd addressed the audience to remind everyone of the countless great articles written by Al through the years for Mabel and Peary Rader's *Iron Man* magazine. Al Thomas' articles gave exposure to strong, muscular women bodybuilders and weightlifters. Al's interesting articles were informative and motivational and furthered women's participation in the iron game more than anything before or since. Jan Todd was a very strong, world class powerlifter who gives credit to articles by Al Thomas for much of her lifting inspiration. Unfortunately, Al Thomas was not able to attend this year's reunion and to receive his well-deserved honor.

The exhibitions which take place at the Oldtime Barbell and Strongmen reunions are unequaled anywhere else. This night was no exception. The attendees were treated to a real strength show by the Powerstars—composed that night of John Brookfield, Dennis Rogers, Greg Ernst and Frank Civattone. This is a really well organized, fast-paced, exciting professional group of strongmen. First a platform was quickly erected upon which sat eight or ten men weighing 170 to 215 pounds. Greg Ernst then performed a back-lift of all those men. Shades of Paul Anderson. Frank Civattone then proceeded to blow up a hot water bottle until it exploded. Next, Dennis Rogers, the man with vise-length hand strength, bent steel bars, and then tore a pack of playing cards in front and later, behind his back. He then had his wrists and upper arms shackled so effectively that it looked as though he was helpless. Usually a person is not able to generate much power in doing lateral raises, but to escape from the shackles, Dennis would have to utilize the same muscles normally brought into play while performing lateral raises. With a burst of ferocious muscle power, he burst the shackles that bound him and acknowledged a round of tremendous applause. The Powerstars are all world class strongmen who must be seen by all who are interested in real feats of strength.

Probably many of us have been subjected to the ordeal of shaking hands with someone who is not really interested in a simple greeting but rather in turning it into an absurd contest of strength. I was personally impressed when I shook hands with John Brookfield. Here is a man who actually has the gripping strength to crush the hands of most of us. Yet his handshake was firm but very gentle. This is a man who knows what he is capable of and consequently has nothing to prove. He has my respect.

Thanks again to Vic Boff for an enjoyable evening.

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