



*Dr. Ken "Leo" Rosa*

# *The Association of Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen 15th Annual Reunion/Dinner*

Hollywood movie people have their Oscar ceremonies. There are the Grammy awards in music. Certain sports have their Most Valuable Player awards. For us in the physical culture world we have the wonderful annual Oldetime Barbell and Strongmen Association reunion where we honor OUR outstanding people. Mighty Atom biographer and TV producer Ed Spielman has said that the camaraderie he has seen at our reunions is unique. As much as most of us used to look forward to each issue of *Strength & Health*, *Iron Man*, *Your Physique*, and *Muscle Power* magazines inspiring us to our eagerly anticipated workouts in those thrilling days of yesteryear, we now look forward to the rekindling of the spirit at our annual gatherings in the hallowed Downtown Athletic Club of New York City. It's fitting that we should meet in the home of the Heisman Trophy.

Our Fifteenth annual reunion on 27 September 1997 was superb. This is an era in which there is an enormous interest in things nostalgic. We do it in music, movies, radio, television. There is a yearning for the "good old days." When I was a boy I had a keen interest in everything having to do with physical culture. I zealously read every word in each issue of *Strength & Health* magazine. I was so impatient for the next issue to appear on the newsstands that I explored the stores that sold used books in hopes of finding back issues. It was in the older back issues that I read about the king of the heavyweight class in weightlifting during his peak competitive years, Dave Mayor. To me Dave Mayor was another giant figure from the early Joe Louis, Jesse Owens legendary years. In 1937 Dave Mayor weighed about 265 and had 19 1/2 inch arms, which were possibly the largest

muscular arms in the world at the time. The pages of *Strength & Health* also contained accounts of the lifting accomplishments of super middleweight champion Frank Spellman during my adolescent years. Even though my interest was bodybuilding, I could not help being fascinated by the exploits of the lifters. Now, so many decades later, I was thrilled to see that two of the honorees were Dave Mayor and Frank Spellman. I also had the pleasure of sitting next to an amazing man, Bill Clark, who was the third honoree. Bill Clark has accomplished impressive lifts during over four decades during which he has contributed profoundly to the Iron Game.

There's always excitement as one enters the Harbor Room of the Downtown Athletic Club eagerly anticipating the renewal of old acquaintanceships and perhaps the establishment of new ones. Big Johnny Ogle was there. Bruce Wilhelm, of strongman fame, was also present. A fellow I refer to as Captain Marvel introduced me to a sensationally muscular young bodybuilder named Annie Rivieccio. She is very impressive with a charming smile. Annie gladly struck a few impromptu poses which captured the admiring attention of the fortunate in close proximity. Perhaps at some future reunion she might consent to delight this appreciative physical culture audience with a posing exhibition.

Marvin, world's strongest youth of the 1950s, had conflicting schedules and was unable to attend this reunion. I also missed the presence of Jules Bacon, the 1943 Mr. America, Jules was not only a fine physique champion but he appreciated good music which makes him special to me. John Grimek was the inspiration of most of us. If there had never been a John Grimek there

possibly would never have been a Bill Pearl or a Reg Park or, consequently, an Arnold Schwarzenegger. Perhaps many of us would have gone in different directions if there had not been a John Grimek to have inspired us. For the first time John was absent. Dr. Jan Todd informed us that the absence was due to an injury and a hip operation.

Rosemary Murdock Miller is the daughter of the unforgettable first M.C. of the Oldtimers' reunions, Leo Murdock, who was an encyclopedia of Iron Game history. Rosemary phoned me a couple of weeks before this reunion and confided that she would like to do something which would honor her late father as well as Vic Boff. Rosemary decided to create the Leo Murdock "Carry On" award. Steve Sadicario, The Mighty Stefan, our present-day, extremely capable M.C. helped to keep Vic unsuspecting. When I took the microphone and informed everyone that the Leo Murdock award had been created there was spontaneous and respectful applause at the mention of Leo's name. Rosemary came to the dais and we presented the plaque to a surprised and very deserving Vic Boff. This turned out to be the night of surprises for Vic Boff as he was also presented with the AAU Emblem and Pin by Dave Mayor and with an Appreciation Plaque from the New England Team in support of All Around Lifting, by Frank Ciavattone.

The always articulate Arthur Drechsler paid well-deserved tribute to 1948 Olympic weightlifting gold medalist Frank Spellman. My friend Dr. Al Thomas is one of the most compelling speakers around. Al lauded the amazing lifting accomplishments of America's strongest weightlifter and national champion in 1937, Dave Mayor. Dr. Terry Todd revealed that Bill Clark is a major league baseball scout, a distinguished lifter particularly excelling in hip and thigh lifts, and a pioneering official in various forms of competitive lifting.

Vic Boff presented the Association's Highest Achievement Award to each of the honorees. Well-known artist Jim Sanders presented a beautiful color painting to each honoree depicting each in his Iron Game prime.

Showtime is a special part of our reunions. That's why our gatherings are unique and unduplicated anywhere. From beginning to end the audience was spellbound watching Frank Ciavattone one arm deadlift over 400 pounds. Next, the posing artistry of natural, muscular marvel Russ Testo was powerful and beautiful. Russ Testo's physique is pleasingly symmetrical. His posing

is always creative with just the right musical accompaniment

Then we were all once again blown away by Slim Farman, The Hammerman. One could run out of emotions in trying to describe The Hammerman's almost indescribable exhibition of raw power and incredible concentration. In fact, this is the strength performance during which there is literally no sound from the audience because everyone's attention is totally riveted to the performer. I have never seen anything like it Slim's sheer force of concentration is stunning. To me, his musculature is quite impressive. He's like what I think a real Tarzan might be like. I have seen Slim's performance many times and I am still thrilled every time. Rather than my attempting to do justice in describing what Slim does I will strongly urge anyone who has never seen his performance to correct that situation. No matter how far you have to travel it's well worth the trip. Slim Farman is the undisputed world's champion at what he does. This was a most rewarding Fifteenth reunion. As always, we're all grateful to Vic Boff for his superhuman efforts on behalf of The Association of Oldtime Barbell and Strongmen.

Thank you Vic.

