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JOHN GRIMEK: 1910-1998

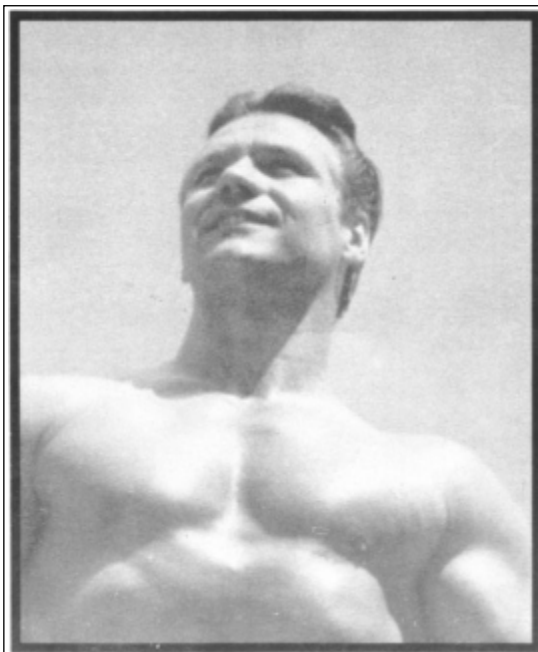
By now, most readers of IGH will have learned of the death of the iron game's great hero. John Grimek. His passing marks the end of an era, and those of us who have followed, and been inspired by, his career have experienced this loss as we would the loss of a member of our own family. Grimek IS family. As a way to honor and celebrate John's remarkable life, we will dedicate the entire issue of the next IGH to the reminiscences of a group of prominent people who knew him in one way or another.

In this issue, we would like to share with you a tribute to John by Joe Weider. Shortly after John's death, Joe called me, and during the conversation I asked him to contribute to the "Grimek Issue." He agreed and within two days I received what follows. In our opinion, Joe's decision to honor John in the way he explains in his tribute is both deserved and appropriate. We suspect you will agree.

On November 20, 1998, at approximately 11 p.m., in York, Pennsylvania, John Grimek passed away. At that instant, a small part of me died along with him.

I first became acquainted with John, albeit indirectly, when I was an 11-year-old boy, desperately seeking a way to build up my scrawny body. I would head off to a local magazine store in search of the holy grail that would reveal this secret to me, and while rummaging through stacks of magazines late one afternoon, I reached down and grabbed a pair of issues of *Strength*, a magazine published by the Milo Barbell Company. I dropped my penny on the counter—that was enough to buy two back issues in those days!—and raced home with my booty.

That night, I pulled out one of the magazines and anxiously opened its cover. Staring back at me was the most awesome sight I had



ever seen: the most muscular man imaginable emerging from water. He was endorsing Milo barbells, and his name was John Grimek. Like a young man seeing his first hero, I was mesmerized by that picture. I stared at it for hours, and when I finally went to sleep, in dreams I continued to conjure what my eyes had recorded. Sixty-five years later that image, seared indelibly into my consciousness that night, has never really left me. It started me on my

journey, and as I've traveled along this path to a destination yet to be reached, Grimek's legacy has never failed to inspire, encourage, and fortify me, as it has countless others.

What is his legacy? History will record that from the 1930s through the 1960s, John Grimek was the most dominant force in the world of bodybuilding. His was the most massively developed, symmetrical, flexible physique of its day, and he was that era's

strongest bodybuilder and most spellbinding poser. (He could pose for 20 minutes without duplicating a shot.) He entered six contests and was undefeated, besting the likes of Steve Reeves and Clancy Ross. Amazingly, those fortunate enough to meet him in person found the man beneath the incredible physique more impressive still. He spoke highly of everyone and always took time to answer the questions of his legions of friends and admirers.

When I first created the Mr. Olympia contest, I chose for its statue the figure of Eugen Sandow, the game's most prominent figure from the 1890s through the 1920s. With his marvelously developed physique, remarkable posing ability, and groundbreaking weight-lifting techniques and training theories, Sandow helped jump-start the entire sport, and I decided that his image would commemorate all winners of the Olympia. Everyone who has held or seen the "Sandow" should remember who and what it stands for. To honor Grimek similarly, I am creating a new contest to take place in Europe a week after the Mr. Olympia. At this new contest, those same Mr. Olympia competitors, along with selected European champions, will again gather to compete on one bodybuilding stage. The winner of this contest, in 1999 and the years to follow, will be awarded a Grimek statue, and it will be the only symbol in bodybuilding comparable to the Sandow.

In retrospect, seeing that first image of Grimek was a revelatory experience, and it instilled in me a message that I have preached to the world ever since with religious fervor. Few men in the history of bodybuilding have inspired such undying love and devotion in their disciples, of whom I am one. Even though John Grimek is dead, his spirit will live on as one of the brightest stars in the bodybuilding firmament. By trying to be their best, by being honorable, and by supporting one another, bodybuilders the world over can best honor legends such as Grimek and Sandow.

Long live the memory of John Grimek. May we all continue to gather strength and inspiration from the knowledge of who he was, what he accomplished, and what he stood for. —**Joe Weider**



JOHN GRIMEK FROM A MILO BARBELL
ADVERTISEMENT IN A 1934 ISSUE OF *STRENGTH*.