

STRONGMEN I REMEMBER BEST



... I MEET THE "CHAMP"

by Siegmund Klein

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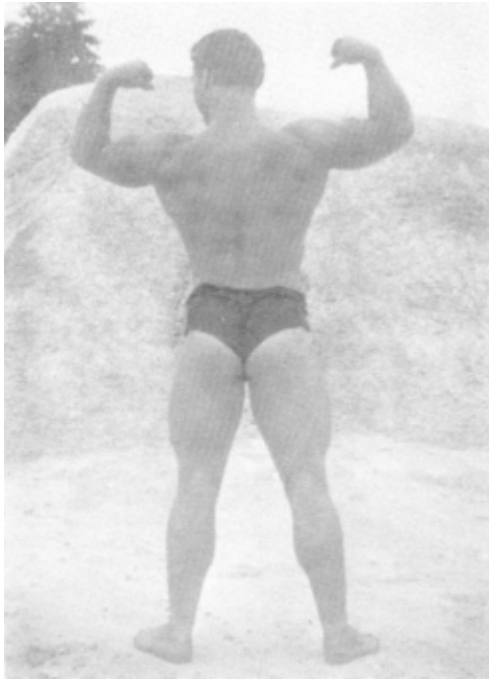
THIS PHOTO OF JOHN GRIMEK WAS TAKEN AT SIG KLEIN'S GYM IN APPROXIMATELY 1931. THE HEAVY LEG DEVELOPMENT THAT SO IMPRESSED KLEIN IS QUITE APPARENT IN THIS PHOTO. DRAWING ABOVE BY HARRY PASCHALL.

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.

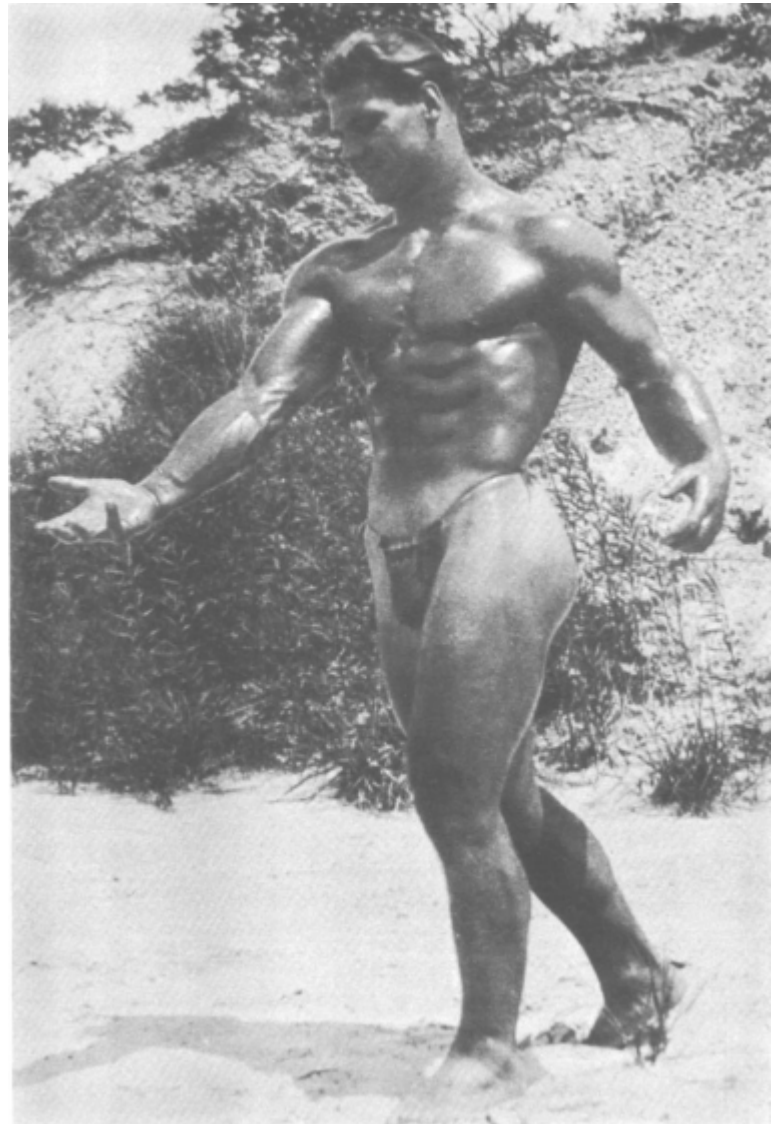
was aroused.

“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*.

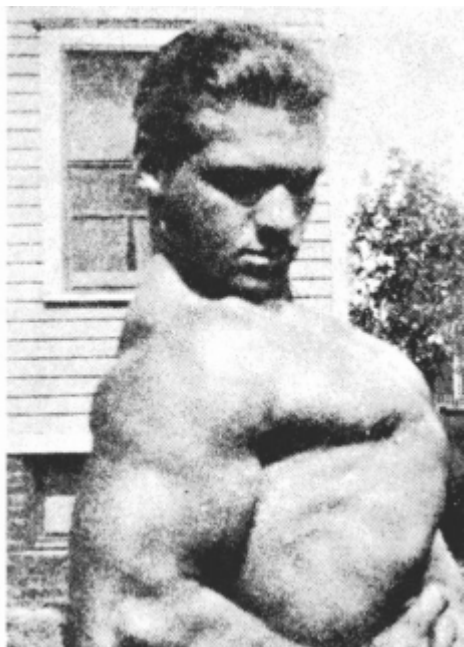
Eager now to see if the rest of his physique matched his mighty arm, I asked him if he could change into trunks and join

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.