

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.