



IRON GAME HISTORY



Volume 8 Number 4

March 2005

Joe & Betty Weider Create Million Dollar Endowment for U.T.-Austin Collection

In February of 2004, Joe and Betty Weider provided \$200,000 to the Todd-McLean Physical Culture Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, and pledged to endow the Collection over the next few years with a total of \$1 million. As most readers of *IGH* know, the Physical Culture Collection consists of archival materials related to physical fitness, sport training, purposive exercise, weightlifting, bodybuilding, physical education, and alternative medicine.

As every student of physical culture knows, Joe and Betty Weider are true pioneers in the areas of bodybuilding and publishing, and some years ago they established the Weider Foundation as a way to provide funds to the many causes and institutions they support. In the case of the pledge to the University of Texas, only the interest on the money can be used, and it has to be used to support the work at the Physical Culture Collection. The pledge was structured so that \$200,000 was transferred from the Weider Foundation to U.T. in February of 2004, and an additional \$200,000 was transferred in February of 2005. For three more years, an additional \$200,000 will be provided each February until the pledged endowment of \$1 million has been completed.

Any Iron Gamer would realize how deeply grateful Jan and I are

for this support. It will be an enormous benefit to our efforts to build the Collection and, especially, to make it available to more and more people. One of our problems through the years has been that because budgets are tight at our university, as they are at similar institutions, we've been unable to assemble the sort of staff we need in order to function as a normal library. Almost all of the work that has been done on the Collection in the 23 years since we brought it to U.T. has been done by the two of us. Over the past ten years or so, we've gotten a lot of valuable help from graduate students, especially Kim Beckwith, and this past semester the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics provided funding for a full-time graduate student to work 20 hours a week on projects related to the Collection. Some readers will recall that in our early years at the university, the late Charles A. Smith came to the campus twice a week and helped us with filing and photo identification. Even so, we have never had any part-time or full-time archivists or librarians, and we have no secretary who works only for us. This is one of the reasons that we're sometimes slow in responding to letters and phone calls, but the Weider Endowment, especially once it's completed, will help us become what we've always dreamed of becoming—a well-



Joe and Betty Weider look over George Hackenschmidt's scrapbook with Terry and Jan Todd. Note the painting of Joe "The Mighty Atom" Greenstein in the background.

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staffed, research library open during regular hours and able to help many more people than we're able to help now. As I've written before, both Jan and I have full-time jobs at U.T., and the work we do at the Collection is not part of our job descriptions.

Over the past 45 years, we've amassed hundreds of thousands of items in our Collection, including books, photos, magazines, posters, catalogues, art, films, videos, and artifacts on everything from the Olympic movement to professional strongmen (and women) to naturopathy to vaudeville to athletic conditioning to ergogenic aids; and it's very gratifying to have people as well-known as the Weiders acknowledge the importance of having this archive preserved in a public institution

for future generations.

For almost his entire life, Joe Weider has been working to raise public awareness of the importance of weight training and fitness. It's a well-known story, but it bears repeating here. Joe started his publishing career in 1940 at the age of 17 with a seventh grade education, a love of lifting weights, and a total of \$7 in his pocket, but it was enough to launch a modest newsletter called *Your Physique*.

In addition to publishing, of course, Joe's involvement in the fitness industry has included the creation—with his brother and partner, Ben—of the Mr. Olympia contest in 1965 and the Ms. Olympia contest in 1980. Everyone who reads *IGH* is aware that the most

famous winner of the Mr. Olympia contest is Arnold Schwarzenegger, a seven-time title holder, mega-filmstar and the current governor of California. Joe brought Schwarzenegger to the U.S. and served as his mentor as Schwarzenegger rose to fame as a bodybuilder, and they remain close friends today. Recently, while Joe was recuperating from five and a half hours of back surgery, Arnold called him almost every day to check on his progress.

Joe founded the International Federation of Bodybuilders with Ben, who is the IFBB president, over 50 years ago. Today, Joe is anything but retired, and he still owns a line of sports nutrition products used by athletes around the world. Betty Weider has also been influential in bodybuilding, and it's a little-known fact that she's the person who came up with the title for the Mr. Olympia contest. What's more, her image is widely credited as playing a significant role in "getting women into gyms" and alleviating the stigma of a toned, muscled, sculpted female form.

A few months after Joe and Betty sent the first installment of the endowment to the University of Texas, they visited the U.T. campus. They had never been here before, but they spent most of Friday, April 16, looking through the Collection and being interviewed by various local publications. On Saturday, April 17, they were introduced by Governor Rick Perry at the opening ceremonies of the Texas Roundup Fitness Festival, and we got a clear example of the far-ranging effect of Joe's life when Governor Perry, upon meeting Joe, immediately launched into a long, heartfelt story about how he had read Joe's magazines as a boy and young man and about how much they had helped him with his self-confidence. And to show he wasn't kidding, the Governor hit a creditable double-biceps shot for Joe, to the delight of everyone who was watching.

During his 63-year publishing career, Joe's empire grew to include magazines such as *Muscle & Fitness*, *Flex*, *Men's Fitness*, *Muscle Power*, *Muscle Builder*, *Shape*, *Fit Pregnancy*, *Natural Health* and *Muscle & Fitness Hers*—many of which were translated into over 23 different languages and sold all over the world. Just over two years ago Joe sold his fleet of magazines, and he decided to give some of the proceeds back to the field that has been his passion for so long. In the inter-



Joe and Betty Weider were special guests at Arnold Schwarzenegger's inauguration as governor of California in 2004.

vening period, Jan and I kept that decision close to our hearts. We realize that we could never have built the Collection to what it is today without help from like-minded friends who wanted to see the history of our game preserved—friends who either gave us their own collections or allowed us to buy them at a fraction of their true value. We also knew that we could never take the Collection where it needed to go without the sort of major endowment that Joe and Betty are in the process of providing.

Here's some background: Joe contacted us and wished us well soon after we came back to U.T. in 1983 and started to donate our Physical Culture materials to the university. After 1990, when we began *Iron Game History*, Joe called me after almost every issue to talk about something we had published and to tell me how much he appreciated our little publication. His phone calls and his promise to help us have enabled us to maintain the will to continue our effort to preserve the memories of the thousands of Physical Culturists who have made significant contributions to the field. In February of 2004 he and Betty made good on that promise, and now they have given us the second installment of their million dollar endowment. Jan and I feel sure that all of you who subscribe to *IGH* join us in thanking the Weiders for sharing their philanthropy with a collection dedicated to the field in which they have made their living and their lives.