



Obituaries

# Joe Weider, titan of bodybuilding who mentored Arnold Schwarzenegger, dies at 93

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Joe Weider, a legendary figure in bodybuilding who helped popularize the sport worldwide and played a key role in introducing a charismatic young weightlifter named Arnold Schwarzenegger to the world, died March 23 in Los Angeles. He was 93.

Mr. Weider's publicist, Charlotte Parker, told the Associated Press that the bodybuilder, publisher and promoter died of heart ailments.

"I knew about Joe Weider long before I met him," Schwarzenegger said in a statement posted on his [Web site](#).

"He was the godfather of fitness who told all of us to 'Be Somebody with a Body.' He taught us that through hard work and training we could all be champions."

A bodybuilder with an impressive physique himself, Mr. Weider became internationally known as a behind-the-scenes guru to the sport.

He popularized bodybuilding and promoted health and fitness worldwide with such publications as Muscle and Fitness, Flex and Shape.

Schwarzenegger is the executive editor of Muscle and Fitness and Flex.

"I knew . . . that sooner or later people would recognize that the human body is the highest form of art," Mr. Weider once told the Los Angeles Times.

Mr. Weider created one of bodybuilding's preeminent events, the Mr. Olympia competition, in 1965, adding to it the Ms. Olympia contest in 1980, the Fitness Olympia in 1995 and the Figure Olympia in 2003.

He relentlessly promoted Schwarzenegger, who won the Mr. Olympia title a then-record seven times, including in 1980 and every year from 1970 through 1975.

"Every sport needs a hero, and I knew that Arnold was the right man," he said.

Mr. Weider brought Schwarzenegger to the United States early in his career and helped train the future Republican governor of California.

## Notable deaths of 2013



A look at those who have died this year.

Schwarzenegger said Mr. Weider helped land him his first movie role, in the forgettable film "Hercules in New York," by passing off the Austrian-born weightlifter to the producers as a German Shakespearean actor.

"Joe didn't just inspire my earliest dreams; he made them come true the day he invited me to move to America to pursue my bodybuilding career," the actor said in his statement. "I will never forget his generosity. One of Joe's greatest qualities is that he wasn't just generous with his money; he freely gave of his time and expertise and became a father figure for me."

Mr. Weider mentored numerous other bodybuilders.

Born in Canada in 1919, he recalled growing up in a tough section of Montreal. Mr. Weider said he was a small, skinny teenager picked on by bullies when he came across the magazine Strength.

He had tried to join a local wrestling team, he said, but was turned down by the coach, who feared he was so small that he would be hurt.

Inspired by the magazine, Mr. Weider built weights from scrap parts found in a railroad yard. Word of his efforts got around, and he was invited to join a weightlifting club.

"When I saw the gym, saw the guys working out, supporting one another, I was mesmerized," he recalled.

He won his first bodybuilding ranking at 17 and soon after began to publish his first magazine, Your Physique.

Later, he started a mail-order barbell business, and in 1946, he and his younger brother staged the first Mr.

Canada contest in Montreal. At the same time, they formed an international bodybuilding federation.

In recent years, Mr. Weider donated much of his bodybuilding memorabilia to the University of Texas at Austin, which opened the Joe and Betty Weider Museum of Physical Culture in 2011.

Mr. Weider prided himself on remaining physically fit well into old age.

“There’s no reason whatsoever to give in to the aging process,” he once said in an interview with the New York Times. “There is no reason you can’t continue to build muscle mass into your 60s, 70s and 80s.”

Survivors include his wife.

— **From news service**

**and staff reports**

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