



NATIONAL GYM ASSOCIATION

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Andrew Bostinto

NGA Hall of Fame – 2014

Good evening and welcome. My name is Francine Bostinto, I'm the Vice President of the NGA but I'm better known as - - - Andy's wife.

This is the 35th anniversary of the NGA which was founded by my husband Andy in 1979. Therefore, I thought today would be a good time to celebrate and pay tribute to him, the most ardent supporter and builder of the sport of natural bodybuilding.

I'm pleased to announce Andy Bostinto as the inaugural inductee into the National Gym Association's Hall of Fame. Andy is and has always been an individual who has championed the sport of natural bodybuilding and has made exceptional contributions that has furthered the growth, reputation, and character of the sport we hold in such high esteem. Future inductees must possess the same attributes but it's only natural to honor and celebrate Andy on the 35th anniversary of the NGA, as its founder, president, and as the first inductee.

Over the years I have seen people approach Andy with great enthusiasm upon meeting him. They've called him a legend, they were honored to meet him and to be in his company. Obviously, I'm quite impressed and proud of him, but in the back of my mind I would say to myself – I wish they really had the chance to know him. I've been fortunate and blessed to know him and I'm happy to honor him today for his contributions to the sport that we all love. But before I brag of his accomplishments, let me share a bit of his story with you so you get a sense of his humble beginnings.

Andy was born on the lower east side of Manhattan and grew up in Brooklyn, NY. He was the oldest of four children to a single Mom who never worked out, ate her pasta every day, but lived to the ripe age of 99. And as Andy always says, "She was a good woman". Growing up poor there were never any Christmas trees, Christmas or birthday presents and there were many times that all they had to eat was a ketchup sandwich.

Andy began training at the age of 12 with his buddies in a city park. They worked out together on the parallels bar and high bar doing chins, dips and using dumbbells that were available for use at the park. There was no money to join a gym! But to no avail Andy and his friends trained everyday all year round. It was here that Andy not only began to develop his physique but also his work ethic because even in the middle of winter Andy would take his jacket and shirt off to work out!

At the age of 15 Andy entered his first contest and placed 2nd. At 17 he appeared for the first time in a magazine called Strength and Health. At 18, Andy entered the US Army to serve his country in the infantry. His salary was \$56.40 a month. And what did Andy do? He sent his mother \$50.00 a month to help her, his 3 younger siblings and his stepfather Joe, another "good man".

After getting out of the Army and for years to come, Andy wore many hats and worked many different jobs including modeling for the Art Student League, managing gyms, supervisor for the Jack LaLanne chain for the entire northeast, manufacturing weightlifting belts, slim belts and vitamins, among many others...

Later Andy would work three jobs at the same time to help provide for the family. He worked for the City of New York for 20 years, he entered the US Reserves to serve his country once again for another 26 years and he opened his gym, Olympia Gym.

Olympia Gym would become one of the top bodybuilding gyms in NY where some of the greatest and well known competitors trained including Arnold Schwarzenegger, Lou Ferrigno, Franco Columbo, Frank Zane, Dennis Tinnerino, Chris Dickerson and many others.

Always wanting to be involved in the sport, Andy became a judge for the IFBB and would judge the top bodybuilders at that time including Arnold and Sergio Olivia. But when Andy was told that he would not be allowed to judge for

other organizations - Andy quit. No one was going to dictate what he could and couldn't do. No one was going to control him. That belief has transpired down to the NGA. Unlike some organizations, the NGA has always told its athletes to compete in any organization you wish, but our only wish is that you enter drug tested shows thereby supporting natural bodybuilding.

In 1977 Andy won the WBBG Pro Senior Mr. America contest at Madison Square Garden. His professional debut win included a trophy and \$50. And what did he do with the money – he gave it back to the organization. Always putting others and the sport he loves first.

Andy started the NGA in 1979 with his friend Al Fives who would become the first Vice President of the NGA. Our promoter, Chris Challenger, described the NGA recently as “an organization founded by natural athletes; to educate through personal training certification and compete on an even playing field.” Well I would like to expand on that and take you back to when and how the NGA started and its struggles.

When the NGA first began it consisted of about 10-15 guys who would meet once a month at Lenny's Clam Bar in Queens, NY. Most of these guys were gym owners and at that time the NGA was basically an organization for gyms as it states in its name. The NGA would help provide a low cost liability insurance for gym owners. Several of these gym owners including Andy became promoters for the NPC and they would work together to help promote each other's shows.

Seeing over the years how the use of drugs was becoming so prevalent in the sport that he loved so much, in 1986 Andy promoted the first ever NPC natural show.

Andy's vision for the NGA was always much bigger than anyone else imagined. He knew then that one day trainers in the future would need to be certified. He wanted to develop a certification for trainers but was told that it would never be accepted. He knew that the sport that he loved so much had become invaded with steroids and though he wanted to do something about it, he knew he was facing an uphill battle. Later these gym owners and NGA office holders would come and go and Andy would be left standing alone holding on to the NGA.

In 1990 the NGA began sanctioning natural amateur shows under its own banner but qualifying athletes to turn pro under another organization. For several years the NGA was developing promoters and amateur athletes while feeding this organization its professional athletes. We would become good friends and build an everlasting relationship, or so we thought.

In 1994 together we developed and published the NGA's Certification Course which is probably one of Andy's proudest achievements. Though now several certifications were already on the market, the NGA was the first bodybuilding organization to certify trainers. And who knows more about training and nutrition than bodybuilders – especially natural bodybuilders.

In 2000 the pro organization that we were working with began calling NGA promoters behind our backs asking them to come along with them. Dangling a carrot. We can do more for you than the NGA. They were offering our amateur athletes at NGA shows their own membership cards if they would hand in their NGA card. Though we lost some of our promoters and athletes this was not the end of the NGA, but a new beginning. The NGA began developing its own professional athletes and promoting its own pro shows. This year the NGA had 50 amateur shows and 18 professional shows. Yes, it has been an uphill battle. Over the years Andy was told by some of the top athletes mentioned before, presidents of other organizations, friends and constituents:

Andy, you're wasting your time...
Andy, the NGA will never be big...
Natural bodybuilding is not the way to go.

Though the NGA may not be the biggest bodybuilding organization, the NGA *is the oldest natural bodybuilding organization*. And I can say *without any uncertainty* is that the NGA *by far has practiced and upheld the highest ethical and moral standards in the business*. We have the best reputation of all bodybuilding organizations - natural or unnatural.

And this is all because of Andy who has instilled these standards into the NGA. Today, I'm proud to celebrate the Brooklyn man who started this lifelong passion with such humble beginnings. I'm proud to call him my husband and I'm thrilled to share with you more about him today so more of you can get to really know him. After 35 years, we celebrate the NGA and Andy who has given his heart and soul to natural bodybuilding.

Here is a video tribute was created about Andy and features some of the many people whose lives Andy has impacted. I hope you enjoy it.

At this time, I would like to invite all of our promoters that are here today to come up on stage to present Andy with the first NGA championship ring.

John Abraham, Illinois
Emmett Ballard, North Carolina
Chris Challenger, Orlando, FL

Murry Dubose, Missouri
Marc Friedman, NGA Secretary/Treasurer
Stan Gorman, Jacksonville, FL
Paul Hendricks, New Jersey
Scott Hults, Alabama
Christine Keefer, Orlando, FL
Clarence Lockett, Jr., Georgia
Josh Miller, Kentucky
Bill Mora, Ormond Beach & Orlando, FL
Abraham Oluwole, Coral Springs, FL
Medina Roberts, Virginia
John Rossman, Alabama
Denicio Royal, Texas
Tim McDaniel Shabazz, New Jersey
Earl Snyder, Pennsylvania
Marco Zanetti, Italy

Will everyone now please stand and help me give a warm welcome to the guest of honor, NGA President and Founder and inaugural inductee into the NGA Hall of Fame, my husband Andy, as he joins us on stage for the presentation?