

## THOUGHTS OF A STONELOVER BY DR TERRY TODD

*In the late summer of 1978 Jan and I travelled to the Highlands of Scotland with Bill Kazmaier to meet David P. Webster O.B.E. It was Jan's first meeting with DPW, but I'd met him much earlier--in the fall of 1964 in York, Pennsylvania--when he was the organizer of a group of a dozen or so Highland Heavies, including Bill Anderson, who were touring the US with several other groups of athletes from unique sports. We met at the York Barbell Company, where I had just begun working as a managing editor for Strength and Health, and I had the good luck to see the Heavies perform the next night in Baltimore. It was an unforgettable evening, and I hoped even then that one day I'd be able to see and even take part in a Highland Games in Scotland.*

*That chance came in 1978 when Jan and I and Bill flew into Glasgow and met David, who had offered to take us to the Highlands so Bill could attempt to lift the Inver Stone and Jan could try to put the wind beneath the Dinnies. Bill did no special training as we had no smooth "river stones" in our area, but Jan spent several months doing such arcane movements as partial deadlifts, Jefferson lifts and partial squats—all heavy. The story of their attempts to lift these famous stones, and of Bill's Weight Over Bar toss at the legendary Highland Games at Braemar, is too complicated to tell here, but the trip*

*with David caused us all to fall in love with the Highlands and the Highlanders for the reverence with which they viewed the lifting and throwing of heavy stones.*

*In later years we four spoke about that magical trip many times, especially after 2001 when we were asked by Arnold Schwarzenegger to design and supervise a heavy-duty Strongman Contest as part of the annual Arnold Sports Festival in Columbus, Ohio, which had already been held annually in Columbus for more than 15 years. During our yearly competitions in Ohio one of the things we always discussed was what new events we could design and add to our contest—the Arnold Strongman Classic. In those discussions, stonelifting was one of the things we talked about the most, and during one of these conversations someone suggested that we should travel to Northern Spain and learn more about the type of stonelifting practiced in the Basque Country. Accordingly, later that year Jan and I made such a trip right after overseeing, in Madrid, one of the first of the intercontinental Arnold Strongman Series which have now become part of the annual Arnold Sports Festivals held around the world.*

*In order for Jan and I to be sure to see the people and places we wanted to see, we asked the Spanish sport historian, Lucio Doncel, to accompany us, and the things we saw and the lifters we met were so*

*remarkable and compelling that we proposed to Bill Henniger, the founder and president of Rogue Fitness, to send us and his team of videographers to the Basque Country the following year and make a documentary about the indigenous stonelifting in northern Spain. Henniger, whose specialists at Rogue Fitness have in recent years designed and built the custom-made implements we use in the Arnold Strongman Classic, agreed to finance the documentary. The result of the trip to Basque Country can be seen on YouTube in the beautiful film, Levantadores, which has had approximately five million views.*

*The success of Levantadores led us to ask Henniger to send the same team of videographers, led by Todd Sansom, to the Highlands of Scotland for a similar documentary, and that trip—accompanied by David Webster and sponsored again by Rogue Fitness—played a major role in our decision to acquire from Senga Dinnie, Gordon Dinnie’s widow, the pair of custom-made copies of the Stones lifted by Donald in the 19th century. Those stones will soon be on their way to the Stark Center where they’ll be displayed and available for pre-arranged challenges from qualified lifters. We also expect them to be used as a Rogue Record Breakers event during the Arnold Sports Festival. In addition to the “Dinnie Replicas,” we also acquired from Senga—after seeking the advice and approval of our old friend*

*David Webster--the website Gordon began to honor the accomplishments of his renowned ancestor, Donald Dinnie. The site had been inactive since Gordon's death several years ago, but our trip to Scotland to shoot the documentary generated so much enthusiasm among the stonelifting fraternity that we decided to make an attempt to reactivate the site and update it.*

*In order for the site to be activated properly, we needed someone from Great Britain who not only knew stonelifting but who loved it and had the energy and knowhow to tend it regularly and expand it through the power of the internet. Amazingly, that "need" led us to a person who was part of the documentary which is being edited as this is being written—a person we believe to be more or less perfect for the role—Stevie Shanks. Stevie, who is also a professional musician, has not only lifted the Dinnie Stones himself but is the son of Jack Shanks who, in 1973, weighing only eleven and a half stones (161 pounds) became the first man since Donald, in 1860, to lift the stones without straps and carry them a distance of just over 17,' which is how far Dinnie carried them across the bridge over the River Dee. (The only other man besides Jack Shanks to have matched the distance managed by Shanks and the great Dinnie is Mark Felix, the professional Strongman from England who weighed approximately 23 stones (322 pounds), exactly*

*double Shanks' weight. We also needed an elder statesman to give his blessing to this regeneration of Gordon's site, and so we turned again to David P. Webster, O.B.E., who in 1999 co-authored with Gordon the definitive book, Donald Dinnie: The First Sporting Superstar.*

*We believe Stevie has made a wonderful beginning with the site, and we urge you to read it and help it grow by communicating with him and, if you like, with us about your questions and interest in the Dinnie Stones as well as the hundreds of other natural stones which rest quietly in many parts of Scotland as well as in other parts of Great Britain and the world.*

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