

Pumped up!

Pittsburgh native — powerlifter — wins Ironwoman event

By ANGELA LEIBOWICZ

Community Editor

How did a nice Jewish girl from Squirrel Hill become the oldest woman to compete and win the bodybuilding portion of the annual Ironman/Ironwoman powerlifting competition?

Determination, Gerrie Shapiro will tell you.

"One of the reasons I began competing is that 50-plus women seem to always talk about what they used to be able to do," said the 50-year-old Shapiro — the first Jewish woman to win this award. "I was determined to accomplish some things that I could not and did not do when I was young."

Shapiro holds the California state record for her age and weight class and broke the world bench record in her class by lifting 181.7 pounds.

But wait. Shapiro said that she is also a professional artist who has exhibited extensively throughout the United States, including in Pittsburgh's Andy Warhol Museum. She teaches dog obedience classes and volunteers every week for senior "schmooze day."

Who is this woman?

The daughter of Squirrel Hill's Hope and Jason Shapiro, Gerrie Shapiro graduated in 1970 from Taylor Allderice High School, where she "did everything possible to get out of gym." She studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and then continued her studies at the Instituto de Allende in San Miguel, Mexico, and at the University of Mexico in Mexico City.

About eight years ago, she moved to Santa Barbara, Calif., to be close to her

twin sister, Robbie.

"I am an anomaly — I am an amazing bench presser," Shapiro said. At 5 feet 5 inches and 125 pounds, she is lighter than her competitors — women who are sometimes 25 years younger than she.

Shapiro started competitive training two and a half years ago. "I started breaking records immediately, I was so focused," she said. She trains with a team of six, ages 20 to 35. The workouts include almost no cardio and last an hour, maximum. Mondays and Fridays are for chest, shoulders and triceps, Tuesdays are back and biceps, and Friday is legs day. Shapiro trains to max out her lifting during competition.

Shapiro won the Ironwoman competition with her 182-pound bench press, 220-pound squat and 230-pound dead lift, which is lifting up bars from the ground.

The week before an event, lifting is dropped from the routine, leaving just eating and resting. Shapiro gets her hair cut that week and the morning of the event she makes sure her makeup is just right. She also puts nail polish on only her thumbnails — it's a long story.

Getting in the groove is imperative, and performing rituals gives her body the cues she needs to stay focused in competition. Essentially, Shapiro said, she trained her nervous system to lift the weights.

Shapiro wears a gigantic Star of David around her neck and won't take it off during events. "I just wanted everyone to see it and if they didn't like it, walk away," she said. She had the piece made because she thought the others were too wimpy. This one, she said, would look natural on Mr. T.

Please see Shapiro, next page.

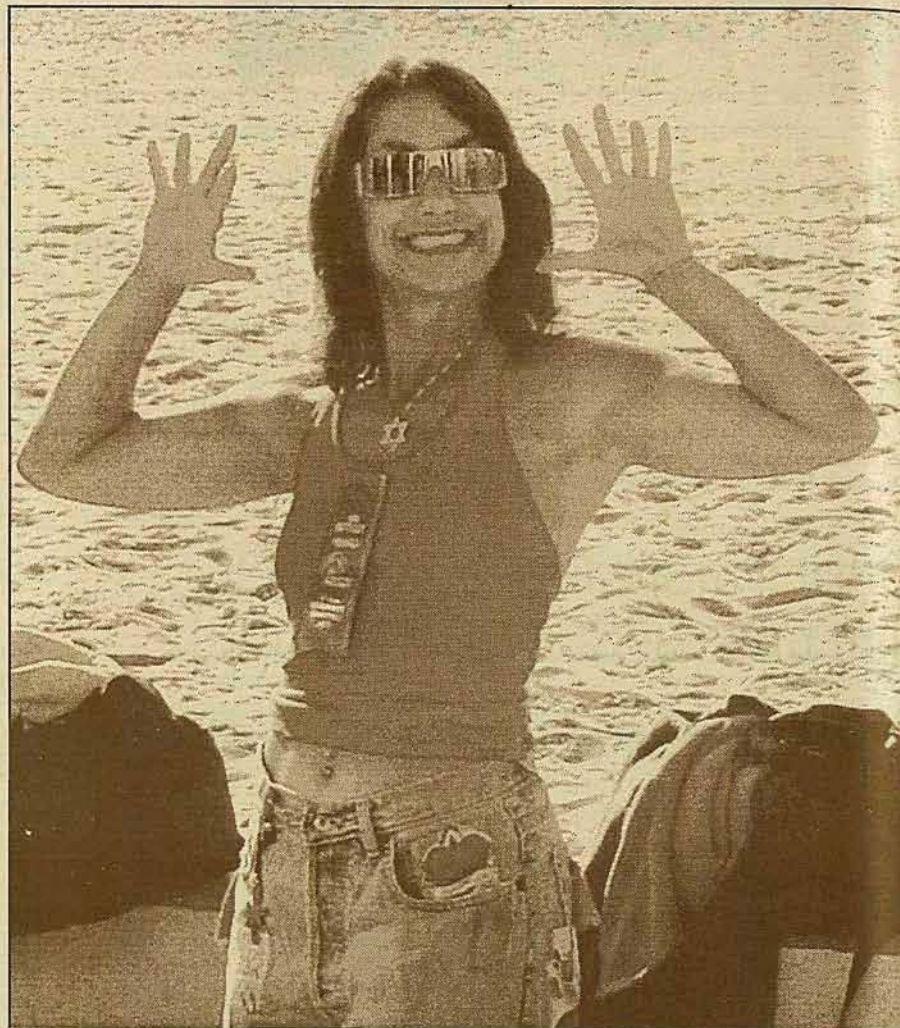


Photo courtesy of the Shapiro family

Gerrie Shapiro, sporting the Star of David she wears in competition, recently won the bodybuilding portion of the Ironwoman.

STYLE

Shapiro: Wants world record

Continued from previous page.

She describes growing up in a "wonderfully Jewish" home in Pittsburgh with a family that is "quite dedicated to the Lubavitch community." Shapiro carries on the family tradition by worshipping at the Lubavitch Chabad in Santa Barbara.

She thinks that "some members of the Pittsburgh Jewish community generally assume that the Reform and Orthodox

communities are mutually exclusive. ... That is just not true. They accept me with open arms!"

So, what follows?

"In March I will be setting a new world bench record for my weight class — any age!"

Talk about determination.

(Angela Leibowicz can be reached online at aleibowicz@pittchron.com.)

Briefly

Conductor Marvin Hamlisch leads the Pittsburgh Symphony Pops in a tribute to composer Richard Rodgers at 7:30 p.m. on Jan. 22, 8 p.m. on Jan. 23 and 24, and 7:30 p.m. on Jan. 25 at Pittsburgh Symphony Heinz Hall. Special guest Mary Rodgers, the daughter of Richard Rodgers, will share her personal stories and insights into the life of her father.

The second concert in the three-concert series Symphony with a Splash kicks off at 6:45 p.m., Jan. 8, at Pittsburgh Symphony Heinz Hall with Pittsburgh Symphony Assistant Conductor Daniel Meyer conducting. The concert, which was originally scheduled for

Jan. 15, was changed to allow the orchestra to travel to Italy to perform for the pope. Preconcert activities include a Happy Hour beginning at 5 p.m. in the Grand Lobby with live jazz music by Rodney McCoy Productions.

Pianist Lorraine Falberg Fuchs will present a concert at 8 p.m., March 15, at Rodef Shalom Congregation. The concert is free and a reception will follow. Fuchs and her husband have performed original music for piano duet at Phillips Gallery in Washington, D.C., and The Library of Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. Currently, Fuchs is assistant to Marta Casals Istomin, president of the Manhattan School of Music in New York City. The concert is part of the Music at Rodef Shalom Series.

Film makes 'Statement' about Vichy France, but doesn't satisfy

BY TOM TUGEND

Jewish Telegraphic Agency

LOS ANGELES — "The Statement" opens in 1944 with a black-and-white montage of a young French officer in the pro-Nazi Vichy militia signaling a firing squad to execute seven Jews.

More than four decades later, having been sheltered by the Catholic Church in the meantime, the officer, Pierre Brossard, is on the run after a reluctant French government finally charges him with crimes against humanity.

The film, shot in France with a first-rate British cast, is a satisfying political thriller. It combines a tour of scenic cathedrals and monasteries with an examination of the murky point where religion, politics, guilt and self-preservation intersect.

Primarily responsible for the suspense and intensity of "The Statement," as well as some of its shortcomings, are three masters of their crafts. They are director Norman Jewison and actor Michael Caine — both Yiddish-speaking Protestants.

The third is Roland Harwood, the South-African born Jewish screenwriter, who won an Oscar for "The Pianist."

As the hunted Brossard, Caine, 70, is a devout Catholic whose twin goals are to escape his pursuers and receive the church's absolution so he can die in a state of grace.

After him are two gunmen who initially appear to be members of a Jewish vigilante organization. They have been ordered to kill Brossard and to leave a statement on his body explaining that the assassination was in revenge for the killing of the seven Jews — and of the other 77,000 French Jews who died at the hands of the Nazi and Vichy regimes.

In the background, however, lurk pow-

erful shadowy figures who easily made the transition from Nazi collaborators to high-ranking officials in the post-war French governments.

The film is adapted from a roman a clef of the same title by the late Catholic novelist Brian Moore, who based his characters on two of the more despicable figures of the Vichy regime.

Brossard is modeled on Paul Touvier, who was pardoned by French President Georges Pompidou but ultimately became the only Frenchman convicted of crimes against humanity.

Pulling the strings is a character known only as the Old Man, representing Maurice Papon, who distinguished himself during the war by interning and deporting French Jews. After the liberation, Papon became a banker and supporter of President Francois Mitterand, was decorated with the Legion of Honor in 1948 and rose to become police prefect of Paris.

The cast includes some top-notch British talent, among them Tilda Swinton and Jeremy Northam as government officials who crack the conspiracy, and Alan Bates and Charlotte Rampling. They all do their profession proud, but the film is not entirely satisfying.

Surprisingly for a writer of Harwood's caliber, parts of the dialogue sound stilted, especially some of the pseudo-gangster talk. One also wonders how the shaky, winded and elderly Brossard repeatedly gets the drop on young professional killers.

A more serious failure in a film billed as a psychological thriller is the lack of insight into the motivations of Brossard — and of the Vichy collaborators generally.

"The Statement" is currently playing in New York and Los Angeles and opens nationwide in late December.

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