

## **PETER MAIVIA**

**Accepted by daughter, Ata Maivia Johnson**

**Inducted by PWHF President Johnny Mantell**

Tough is a word thrown around a lot when talking about “High Chief” Peter Maivia. Though he was only 5-foot-10, at his greatest fame, Maivia packed a whopping 320 pounds onto his frame, which was often adorned with colorful grass skirts and traditional accessories of his Samoan culture. Later, much of his body would be covered with imposing tattoos as well.

His only daughter, Ata, loves to tell the story about how the family was kept in the dark about how professional wrestling worked. “My father was so protective of the business that for the first few years he even protected it from my mom and I,” she said. “Hence during a match in London, England during the early sixties, my mom jumped in the ring, her stiletto heel in hand, to beat the pulp out of the guy that was beating my dad.” The next day, Maivia was instructed to smarten his family up. Maivia was born in Western Samoa, one of three sons, and raised in New Zealand, where he worked as a plumber and began his wrestling career in 1958 as Peter Fanene Anderson, training under the light heavyweight champ Doug Harding. He got to England for the first time in April 1963, and stayed, off and on, for four years. Initially known as Peter Anderson, he was given the Peter Maivia name (to confuse everyone with the original Prince Maiava, who also wrestled as Neff Maiava), and became a star, in part because of a small role as a thug fighting Sean Connery in the James Bond film *You Only Live Twice*. In North America, his first major port of call was San Francisco. “Peter was a great wrestler, in fact, he was a great amateur wrestler,” recalled Fritz von Goering, a frequent foe. “He made a lot of good moves. He wrestled barefoot. He moved like a lightweight or a middleweight.” “I never realized how many Samoans lived in San Francisco until I saw the crowds that turned out when Peter wrestled,” wrote Superstar Billy Graham in his autobiography. “Afa and Sika Anoa'i were two gargantuan Maivia supporters who believed that everything they saw in the ring was real.”

Maivia inspired many from the islands to give wrestling a try, and

though his bloodline in the business only really consists of his cousin, Papali'itele Siva Afi, and grandson, The Rock, many others from the Wild Samoan family tree consider him the family patriarch.

“When I am being interviewed on television, I generally like to say a few words in Samoan to my people. I feel that I owe them a lot of respect,” Maivia said in 1969.

A babyface for most of his career, he did have a high-profile heel run, betraying WWF champion Bob Backlund in late 1978. After the WWF stint, Maivia settled in Hawaii, and eventually ran the promotion with his wife, Lia.

Following her husband's death on June 13, 1982 of cancer, Lia kept the company going until 1988. “When my Grandfather passed away, he was running the wrestling promotion in Hawaii and his dying wish was that my grandmother continues with the business, and she kept it going,” said The Rock. She died in October 2008. That same year, Peter Maivia was twice honored, with induction into the Samoan Sports Association Hall of Fame in Auckland, New Zealand, and the WWE Hall of Fame.

The Maivia legacy would live on, of course, through grandson Dwayne Johnson, who initially took the name Rocky Maivia as a tribute to his father, Rocky Johnson, and his grandfather.

— Greg Oliver