



## Rolling Through Time

By James Vannurden

Director and Curator

Official Newsletter of:

**National Museum of Roller Skating**

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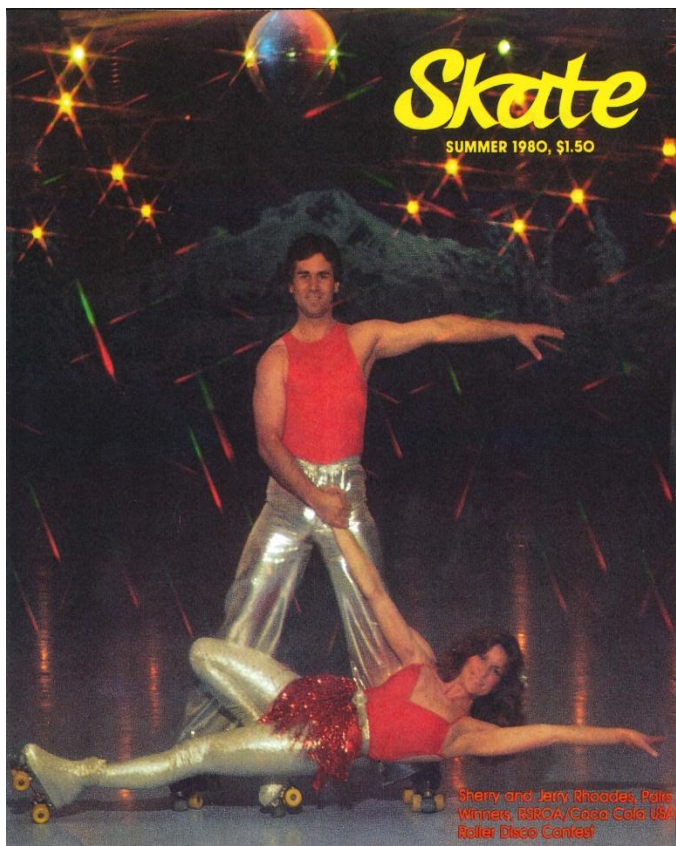
### Who We Are

The National Museum of Roller Skating is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization located in Lincoln, Nebraska and the only dedicated roller skating museum in the world. We are committed to the preservation of the history of roller skating. With over 50 display cases, the museum educates the public on all aspects of roller skating, which dates back to the first patented skate from 1819.

### Curator's Corner

#### New Display

## Roller Disco



Our new display "Roller Disco" features information, photographs, and costumes from roller skating's great disco era. Recognized as having started at the Empire Roller Rink in Brooklyn, New York, roller disco swept the nation while the music trend remained at the top of the charts.

### Memphis Figure Roller Skating Club donation



Every year Caroline Mirelli, coach and owner of the Skate Haven roller rink in Memphis, Tennessee, puts on a Christmas show with her roller figure skating club. She then donates items from her show to the museum archives.

Ms Mirelli has donated photographs, programs, newspaper articles, and even digital copies of past performances.

We thank Ms. Mirelli for her years of continued support of the museum through her promotion, membership, and donations to our facility.

### In Memory of Robert Gormley

(Written by RSA)

Robert W. Gormley of Aurora, Illinois died on Friday, March 14, 2014. He was 88 years young.

Bob was an SRSTA teacher for years and was inducted into the SRSTA Life Membership in 1987. A Memorial Celebration was held at the Lombard Roller Rink on Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requested any donations be made in memory of Mr. Gormley to the National Museum of Roller Skating.

Special thanks to everyone who contributed to our memorial fund.

## **(Derby) Skaters in the Service of their Country** (Story from the 1952 Roller Derby Yearbook)

The Korean situation has stymied the growth of Roller Derby. With the inroads of the draft 33 skaters are now serving their country on the Battlefields in Korea, occupation in Germany and wherever the American flag is raised.

In the year 1950 the Derby was growing again and was getting over World War II, with six teams and contemplating an eight team league. If we look back for just a moment and turn the calendar to the year of 1941, Roller Derby had an eight team league, all in the Midwest, and was getting ready for the trek back again to New York. Then it happened, December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor. As then and now many skaters were called to the colors and many skaters never returned.

One of the first skaters to leave was Rusty Brand of the Jolters, she entered the WAC. Rusty, a New Jersey lass, quietly enlisted and with no far fare turned in her uniform and before anyone knew what happened she was in Georgia. Like a tidal wave many skater received their notices for physicals and induction.

When Uncle Sam taps you for service you can be the biggest star in Roller Derby or just a rookie. In rapid fashion they were going and talk was around whether the Derby could stand the inroads that the draft has made. With all this going on skaters were saying their goodbyes. Jimmy Ciota, Bob Venter, Bob Klein, Bob Lewis, Charlie Schuchart, Frank Baeli and Herbie Plumb all top skaters left and to get replacements for them sure, but they lacked what these skaters had-experience.

The season, 1951-52 held Roller Derby back due to the loss of skaters and the many youngsters who were ready to embark on their career in Roller Derby.

Like all big organizations rumors fly from all places and from outside people not in the organization that skaters were coming back from service to skate again. The first to return was Buddy Kemp. When it pertains to skaters and if information is needed, ask a dyed-in-the-wool Roller Derby fan, they will give you all the answers.

Though it is late for Christmas, the Derby received one of the top gifts of all when it was learned the Russ Massro was discharged from service and skating again.

The Roller Derby is indeed proud of its skaters in uniform. In World War II over 100 wheelers saw service and several never returned to the banked track again. Who among the old time fans will ever forget the name Fuzzy Calvenesso? Never a speed star Fuzzy was a colorful athlete who never gave up even when the odds were stacked high against his team. Fuzzy paid the supreme price of war.

Another old time wheeler who never came back is Bill Feeman, Feeman, a 200 pound defensive whiz stayed on to make a career out of the Army and when last heard from was serving in Germany as a one star general.

Stars of only a few years back are now fighting in Korea. Little Frank Baeli of the Jolters, pictured trying on Herbie Plump's overseas cap is now driving a truck somewhere in the snowy front lines of Korea.

Bob Klein, shaking hands with Bill Reynolds and Buddy Atkinson in the lower picture, was only a PFC when the picture was taken. Bob is a sergeant in the Air Force serving somewhere in Korea. Truly these are strange times.



Youths are called from the bosoms of their homes to leave the life they know and risk their precious years for a greater cause. The Roller Derby has not lagged in sending their stars to answer the call of Uncle Sam. Right now there are 33 stars on the Roller Derby service flag. There will be many more.

As one fan put it, having two sons in service stated, "Let's be thankful to God that our sons and daughters when they come home, can hold up their heads knowing they served their country and their family."



## Rink Photo

### Melody Lane Minden, NE



#### Testimonials from skaters at Melody:

**Margaret:** My favorite memory is from high school and the dances at Melody Lane! We really looked forward to deciding what to wear and going to them. Anybody remember KOMA - the radio station from Oklahoma that would advertise where the bands were playing and Melody Lane was often mentioned!

**Julie:** Loved roller skating at Melody Lanes - Virgil and Iva were like my second grandparents! Liked the hokey pokey and grape pop there the best!! Fun times back in the day!!

**Sheila:** And don't forget how the boys all skated into the tiny bathroom whenever the "Lady's Choice" or "Grand March" were called! Spent many Friday nights out there skating!

**Carolyn:** I remember when my parents skated. We kids weren't allowed to skate on that night so we played tag and other games back behind the building. I also remember taking dance lessons on skates. We waltz around the rink. And then when in high school we skated on Sunday nights. I remember Jack from Gibbon was a really good skater. Also we not only had pompoms on our skates we had lights that clipped on and when they dimmed the lights for couples skate we turned them on. Oh yes, Ivy had the best Sloppy Joes and hot dogs.

**Teresa:** I always wanted my own shoe skates. And Laura, she taught me how to skate. I think she must have pushed me around the rink more than a 100 times that day! And she was fast. But I learned!

**New and Renewing Members**  
Leeland Wells

## Rink Sticker Collection

The museum has an extensive collection of roller skating rink stickers. Many skating rinks used to produce stickers as both an advertisement and fun way to for skaters to interact with one another, comparing the different location in which they skated. These were even traded as collectibles both informally and formally, under the Universal Roller Skating Sticker Exchange founded in 1948. Each newsletter, we will feature different rink stickers. Here are a few examples of the numerous stickers in the collection and on display at the National Museum of Roller Skating.



Thanks for supporting the museum!

