

August 2018

Rolling Thru Time
Newsletter

The National Museum of Roller Skating



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Newest Museum Members



Three visitors to the museum during Nationals left as new museum members. Like many skaters who dropped by, they had interesting stories to

tell of their skating experiences. As one said, "I've been meaning to become a member for a long time and just hadn't got around to doing it - and finally this was the day."

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP WHEN EXPIRED

It is so easy to put it off and forget. Your membership is vital to maintaining the museum. The museum thanks you for your support.

***Top:** Scott Christley (far right) is the owner of Skate World in Leesburg, Florida. Every year that Nationals is in Lincoln he brings his speed team to the museum. They always love it, he said. This year two teenage boys were reluctant to come, but ended up having had a great time, he added. Christley is planning on breaking ground in two months on a new 65,000 square feet, 10 acre, \$6 million FEC. Skating is his first love so it will have a full-size rink, and also a long list of other attractions from bumper cars to bowling.*



Karyn Foley Cormier is from Skate Reflections in Kissimmee, Florida. She is pointing to a skate diagram and said that she was the author of the Masters Polka Roller Dance in 1986.



Mark Thorton is from Champions in Spring, Texas. Thorton is pointing to Gerry Murray's outfit when Murray played for the San Diego Clippers, a roller derby team, in 1955. Thorton said that Murray was his first derby coach in 1969, and Murray sent him a Christmas card out of the blue last year after losing contact for many years.

Elmhurst Exhibit Opening a Great Success!

The three pictures below were taken at the Elmhurst History Museum near Chicago by Tom Russo. The first one includes, at the far right, a dress of Gloria Nord's during her Skating Vanities days loaned for the exhibit from the National Museum of Roller Skating (NMRS). The exhibit about the historic Elm Rink and roller skating in Chicago and the U.S. during WWII continues through November 4.

The exhibit opened July 13 to the largest crowd the museum has had for an exhibit launch. "Well I must say that the Elmhurst History Museum really knocked it out of the park with the opening of their exhibit yesterday evening," said Russo, who wrote the script for the displays, and is the author of the book *Chicago Rink Rats: The Roller Capital In Its Heyday*. "They (the Elmhurst History Museum) loved the fact they had one of Gloria

Nord's outfits for the display, added Russo. "The design team got some amazing footage for the displays . . . push a button and the video plays . . . really nicely done with lots of interactive screens. They even had a temporary skate floor installed in the parking lot to encourage young and old to don skates and do a few laps . . . that really drew a crowd . . . who would have thought?"

Russo's mother was at the opening. She was the inspiration for his book. When he was helping her with her legacy letters, he realized how much roller skating meant to her and her friends growing up in Chicago during the war years.

James Turner, a founding trustee of the NMRS and author of the 1995 book *The History of Roller Skating*, was also present.

NMRS will be receiving some of the artifacts from the exhibit, including items from the recently closed Orbit Skate Center near Chicago that are part of the display.

A half dozen articles have already been written about this display, said Russo. You can see the Chicago Tribune's at: [HERE](#)





James Turner Changes Date for Elmhurst Lecture

James Turner, pictured center, at the 2018 Nationals, has changed the date of his lecture on the history of roller skating at the Elmhurst History Museum near Chicago. It will now be September 23 at 2 p.m. The reason for the change is because two of his students are going to Worlds, and he is attending as a coach.



Skating Anecdotes

The pictures below tell just some of the stories of recent visitors to the museum who were also at Nationals. There are other stories too, without a picture, including some from visitors who were at the museum, but not because of Nationals: One woman who was with her daughter from Las Vegas said emotionally, "I can't tell you how important roller skating was to me when I was a kid." Two women were looking at the collection of sidewalk skates with the numerous skate keys. One said about skating outdoors, "Do you want to see my scars." The other commented on her skate key she had when she was young. A woman from Michigan who visits her mother in Lincoln found her friend's picture in the showcase. It was a picture of pairs skaters Gail and Ron Robovitsky from the early 1970s. She called Gail who didn't know her picture was displayed at the museum. An Ecuadorian woman whose daughter was competing seemed pleasantly surprised when she saw an Ecuadorian skating banner the museum has displayed on the wall along with other foreign

banners. One rink hockey player from southern California, whose team is mostly made up of players from Mexico, talked about how hockey is growing in Mexico.



Tina Yow is from the Piedmont artistic club in Greensboro, North Carolina. Like many coaches, she brings her students to the museum to expose the next generation to the history of roller skating. This gives them a better appreciation of the sport, she said. She knew the museum and the history of skating better than any other visitor that week; she didn't need a museum

docent to help.

The Ruiz family are owners of Sk8land in Corpus Christy, Texas. Many families at Nationals make a trip to the museum a special outing of the day.



Dorothy Ramsey is pointing to her former coach, Arlis Snyder. She said he changed her life. It's always heartwarming to see skaters find their coaches on the USA Roller Sports Hall of Fame and listen to the sincere respect and admiration they display for them.



Nicole Leonard Fiore is from southern California. When she saw the picture of Dominic Cangelosi, NMRS trustee, above the organ, she talked about his rink, Moonlight Rollerway in Glendale, California, and the filming that is done there. She said she is on a skating talent list to be called when skating extras are needed for commercials and movies. She has been in Old Navy and Tommy Hilfiger ads. She was in France with Katy Perry for a charity showcase.



Lilli Stevenson, center, is with Caitlyn Riddle and Aurora Mestas. Lilli is pointing at a picture of her father in the showcase, Mike Stevenson, rink hockey player from Bremerton Skateland in Washington state. Family members are excited to see one of their own recognized at the museum.

Sojourner Croom and Jaylynn Dorsey are from Olympic Skating Center in Enola Pennsylvania. Like most kids who visit the museum, one of their favorite displays is the animals on skates.





In center is Nellie Anderson Lillie, museum vice president, with Nicola Genchi (left) and Richie Gussmann (right). Genchi, from Italy, is Chairman of the Artistic Committee of World Skate as well as creator of the new Rollart scoring system. Gussmann, from Germany, is the Chief Calculator for World Skate. They were at Nationals assisting with the new scoring. These

were not the only international visitors that came to the museum. Visitors came from such places as Ecuador, Mexico, Brazil, Columbia and Argentina.

John Honodel, speed coach, is from Enola, Pennsylvania. Like many competitive skaters who come to the museum, especially speed skaters, he has a personal connection to one or more of the wheels on display. In this case it's the Powell Bones known as Primo Dino, an old favorite he competed on.



Bryce Robison is from Roller Land in Merced, California. Robison is pointing to a picture of C.W. Lowe's tent rink taken in 1924 in Little Rock, Arkansas. He remembers his dad's tent rink in North Carolina that blew down during a session. No one was hurt. Before that, he said his dad worked for Bud Van Roekel in California.

Isaiah Haynes from Tampa, Florida, is taking a picture next to the plaque of his coach, Samuel Johnson, in the USA Roller Sports Hall of Fame. His dad said the coach is an amazing guy. Many skaters enthusiastically take their picture next to their coach's plaque.



Remberto Milian is a rink hockey goalie from Miami. Their team is called Florida United, since most of the players are from various Latin America countries: Columbia, Brazil, and Argentina. The team practices outside since their rink in which they were practicing closed. He is pointing at one of the popular skating stickers from the Venetian roller skating rink in

Miami, but not for the usual reasons. On this sticker is an old rendering of the Miami skyline, with the Freedom Tower in the far right. He described this tower as the Statue of Liberty for him. He came to this country from Cuba at three months old in 1963. His friends laugh at him, but he says he can remember that tower as he first saw it at three months, the first building he saw. He said immigrants went there for assistance. He began skating at age 12 with clamp-on skates. He met his wife at a rink, who was on another team. He knew she liked him when she came by and hit his helmet. He knew he was in love.

Museum Attracts Locals Too!

During the hectic weeks of Nationals at the museum, visitors were not just skaters. Here is a group who are part of the University of Nebraska's chapter of OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute). Besides auditing classes, they do educational outings such as this trip to the NMRS. Rhonda Cann is introducing the museum near the front door displays.



Russo's Comments at Exhibit Opening

Comments by Tom Russo at the Elmhurst History Museum pre-exhibit launch of its *Chicago Rink Rats: The Golden Age of Roller Skating* exhibit. July 13, 2018



As author and exhibit writer, I was introduced and invited to say few words at the pre-exhibit reception held for the Elmhurst History Museum members and donors. After years of public speaking, I recognized that I would have only a few moments to leave an impression and three points came to mind; find some way to thank donors and members for their support; comment on the exhibit theme without droning about exhibit contents, and; finally, what would I like to see come of this exhibit.

With the brochure in hand, I raised it overhead to bring attention to the front cover, I stated "how clever of the design team and staff to select *Jenny on skates* as the marketing symbol to represent the museum's roller skate exhibit." I explained that Jenny was one poster in a WWII propaganda campaign intended to encourage women to wear slacks and overalls, caps and gloves while working in America's war factories. The caption for this poster read *Jenny has her fun after work!* But the significance of this poster though while encouraging women to wear work clothes, illustrates the high regard for roller skating as a national fitness past time. It underscores how roller skating became one with the war effort and demonstrates why roller skating became the number one sport in America by 1950.

The second point I made was that in writing the book *Chicago Rink Rats*, the role of digital collections was enormous as it allows researchers and writers to search not only the digital collections of the US Library of Congress, but as well local

library and museum collections such as the Elmhurst History Museum. As I explained this, I added "so your support of local museums is critical to develop and make digital collections come alive for others throughout the country and I thank you for your support of local history museums like Elmhurst." I went on and added "In fact, it was a digital connection with EHM in which I sought permission to print its one photo of the huge, and memorable "Elm Rink" sign that lead to an invite by the museum staff to discuss the possibility of the roller skate exhibit." In a digital age, we make digital connections but its donors and members that understand this vision and make it a reality.

Finally, the third point I wanted to make was a question raised by this newsletter's editor when interviewed to announce the roller skate exhibit. I shared with the EHM donors and members that in a recent interview I had with Alan Bacon, both a rink operator and National Roller Skate Museum newsletter editor, he asked "what would you like to see come of the Elmhurst History Museum exhibit?"

The answer was easy "I would like to see other local museums who were (and are) great roller skate centers during the Golden Age, to use this exhibit model and honor the memorable roller skate rinks that made those great roller skate cities." I added that "EHM has reached out to past skaters and captured the oral histories of those skaters of the Golden Age who skated at the great Chicago rinks on the wall map you'll see in the exhibit." Today, the Elmhurst History Museum exhibit not only recognizes the golden age of roller skating across the country, but illustrates how Chicago rinks contributed to that fame while also commemorating its own Elm Rink by audio oral histories of Elm Rink skaters who shared all those great stories of the huge green doors of the Elm Rink.

This museum ad appeared in this year's program at Nationals. Thanks to Peggy Young, museum secretary, for her help in producing it. Special thanks to USA Roller Sports for including it in their program at no cost to the museum. The museum had many visitors, and this ad surely helped.



VISIT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ROLLER SKATING
4730 South Street - Lincoln, Nebraska
402-483-7551 ext. 3

The National Museum of Roller Skating is the only Museum in the world dedicated to Roller Skating. Visit to learn the rich history of the sport, the recreation and the business roller skating.

Open 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Monday - Friday

No Admission Charge
Donations Appreciated

Visit us at www.rollerskatingmuseum.com

Our Newsletter Team Visits the Museum



Pictured left to right are Kelsey and Joy Bacon, two other visitors that came to the museum lately. They were on their cross-country car trip from Baltimore to Richland, Washington. Joy is the copy editor of the museum's newsletter, and Kelsey does the graphic design. Both were editor in chief of their high school newspaper, the *Hanford Altitude*, and Joy was editor in chief of the *Whitworthian* at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington, while Kelsey helped with the graphics. Joy has also

written for Rinksider magazine. Both grew up working in their parent's rink, and both competed in dance and figures while Kelsey also played roller hockey.

Editor's note from Alan Bacon: I could not do the newsletter without my two daughters. I can concentrate on the research and writing the rough drafts while they finalize it.

Road Trip Reveals Skating History

By Joy Bacon

Growing up, my family earned quite the reputation for epic road trips. Whether it was stretches of Baltimore to Montreal or Seattle to Mexico, we crammed all the sights into the 14-day window after sports camps ended and before my parents had to be back to get their roller rink in Richland, Washington, ready for the new school year. And these trips always included a myriad selection of historical stops, from the classics like the Smithsonian to more "remote" destinations like small state park visitor centers.

So it was no surprise that when my sister and I drove most of Interstate 80 this summer, a stop in Lincoln at the National Museum of Roller Skating was a natural part of our itinerary. As a history teacher, our father, Alan Bacon, never missed a chance to infuse our life with the family business with its historical roots. His rink, after all, had literally been a part of our family history since his birth in 1953. We knew where the old windows used to be, remember playing in the sawdust of the floor renovation, and had helped change more paint colors than we care to count. But visiting the museum finally put our own family history into a larger context of the national pastime.

Despite living and breathing the rink life, my sister and I were still intrigued by the many facets of roller skating displayed at the museum that we hadn't explored before. We'd seen the infamous Charlie Chaplin video clips, but didn't realize the same era included women roller skating in Vaudeville Follies. We'd visited a Barnum & Bailey circus, but couldn't believe they included skating bears in advertising posters. We had both participated in competitive arts skating, but didn't realize the extent to which the sport's elaborate costumes evolved over the past 50 years. We'd skated to live organ music at Oaks Park in Portland, Ore., but hadn't ever played a rink organ for ourselves. The artifacts and displays offered tangible connections to a world we'd lived, but never studied.

As a millennial and Olympics enthusiast, my favorite surprise finds were Tara Lipinski's old roller skates and costume. This year's Winter Olympics included both speed and figure skaters who transitioned from their non-frozen counterparts, and while the 2020 Tokyo games won't include 4-wheel events, the 2024 summer games in Paris could see petitions for roller sports to be included in the mix.

This month's newsletter features many individual anecdotes from visitors near and far to Lincoln. I'm glad my sister and I made the time to have our own museum story to tell. We could build a narrative that started long before our narrow window of history with skating, and hopefully will stretch far into a future of a thriving industry, sport, and cultural landscape.

STAY CONNECTED

The National Museum of Roller Skating | (402) 483-7551 extension 16 |
directorcurator@rollerskatingmuseum.com
www.rollerskatingmuseum.com



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

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National Museum Rollerskating | 4730 South St, Lincoln, NE 68506 www.rollerskatingmuseum.com

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