



## Historical Roller Skating

# OVERVIEW

Issue No. 19

September 1986

### CURATOR'S CORNER

**Michael W. Brooslin,**  
Director & Curator

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The newsletter of the National Museum of Roller Skating is available only through membership in the museum. Minimum annual contribution is \$15. The newsletter is published 4 times a year to inform the museum's honorary members of happenings at the museum and about aspects of roller history. Although the museum cannot pay for articles, contributions by the readers are welcome. All articles, inquiries or comments should be sent to the Museum Curator.

Late in July, we were notified the museum was awarded a grant of \$5,400 from the Institute of Museum Services, an agency of the federal government. The funds will be used to help underwrite the museum's activities during the 1986-1987 year. Our museum was one of only 409 museums nationally awarded grants under this general operating support program. According to a statement issued by the Institute, "museums receiving awards have demonstrated the highest standards of services and operations." We are pleased that our museum is thought of so highly after only five years of active operation, and thank the Institute for awarding the grant.

However, one of the conditions governing the grant is that, in the coming year, the museum must receive financial contributions at least equal to this past year. Because of this requirement, it is essential that you as an honorary member of the museum, renew your membership when your current term expires. In the 1986-87 year the museum will be renovating its exhibit gallery, improving collections storage, and will begin planning for additional services. Your honorary membership donation, combined with the federal funds, will make this possible.

For many of you whose honorary membership term will not expire until sometime in 1987, you may wish to consider making your 1987 donation before the end of December 1986. As you may have heard, the Congress has finalized the new tax reform bill, portions of which affect contributions to charities, such as the museum. Those of you who do not itemize your charitable deductions will no longer be able to deduct a portion of them after 1986. There are also changes to what you can deduct for charitable contributions for those

Continued on next page

CURATOR'S CORNER (continued)

who do itemize. Lastly, due to the decrease in the tax rates for most individuals, your donations will likely be worth more as deductions in 1986 than in 1987. When you renew your honorary membership is entirely up to you, and you should check with your own accountant to see what effect the law will have on you, however we thought you should know you may benefit by making your 1987 charitable donations before the new laws take effect.

The museum will also be receiving another grant from the Institute of Museum Services. This is an award of \$1,000 which does not have to be matched by the museum. These funds will enable the museum to employ an outside consultant to assist with our long range plans, so that we can develop the museum to its fullest potential.

The museum was host to many visitors this summer, including families from France, Switzerland and several other countries. One of our special guests was museum Donor Mrs. Lillian Franks Sarnelli and her family, who came to Lincoln to celebrate her 90th Birthday. Mrs. Sarnelli (her career was profiled in newsletter number 13, March 1985) skated vaudeville in Europe and the United States from 1905 through 1920, and her costumes and memorabilia are on exhibit in the museum. Miss Franks is pictured at the left using a pair of stilt skates, during a show in France in 1914 (86.49.1).

Thanks to Bert Widd of Florida, the museum now has a pair of 1940's Anagnost skates, something we have been looking to acquire for over 5 years. The museum received many other objects this summer. Among the more significant were a pair of Hudora and Marla skates from Dale Pritchard in Oregon, from Mack & Beverly Harris of New Jersey a pair of 1882 wood plate skates made by the Raymond Park Skate Company, many different 1950-60's Chicago skates and parts from Bill Fehr of Portland, and a pair of Bill Fleming custom-made 1955 skates from Bob Gormley of Illinois. We also recently acquired all the different models of boots made by the Oberhamer Shoe Company from 1946 to the present, courtesy of Roy Oberhamer. Lastly, the museum received the papers and memorabilia of Thomas Boydston, President of the RSROA from 1955 to 1966, from Lillian Riefschnieder here in Lincoln. Despite the many collections donations to the museum in the past five years, there are still many specific items we would like to add to our collections. From time to time we shall be publishing "want lists" in the newsletter (see page 7 in this issue). If any of our members can help locate the items listed, we would appreciate hearing from you.



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## USAC/RS HALL OF FAME NEWS

On August 8th, Randy Dayney, Buzz Kerwin, Fleurette Arseneault Jeffers and Dan Littel were inducted into the USAC/RS Amateur Atheltes Roller Skating Hall of Fame in ceremonies at the National Championships in Indianapolis (pictured on back cover). In 1987, three teams or individuals will be selected for induction into the Hall of Fame at the National Championships in Lincoln. As in past years, the museum will be conducting research and assembling information on Hall of Fame candidates. If you would like to nominate a skater, or to add your recommendation to the information presented to the USAC/RS Board of Directors, we would appreciate hearing from you. All skaters must meet the following requirements to be eligible for nomination to the Hall of Fame in 1987: the individual or team must have contributed significantly to the sport as an amateur skater (coaching and teaching accomplishments are excluded); these accomplishments must be of an innovative or an exceptional nature, and must be of lasting duration; and the individual or team must have retired from active competition by the end of the 1981-1982 season (ending with the 1982 World Championships). The museum does not determine who is elected to the Hall of Fame; we only furnish information to enable the USAC/RS Board to make the best possible selection. If you feel a skater should be considered for election to the Hall of Fame, simply send a letter to the museum stating who you wish to recommend. In your letter you must state why you feel the individual or team is worthy of this honor, and list a summary and accomplishments and contributions to the sport. All recommendations must be received by the museum by 15 December 1986 to be included in the information provided to the USAC/RS Board prior to the election of candidates this winter.

From the "oops - we goofed" department: In the profile of 1986 Hall of Fame inductee Randy Dayney, published in the March 1986 museum newsletter, we printed Randy was the first American since 1947 to capture the FIRS mens world title. This should have read the "second" American to win the mens world title since 1947. Our humble apologies to Hall of Fame member Jack Courtney, who won the world mens title in 1968.

The museum recently received news that James Lidstone, who was elected to the USAC/RS Hall of Fame in 1984 along with his sister Joan Lidstone Watson, was finally inducted into the Hall of Fame. The Lidstones introduced competitive dance skating to America in 1938. Jimmy was honored at the 1986 British Roller Skating Championships held in July. At right, Mr. Lidstone (on the right) receives his USAC/RS Hall of Fame plaque from Mr. Courtney L. Jones, President of the National Skating Association of Great Britain.



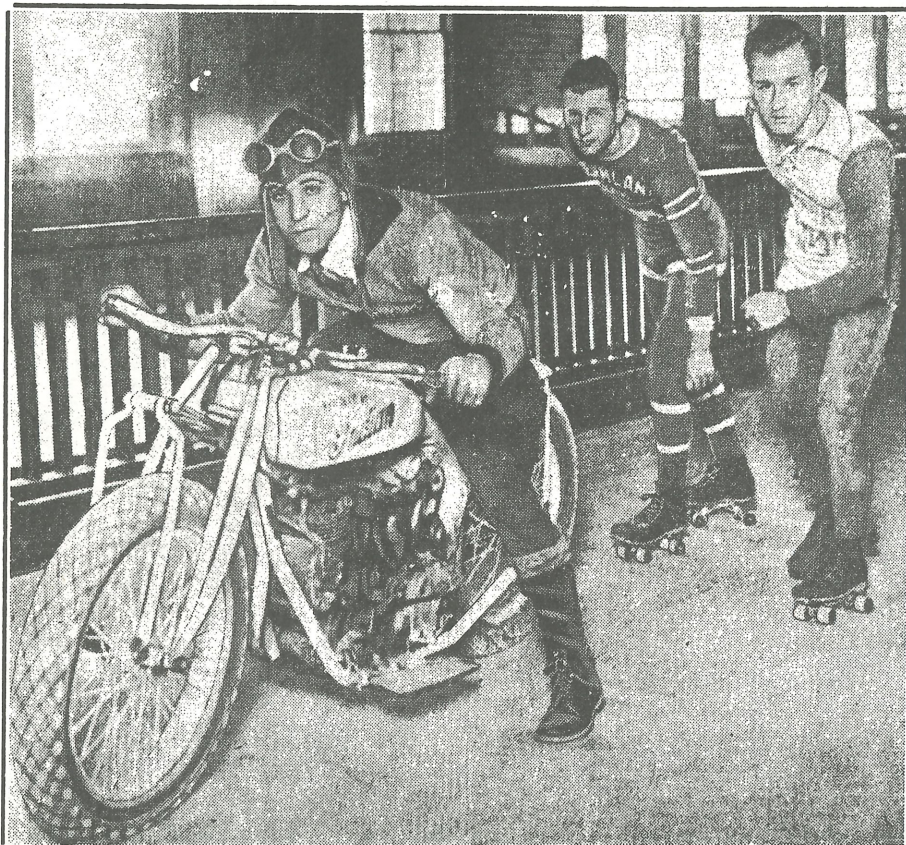
## THE GREAT TWENTY ONE DAY RACE OF 1934

In the era before World War II, the twenty one day exhibition held in February 1934 at old Dreamland Park in Newark, New Jersey, commanded more news print than any other single event in roller skating history. Part of the reason was that in the thirties, everything was being "marathonized," and after all, twenty one days of continuous roller skating was a substantial test of endurance. After the race was over, the event became known as one of the most grueling and fatiguing roller skating contests ever held. Victor J. Brown, operator of the Dreamland Park Arena, and the first President of the Roller Skating Rink Operators Association, was the prime organizer of this marathon. In the late 1960's, Vic donated his personal scrapbooks and papers to the RSROA National Office. They became part of the museum's archival collections in 1980. The following account of the race is taken from Mr. Brown's scrapbooks.

The planning and promotion of the race was, as present meet organizers know, a tremendous task in itself. Many problems had to be solved, such as building a banked track, housing and feeding the competitors, and promoting the race to create public interest. Vic Brown met the problems head-on, and with the help of his colleagues in the skating industry, managed to solve all of them. The veteran bicycle track builder Pat Mulvey was contracted to build the skating track. It was originally designed to be twelve laps to the mile in size, but as completed was fourteen laps to the mile. Due to its advanced design (for that time), great speeds were predicted. The track walls were twelve feet high, and banked down to floor level. One problem encountered (which still plagues many skating competitions today) was the noise level made by the skaters on the floor. This was solved by packing sawdust under the floor, muting the sound made by fifteen men speeding over the surface. According to contemporary accounts, "the spectators watched the race without rupturing an eardrum."

Charles Stein, a man who devoted twenty five years to the training of professional and amateur speed skaters, was appointed "caterer" for the meet. Charlie's was an important job. He was responsible for housing, feeding and taking care of all the needs the competitors might have. Because of the race format, the kitchen had to be right by the track, and had to be well stocked. According to information in the museum archives, the racers had a rather low calorie to miles ratio. In meat alone the fifteen men consumed twelve sides of beef, over 500 steaks, and about 400 chickens, in addition to literally a ton of fruits and vegetables. Perhaps some of the problems encountered by the racers was due to their diet (few carbohydrates), but it must be remembered this race took place before any scientific nutritional studies were done for athletics. Several of the athletes also tried some novel training techniques, such as that shown on the top of the opposite page.

According to Vic Brown's records, the greatest problem facing the organizers of the race was determining whether a man could endure twenty one days of continuous speed skating. This in fact, became a problem that could not be solved. On February 26th, the race was cut short after nineteen days of continuous skating because of the cold weather and snow (the track being outdoors). The top United States team of Bob Ringwald, Claud Hawthorn and Midge Reiff were declared the victors, winning ten of



At left, an article from an unknown New Jersey newspaper: "How Roller Skaters Train." Speed Skaters from all over the country are now in training for the twenty-one-day marathon on rollers, to be held at Dreamland Park February 7 to 28. Many of the racers use motor pace in their training. Already on the scene of the three week grind are two local entries, Bob Ringwald of Newark and Ernie Meier of Arlington, who are shown as they begin a workout at the park behind the specially constructed motor cycle piloted by Daredevil De Muro.

the final eighteen sprints. Many of the skaters who entered the contest were veterans of other sports. They were attracted to the roller skating event because of the publicity the sport as a whole was then receiving in the media. There was an international field as the race started on February 8, 1934. In addition to racers from the United States, the registration records for the race showed that skaters from Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, England, Canada, Mexico participated.

Fifteen three-man teams were registered, with one skater representing the team on the track at one time. Canada was the best represented country in the race, with five of the starting trios. Ray Ibester, Stan Malcolmson and Si Cimino formed the French-Canadian team from Ontario. Wearing Montreal uniforms were Charley Ray, Gerald Cote, and the Canadian champion snowshoer Pete Gavuzzi. Paul Schaufret, Paul Emilemaro and Albert Thiobolt represented Quebec. From Toronto came Arthur Jattz, John St. Jean and Bernard Larost. The final entry from north of the border, the Ottawa team was composed of Lucien Tesser, Roland Seymour and Lauret Rheaume.

All five of the Canadian teams were excellent, Canada at that time being a hot bed of roller skating. With these five teams and the top American squad of Ringwald, Hawthorn and Reiff, the race proved to be a world class competition. The best known of the racers were Americans Robert "Red" Ringwald and Joey Ray (a former track star), and Pete Gavuzzi of Canada.

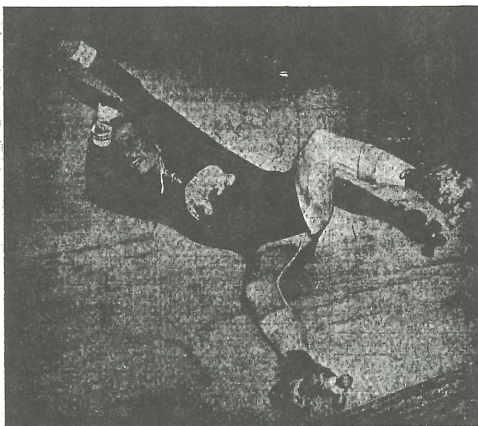
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## The Twenty One Day Race (continued)

The race itself was highlighted by spectacular spills at high speed, skaters being lapped, and ties for scoring positions. After hours of searching through Vic Brown's papers and other materials in the museum, we have been unable to discover the exact format of this marathon. However, many of the other speed marathons done in the Thirties ran between ten and twenty races a day, ranging in length from 440 yard sprints to 20 mile endurance events. Each competitor or team was awarded points for finishing first, second or third in each race, with the high point team or skater after the marathon was completed being declared the winner. This 1934 competition at Dreamland Park probably followed the same format.

According to the competitors, every skater in the race were awarded with what they referred to in the newspapers as "Badges of Honor," commonly known as "raspberries." Although the race undoubtedly helped the stock of the bandage industry, foot problems were the major cause for concern. By the end of the nineteen days, severe foot injuries was the prime factor in reducing the field from fifteen to only seven teams. From the publicity the event generated for roller skating, one has to agree with Vic Brown's observation that the venture was a success. Looking back at the twenty one day race, it seems that the idea was before its time. With a little more knowledge about nutrition and sports medicine, the race might have been finished as scheduled, and perhaps have become an annual event.

Pictured below is part of the newspaper coverage generated by the race. At Left: "Down the Spillway. Spills, track burns and a hide full of splinters are part of the endurance roller skating game, the same as in six-day bike racing. In the picture the approved method of taking a tumble down the banked track is demonstrated by Claude Hawthorn of St. Louis, who is one of the racers entered in the twenty-one day team grind which starts tomorrow night at Dreamland Park." At Right: "One Way Skaters Spend Leisure Time. Jack Gillespie (left) and Pete Fabas, two of the human fliers in Dreamland Park's current 21-day roller skate derby, are shown repairing their skates during the lull hours of the grind." In the center is Bob Ringwald of Newark, a member of the team which emerged victorious.



CURATOR'S CORNER (continued from page 2)

We are in the process of completing an inventory of the back issues of "Skate" magazine now in the museum. As part of the permanent collection in the museum library, we will have two complete sets of "Skate" from 1940 to the present ("Skate" was know as "Skating Review" from 1940 to 1944, and from 1945 through 1959 as "Skating News"). As soon as the inventory is complete, we shall be holding a "clearance" sale on the surplus back issues. Museum honorary members will receive a flyer later this Fall.

1987 marks the 50th Anniversary of the first United States Amateur Roller Skating (speed) Championships, and the formation of the Roller Skating Rink Operators Association. In recognition of this event, the museum is researching and writing the history of the RSROA, which until the merger of USFARS and USARSA formed USAC/RS in 1972, was primarily concerned with competitive skating. We hope to publish this report in April 1987. We are also considering having something special made, such as a commemorative plate or medallion, to mark these events. Your thoughts or suggestions would be most welcome.

**WANT LIST:** The museum would like to acquire the following items for the collection: "Johnny Mason" (1947 ad at right) dance skates; pre-World War II roller skating rink postcards; Rink Hockey equipment, programs and photographs; boots made in the 1940's by the Bruno and Jacobs Company; and a set of the original (without the stepped-up reinforcement) mid-1940's Eli Fackler horseshoe toe stop brackets.

## JOHNNY MASON

*Those Great Dance Skates*

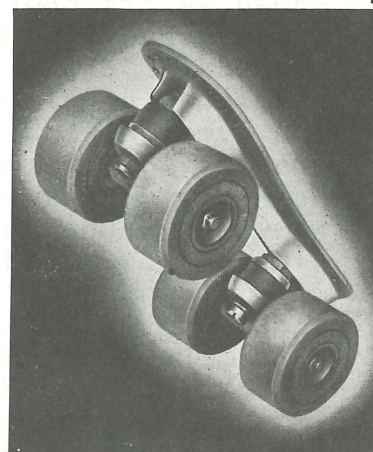
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Contributors of \$5 receive their choice of the National Museum of Roller Skating

Pin or  Patch (please specify)

Contributors of \$15 or more become honorary members of the Museum. Benefits include the Museum pin, a wallet-size membership card, free admission to the Museum, and the quarterly newsletter.

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And mail to: The National Museum of Roller Skating, PO Box 81846, Lincoln, NE 68501

## HELP PRESERVE ROLLER SKATING HISTORY



through  
Honorary Membership  
in the  
National Museum  
of  
Roller Skating



The 1986 USAC/RS Amateur Athletes Roller Skating Hall of Fame Induction Ceremonies. Left to right: Buzz Kerwin, Randy Dayney, Fleurette Arseneault Jeffers and Dan Littel.

Coming in December: Competitive requirements for the 1939 Nationals.

**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ROLLER SKATING**  
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