

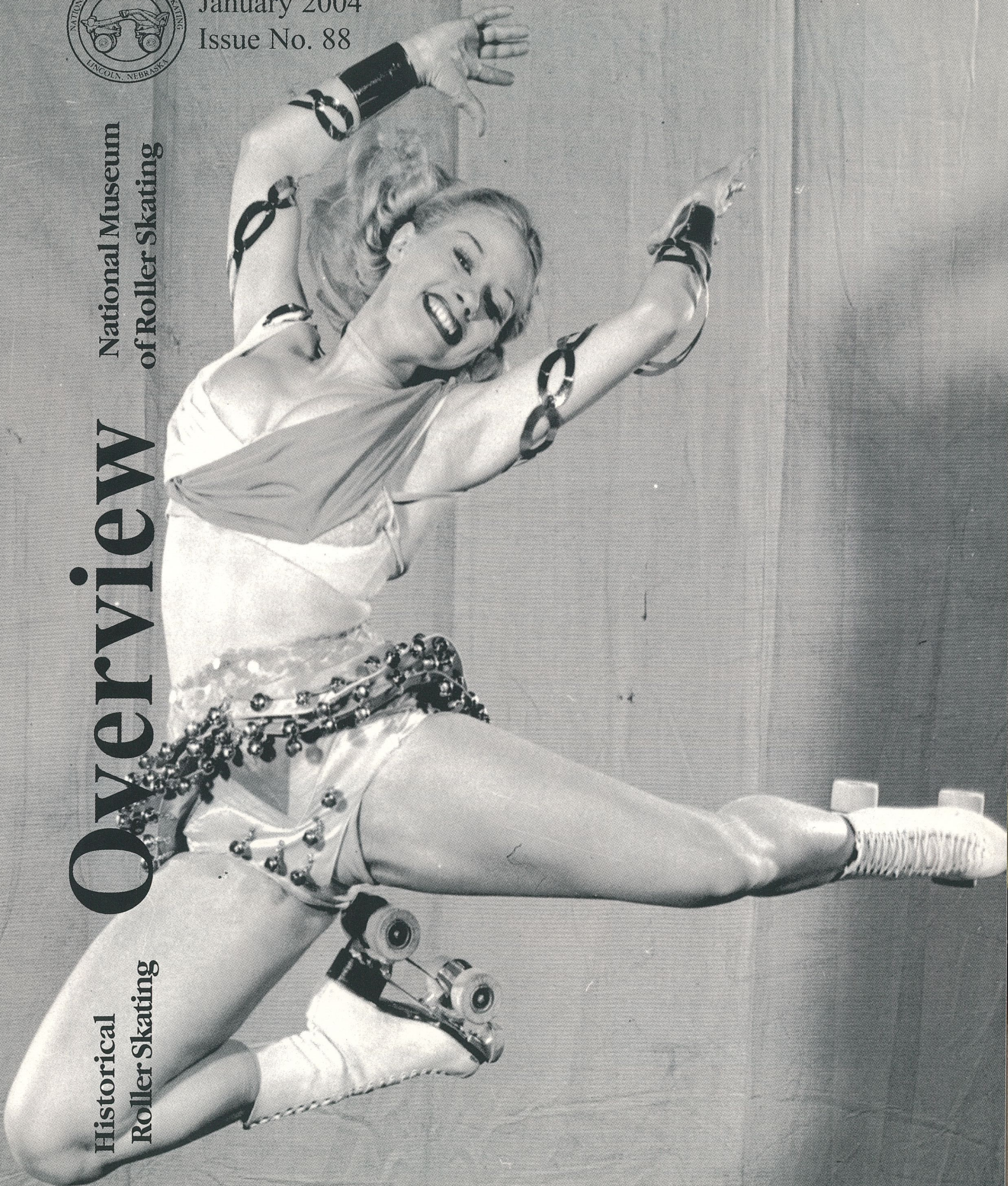


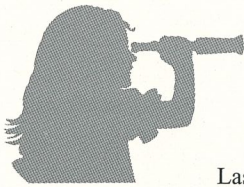
January 2004
Issue No. 88

National Museum
of Roller Skating

Overview

Historical
Roller Skating

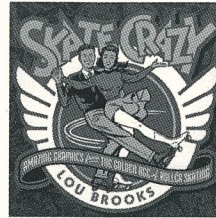




Curator's Column

By Deborah L. Wallis,
Director and Curator

Last month, the museum added a new book to our offerings from the Museum's Store titled *Skate Crazy! Amazing Graphics from the Golden Age of Roller Skating* by Lou Brooks. The book explores the artwork of rink stickers, the Skating Vanities, rink entertainment, skate queens and many more topics. The museum worked with Mr. Brooks by providing photos, sheet music and ads for the book. If you have not purchased your copy yet, call the museum today and place your order.



The cover photo on this issue is Peggy Wallace of the famous Skating Vanities doing a stag leap during a performance in 1952. To learn more about Ms. Wallace, read the featured article that is a reprint of an interview with her.

The start of new year brings up the museum's annual fundraiser, the Raffle. The raffle is the museum's only fundraiser and it provides the vital operating support for the museum. The funds from the raffle are used to ensure the fiscal vitality of the museum, thereby enabling the museum to fulfill our mission of enriching the experience of roller skaters by increasing their understanding and appreciation of its rich history and accomplishments, to extending public knowledge of these past events and by preserving this legacy for future generations. You can help the museum by buying a \$50 raffle ticket. And not only will you be helping the museum, but you will also be giving yourself the chance to win some cash. To purchase a ticket, fill out the form below and send it in with your payment.

In November, the museum's Board of Directors approved a new mission statement. The new statement provides a tighter focus for the museum, it helps to point toward a future path for the museum and it will also assist the museum in going after grants. This new mission statement is just the first step in laying the groundwork for the museum's future. The museum's board of directors, its officers and the museum's staff are working on several projects that will help to ensure a long future for the museum. I look forward to sharing with all of these projects with our members.

Thank you for your continued support of the museum.

National Museum of Roller Skating
4730 South Street Suite 2
Lincoln, NE 68506
Phone: 402/483-7551 x16
Fax: 402/483-1465
www.rollerskatingmuseum.com
postmaster@rollerskatingmuseum.com

Museum Hours

9 am to 5 pm, Monday - Friday
Closed holidays and weekends.

Mission Statement: Roller skating is a shared experience of many generations of Americans as a recreation, sport and commercial enterprise. The National Museum of Roller Skating is committed to enriching the experience of roller skaters by increasing their understanding and appreciation of its rich history and accomplishments, to extending public knowledge of these past events and by preserving this legacy for future generations.

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Prizes Consist of:

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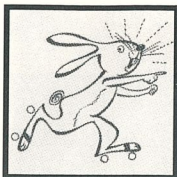
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FEATURE ARTICLE

Coming Full Circle

by Peg Scheldrick

Reprinted from the Fall 1981 issue of *Skate* magazine

"Early in the morning, before classes at school, I would take the subway and then trudge blocks to Park Circle Roller Rink in Brooklyn, New York. There Ci would be waiting for me, lights ablaze over the center circles..."

Peggy Wallace remembers those early practice sessions with Roland "Ci" Cioni vividly. Under his watchful eye she would trace and retrace the compulsory figures that helped her become an international roller skating star. Her idol was Sonja Henie, the Dorothy Hamill of her day.

"As memories flood back, the most persistent was the love, dedication, hard work, and extremely competitive spirit we had then," says Wallace in some written recollections she shared with *Skate* recently. "Not that we didn't have our fun times too, but discipline was the operative word, and don't you forget it!"

That discipline saw her through competitions, tours, and exhibitions the world over, and enabled her to switch from roller skating to ice skating with no difficulty. "Who could ever believe that one pleasurable afternoon roller skating session could and would change one's entire life?" writes Wallace.

She grew up in New York, and came into national prominence in the mid-1940's by taking the United States Intermediate Ladies title, and the Intermediate Pairs title with no less a partner than Norman Latin. Wallace and Latin became roller skating goodwill ambassadors, skating benefits, pageants, and exhibitions for charity while trying to find time to train for further competitions.

The pair went on tour in Canada and England for the RSROA, much in the same way the Lidstones of Britain had toured the United States in 1938.



1947 World Pairs Champions Norman Latin and Peggy Wallace from Brooklyn, New York (1987.27.2)

"Even though it was hectic, it was most rewarding," recalls Wallace. "The tour itself lasted for slightly more than a month, and every night Norman and I would travel, sometimes hundreds of miles, to the various rinks... each different in size, some with obstructions, and with floors of every conceivable skateability. Many times we had to skate without any preparation!"

But they adapted and enjoyed themselves. Enthusiastic Britains followed them from rink to rink to watch their performances. They returned to the United States in time to participate in the World Meet, held in Oakland, California in 1947. Wallace took Senior Ladies Championships title, and joined Latin once more to win the World Pair Championship title.

The pair felt ready for a new challenge, so they signed with the "Skating Vanities" roller skating show. Norman Latin left "show biz" after a year to take up teaching, but Peggy Wallace teamed up with Tommy Lane (an old friend and former champion) and stayed with the exhibition.

"Tommy was another skater who eventually wanted to teach," writes Wallace. "I shall never forget his organizing our Gold Medal Tests. They were held on our day off from the 'Vanities,' in Wembley, England. Tommy, Joni Pierce, and I skated and passed Bronze, Silver and Gold Figure Tests. At that time, one also had to pass the free skating. Tommy and I also skated and passed Bronze, Silver and Gold Pair Skating Tests. All in one day! Quite remarkable, since I doubt anyone had accomplished that feat either before or since."

Wallace stayed with the "Vanities" for five years. Then came a six month layoff, during which she shed her wheels and donned blades instead. Relying again on discipline and determination, she made the transition from wood to ice successfully enough to become a member of the ice skating troupe at the Roxy theatre in New York City. "From there I went to England to appear in many ice shows and pantomimes," says Wallace. "In England I skated with the lovely Jacqueline DuBief, who was then the World Ladies Ice Skating Champion."

Wallace continued touring with ice shows for a number of years. Then, when time came to settle down and teach, she returned to Manhattan. "Roller skating, being by my first love, was what I wanted to teach," says Wallace. "Unfortunately, there were no roller rinks available in Manhattan. I began teaching ice skating, and remained with ice until recently."

She was able to return to roller skating when two new roller rinks opened in her area. She's glad to be back teaching the sport she loves and hopes that competitive skating will become more prominent with the local skaters. She has plenty of experience to share in both roller and ice skating, but feels roller skating is the more challenging of the two.

"Technique and body positions may be the same, but balance points differ," she says. "Consider spinning as an example. In spinning on rollers, you must spin on tiny circle edges causing much friction and reduced speed, whilst the ice blade can accommodate spinning onto the lower toe pick (scratch spin) or weight over the flat of the blade, giving rise to less friction, no edges, and considerable speed. No doubt about it, roller skating requires a greater degree of expertness."

Over the years, Wallace has seen many changes in the art and sport of roller skating, not all of them for the better.

"Counting the divisions for figures 1981, there are eleven events.

Couple that with free skating and an astronomical figure will emerge. Compare that with five championship events that existed when I was an amateur skater," says Wallace. "We must remember that in the past, figures and free skating were a combined effort, thus aiming for a highly difficult win! While I agree in principle with greater participation, I believe that the old system produced a more disciplined and profound competitiveness than I see in skating today. Making it easier does not necessarily make it better."

Figures were very important when Wallace was an amateur. Skaters had to follow powder or rosin loops rather than painted circles, and a greater emphasis was placed on line, footwork, music, and costumes. She and Norman Latin strove for continuity in lifts and artistry in execution.

"While I'm sure many of the young skaters will not agree with me, I do believe that there exists a greater laxity in competitive standards than there was in the past. Certainly the skating system today affords more opportunities for more skaters to win more medals," writes Wallace. "(Yet) there is no question that the athletic ability of skaters today has come a long way. When I competed, a double jump was just being attempted, and at times successfully completed. Now it's triples!"

"(But) I don't think just doing 'tricks or items' make for a championship performance because quantity does not make up for quality...If you're to be called an 'artistic' skater, then you

must be artistic. (Your routine must be) done with skill and good taste."

Looking to the future, Wallace plans to continue teaching roller skating, trying to instill in her students the discipline and enthusiasm that has kept her a champion through the years.

"I hope the near future will bring our sport into the Olympic games where it so richly deserves to be. I hope our young skaters will continue to be dedicated, reach and attain higher and higher goals of proficiency, and make all of us who so love the sport of roller skating, continue to be proud of them!!"



Peggy Wallace and the Skating Vanities troupe in the 1951 Bolero production number (1998.22.6)



One of the largest sections of the museum's collection is our collection of photographs. The museum houses over 15,000 photographs, and our collection is growing rapidly. The photographs span a time period from the early 1900s to the present, and they cover almost every imaginable subject related to roller skating. Our collection includes photographs of roller rinks across the country, skaters competing in various events, vaudeville performers on roller skates, actors in skating-related movies, variety shows like the Skating Vanities, and many other subjects.

We use the photographs in our collection in many ways. One of the main uses of photos is in exhibits, where they are used to illustrate information in the exhibit text, or to provide context for the objects in the exhibits. We also rely on our photos to help us with research requests from members of the public. Another recent use of our photos occurred this past summer, when some of our photographs were used by USA Roller Sports staff members for the creation of programs, t-shirts, and videos for the national championships.

Our photographs make up an extremely valuable component of the museum's collection. They help us document many parts of the history of roller skating, including important events, famous skaters, and changes in fashion and technology. As our photograph collection grows, so does our ability to preserve roller skating's past.

Recent Donations

Lorraine Bell, Lincoln, Nebraska, *Flyaway clamp-on skates used by the donor in Elkton, South Dakota.*

Gary Callahan, Racine, Wisconsin, *photos of donor and his partners at world competitions and archival material*

Rodger & Kathy Confer, Erie, Pennsylvania, *skate parts*

Janine Ferreira, Lincoln, Nebraska, *2002 and 2003 Roller Figure Skating Academy t-shirts*

Richard Hawkins, USA Roller Sports, Lincoln, Nebraska, *programs, wheels, archival material and plaques*

Beverly Hofferber, Omaha, Nebraska, *Skates and case used at Sandy's Roller Rink in Burlington, Iowa and an article on the rink*

Linda Katz, Rinkside, Columbus, Ohio, *keychain*

Juanell and Ron Largent, Kansas City, Kansas, *Roller Derby skates, jersey, photographs and archival material*

C.W. Lowe, Polk City, Florida, *Rink stickers, postcards, patches and archival material from various rinks*

Caroline Mirelli, Memphis, Tennessee, *Roller Bowl Skate-Dance Club of Chicago membership card, 1964 program from Skatehaven rink and newspaper clipping on 2003 National competitors*

John Mongrella, Rockaway, New Jersey, *1908 roller rink postcard*

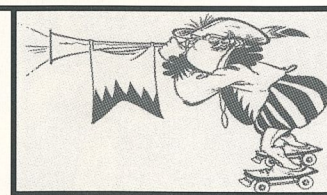
Tom Murray, Rochester, New York, *pair of ladies skates with Jim Cook artistic wheels*

Dean Rosko, Sturtevant, Wisconsin, *compact disks with recordings of donor playing dance temps on the organ*

Andy Upbin, Brooklyn, New York, *Empire Roller Disco sticker*

Dan Warner, Aurora, Illinois, *Great Lakes Regional programs, Illinois State and tri-state programs and archival material*

Jane Wojnarowsky, Willoughby, Ohio, *Materials from the 2003 World Inline Hockey championships, USARS/AU Roller Hockey items and pair of men's roller skates*



Featured Exhibit

The Thrills and Spills of the Mad Whirl: Roller Derby from 1935 to Present

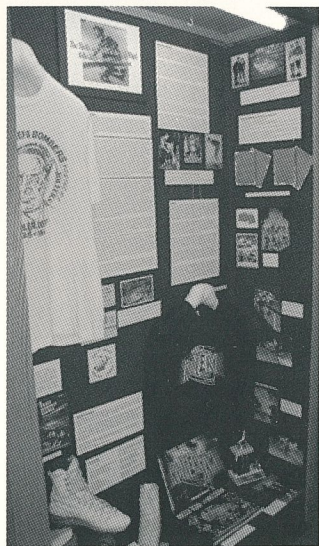
The colorful fast-paced banked track game of Roller Derby actually started as a marathon race. Its founder and creator, Leo Seltzer, had been a producer of small time sports shows during the 1930s including the popular walk and dance -athons. After having read about the huge popularity of roller skating, Seltzer was determined to find a way to include roller skating in his endurance 'athons.

On August 13, 1935, the Transcontinental Roller Derby was born. The derby was an endurance race going the distance from New York City to San Diego for a total of 3,735 miles. However, all of the skating was completed indoors at the Chicago Coliseum on a track that was banked 30 degrees around the curves. The object of the race was to skate the distance in the shortest amount of time. The twenty-five contestant teams consisted of one male and one female skater. A huge electronic map tracked the distance of the skaters as they moved westward.

The skaters skated for fourteen hours per day for seven days a week and had to skate the given number of miles for each day or risk being disqualified. At all times, at least one member of the team had to be on the track during the set skating periods. The skaters even lived at the coliseum during the race and slept on cots in the middle of the track in full view of the spectators. In order to keep the spectators interested in the race, during the evening hours, the racers would compete for fastest skater award and professional entertainers were brought in to entertain the crowds. One night's entertainment even included a wedding of two of the skaters from opposing teams, Jack Cummings and Jayne Terreberry.

The derby finally ended on September 22, 1935 and only nine teams lasted the entire race. Exhaustion and injuries caused the majority of the teams to pull out of the race. The team of Clarice Martin and Bernie McKay completed the race in 493 hours and 12 minutes and became the winners of the first roller derby.

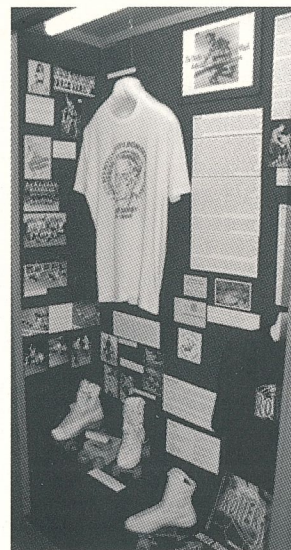
The first Transcontinental Roller Derby was a success with not only the skaters but also with the spectators. Seltzer took the derby on the road and it appeared in several cities across the nation over the next two years. During the 1930s, the roller derby was a very good employer as it paid \$25.00 per week plus they also provided the skaters with food, clothing, shelter and medical needs. In return, the skaters worked fourteen-hour days seven days a week for seven-week runs.



In 1937 during a race in Miami, Florida, faster skaters would pass the slower skates in order to gain points but the slower skaters began to

shove and push the skaters back. However, per the rules, physical contact between the skates was forbidden. The referees stopped the play and fined or penalized the skaters. The spectators booed the referees and the fines. Watching this, sportswriter Damon Runyon suggested Seltzer change the rules to include physical contact between the players.

Seltzer began to tinker with the rules. He took ideas from other contact sports such as hockey and football to shift the emphasis of the game from endurance to competition. The teams were set up and each match featured two opposing teams vying for points by completing jams. Each team consisted of five men and five women with each gender skating against the same gender of the opposing team. Teams now earned points by successfully circling the track and passing a member of the rival team at the rear of the pack. The designated skater's attempts to shove, slug and thrust his or her way through the line was called a jam and became the hallmark of Roller Derby. Jams ended when a skater fell, a hand signal given by the lead skater or when the time limit expired. Seltzer also had a "home team" at every game as one of the teams was designated the home team of the town in which the match occurred. The "home" team wore white jerseys and the "visiting" team wore red jerseys. The white jerseys not only designated the home team but also the good team while the red jersey designated the mean team that did not always play by the rules.



The new media of television broadcast its first Roller Derby game on November 29, 1948 in the New York City area. The response was tremendous. Following a thirteen week contract in which Derby games were broadcast on CBS, all of the networks vied for the rights to broadcast Roller Derby games. Leo Seltzer signed a contract with ABC and to keep up with the demand of games for the broadcast, the National Roller Derby League was formed with six clubs: New York Chiefs, Brooklyn Red Devils, New Jersey Jolters, Philadelphia Panthers, Chicago Westerners and Washington DC Jets. TV and Roller Derby was a good match. The games were broadcast several nights a week nationwide often in prime time. Skaters became household names and attendance at the games blossomed. After three years on ABC, Seltzer wanted to shop around for a better TV contract but Roller Derby had been over saturated and no one wanted it. This was a huge blow as the TV contract was the Derby's main source of income. In the fall of 1952, Seltzer moved the base of operations from the East coast to the West coast with teams in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

A big change occurred to the league in 1958 when Leo Seltzer retired and turned the league over to his son Jerry Seltzer. The main difference between the father and the son was their view of the game. Leo truly believed Roller Derby was a legitimate sport with possible inclusion in the Olympics. Jerry Seltzer did not care if the sport was seen as legitimate or as entertainment; his main concern was the bottom of line of how many tickets were sold.

Jerry also used TV to popularize the game but in a much different way than his father. He did not sign a contract but instead he filmed the games with videotape instead of the common grainy kinescope used at the time. He then sent the videos out to independent TV stations that would broadcast the videos and then ship the tapes onto the next station. Thus by using this small grass roots method, Jerry was able to rekindle interest in the game. It worked and Roller Derby had its second boom. But with success comes copycats that would like to have a piece of the pie as well. Roller Games was the only one to survive and successfully compete with the Derby.

Due to several factors including the worldwide energy crisis and a strike by the players, Roller Derby was in financial trouble by 1973 and Jerry Seltzer began to look for a way out. On December 8, 1973, Roller Derby ceased to exist. Roller Games absorbed many of the players but suffered the same fate as the Derby had in less than a year.

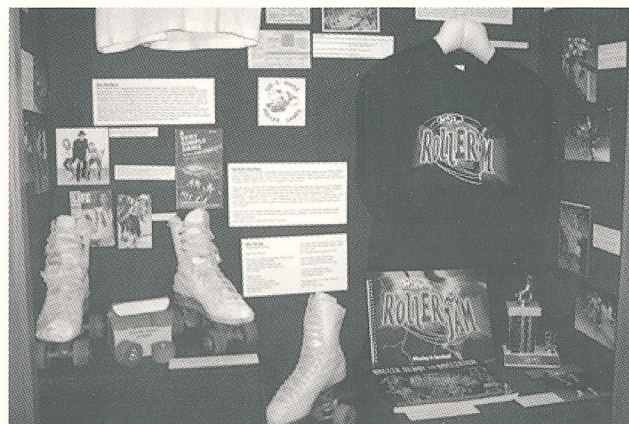
RollerJam

Beloved Roller Derby star Joan Weston died in 1997 and her death rekindled the interest in Roller Derby and prompted some to try bringing it back. Stephen Land and Ross Bagwell with their backgrounds in television producing and advertising contacted Jerry Seltzer and asked what would it take to bring Roller Derby back. Many had tried and failed before but with the assistance of Seltzer, Land and Bagwell thought they could succeed. They were able to get a twenty-six week length contract on The Nashville Network (TNN).

Their new league was named the World Skating League (WSL) and they set up their training ground in Orlando, Florida. As with the change in the times, in order to attract talented skaters, the WSL paid the skaters to train unlike the Derby where the skaters had to pay the Derby to train. All of the athletes selected were chosen for their skating abilities as most had backgrounds in speed skating, roller hockey, jam dancing or aggressive skating.

RollerJam was officially launched. To get the audience interested, TNN made and broadcast a documentary

"RollerJam: Roller Derby Reborn" with hope that this would attract their fan base. The new name of RollerJam was chosen to better reflect today's audience that had grown up with MTV and to better reflect the fitness level of today's athletes. Two other changes included a larger banked track made of plastic and filming the games in a studio in Orlando complete with multi-colored moving lights, fog machines and a booming sound system. RollerJam brought many Roller Derby stars into their organization including Jerry Seltzer as the Head Commissioner, Nick Scopas, Joan Weston's husband, as the key trainer and Buddy Atkinson, Jr, Dru Scott Atkinson and Erwin Miller as players.



The first RollerJam game aired on January 15, 1999. The league had six teams: California Quakes, New York Enforcers, Florida Sundogs, Nevada Hot Dice, Texas Rustlers and Illinois Riot. The players used both the new inline skates as well as the old quad skates. Unfortunately, RollerJam was not able to bring back the boom of Roller Derby. RollerJam aired their last show two years later on January 19, 2001. Various groups continue to stage their versions of Roller Derby or to put on reunion games but nothing has been able to bring back the thrills and spills of the mad whirl of Roller Derby.



How I Spent My Summer Internship

by Amanda Ray

I have been asked to think back and recap my experience this summer interning at the National Museum of Roller Skating. This request has reminded me of when I was a kid and the teacher would always ask us to write a paragraph on how we spent our summer vacation. My experiences have reminded me of what types of adventures I encountered as the Summer Intern at the museum.

My experience from this summer has given me a better understanding about the field that I will be entering after graduation. I was intrigued and challenged to create an exhibit case of my own choosing that would help educate and enhance the experience of our visitors. Since I am a native of Lincoln, I focused my attention on all of the different experiences our visitors could have roller skating in the city. I was looking for a way to promote roller skating to children and their families while they visited the museums. I directed the exhibit towards children by using toys and colorful pictures to get their attention about the sport.

This summer also allowed me to witness the rush and excitement

of skaters and their families that visited the museums during Nationals. I received first hand knowledge from these people on how important this sport is in their lives. It was great talking with all of you and I want to thank you for the knowledge you gave me about roller skating.



Lastly, I would like to thank Deborah and Emily for helping me to understand all of the different tricks and tools a person needs to help make a day at a museum enjoyable for all visitors. I was able to try my hand at making boxes for displays, cleaning and preparing artifacts for the exhibit cases, cleaning cases, researching artifacts as well as learning the fine art of taking inventory of the Museum Store after Nationals. This summer has helped me to appreciate all of the work that is required at a small museum with a small and knowledgeable staff. They helped by giving me space to learn and challenged me to take the next step in understanding the needs and wants of visitors. I look forward to volunteering my time this year in creating a wonderful place for everyone to learn about roller skating.

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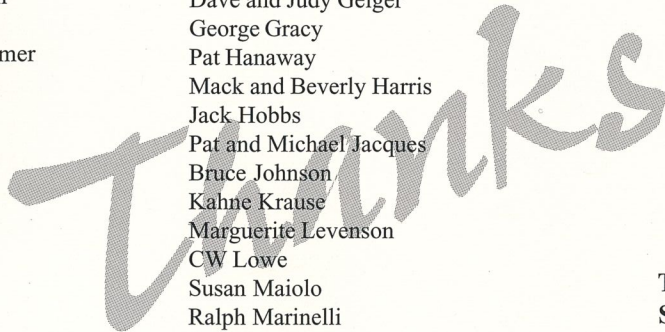
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The National Museum of Roller Skating symbolizes the generosity and commitment of our members. It is the support of our members that sustain the museum and without our members the museum would not exist. We are indebted to them. We are pleased to recognize in this issue our Benefactor, Patron, Associate Patron level members for their interest and philanthropy.

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The National Museum of Roller Skating would like to thank our new museum members that have joined since our last issue. Thank you for your support!

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Contributions in addition to membership increase your support of the museum's activities.

Membership includes a subscription to the member's newsletter, Historical Roller Skating Overview, 10% off museum store items, a membership card, and your choice of publications (please check one):

- The History of Roller Skating* ©1997 ISBN 0-9658192-0-5
- The Allure of the Rink* ©1999 ISBN 0-9658192-1-3

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 or call the museum at 402/483-7551 x16

All donations are tax-deductible up to the amount permitted by law.



Just For Fun

Can you complete this word scramble? Try to unscramble the 20 words from the exhibit *The Thrills and Spills of the Mad Whirl: Roller Derby from 1935 to Present*. If you need some help, the answers are listed below the puzzle.

Word Scramble

- 1. eihfcs _____
- 2. molejrrlae _____
- 3. sltnnnntcrtaaoie _____
- 4. srrcfneeo _____
- 5. teessrwn _____
- 6. uaeernncd _____
- 7. rsstlreu _____
- 8. lordw istnakg ueegal _____
- 9. lorelr megas _____
- 10. zelrest _____

- 11. trojles _____
- 12. oht eicd _____
- 13. samj _____
- 14. napresht _____
- 15. oudgnss _____
- 16. orit _____
- 17. onaj snowet _____
- 18. erd silved _____
- 19. ejst _____
- 20. kuaesq _____

- 20. Quakes
- 19. Jets
- 18. Red Devils
- 17. Joan Weston
- 16. Riot

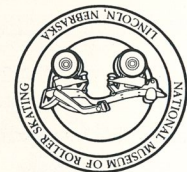
- 15. Sundogs
- 14. Panthers
- 13. Jams
- 12. Hot Dice
- 11. Jolters

- 10. Seltzer
- 9. Roller Games
- 8. World Skating League
- 7. Rustlers
- 6. Endurance

- 5. Westeners
- 4. Enforcers
- 3. Transcontinental
- 2. RollerJam
- 1. Chiefs

CONSIDER INCLUDING THE MUSEUM IN YOUR WILL!

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