

August/September 1998
Issue No. 65



National Museum of
Roller Skating

Historical Roller
Skating Overview



Dear Members,

In June, the museum received a special loan from Tara Lipinski, the youngest individual gold medalist from the 1998 Olympics at Nagano. Before beginning her amateur career as an ice skater, Tara Lipinski was a competitive roller skater. She won a National Championship in 1991 in Primary Girls Singles in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Please see page nine for details.

The feature article in this issue is about the history of in-line roller skates. The article explores the early origins to patent problems as researched by former assistant curator, Sarah Webber.

Ms. Webber left the museum in June to pursue other career opportunities. Ms. Webber started working here in April of 1997, and she has accomplished many things for the museum including writing articles for the newsletter, designing exhibits, and cataloging a lot of photographs. I wish her much success with her new career, and I am sure she will always remember her roller skating career at the museum.

In the last newsletter, I mentioned the fact that the museum was awarded a grant from the Nebraska Humanities Council, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, to build two interactive exhibits. I am happy to report that both exhibits are up and look great! Please turn to page eight for a complete wrap-up of activities.

In May, the museum co-sponsored the Hyland Hundred, a noncompetitive bike/roller skate race to benefit the trail system in the city of Lincoln. The museum encouraged participation from local residents. Compared to last year, the amount of participants doubled! The event, which raised over \$10,000, will certainly help create longer and safer trails for the bikers and skaters of Lincoln.

The 1998 USA Roller Skating Artistic & Speed National Championships will take place in Fresno, California, August 1-22. There will be skates from the museum on exhibit during a portion of the artistic events, August 5-10. If you would like to see the best artistic and speed skaters in the USA, this would be an opportune time to attend.

Since June, the museum has lost two important people from the skating community, former board member, Bruce Pearson and Marge Martin McLauchlen. Mr. Pearson was an avid museum supporter and was also President of the Roller Skating Association from 1991 to 1992. Mrs. McLauchlen was an artistic skater and coach. A picture of her was used on a postcard advertising the San Francisco Airport loan last November. Both will be missed.



Marge Martin
McLauchlen

A wonderful collection of roller skating patents has recently become available to the museum, however, we need additional support from our members to purchase these patents. We have raised some of the money, but we still need your support. This collection contains 455 original roller skate patents from 1823 to 1910. These original patents provide detailed information about the history of these skates. I hope you will be able to provide additional funding to purchase this unique collection of roller skating patents. Please see page nine for funding opportunities or call the museum for more information.

Thanks again for your continued support. I hope you will have a chance to visit the new interactive exhibits at the museum soon.

Sincerely,

Michael Zaidman
Director & Curator



The Hyland Hundred, May 30, 1998

On the cover: From a Rollerblade® media kit, circa 1989.

Corrections from issue #64: The photographs on the left side of page four should have been switched. Ivy King and Joe Evans were in the top image and Clarice Martin and Bernie McKay were in the bottom image. Page eight, Roberta Waldman was in the photograph, not Robert Waldman. Page nine, raffle ticket buyers not included, but we still appreciate their support include: Kelli Mirelli; Pamela Mitchell; Ian Moodie; William Moores; Robert Moul; Robert & Helen Murphy (2); Robert Nataupsky; Joseph & Jenisa Nazzaro; Joe Nazzaro Jr. (2); Marsha Neary; Glen & Jo Donna Neifert (2) and Nancie Nemanich. The number indicates the amount of tickets purchased.

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America Online: hit keyword roller skating, then Grandstand

Museum Hours

9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. Closed holidays and weekends, open by appointment.

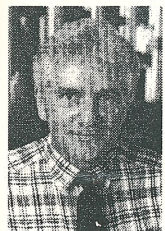
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All Lined Up with Someplace to Go: A History of In-Line Roller Skates & Skating by Sarah Webber

In 1979, a semi-professional ice hockey player went shopping at a Bloomington, Minnesota, sporting goods store and came across a pair of 1966 Chicago Roller Skate Company in-line roller skates. Liking this idea, the twenty year old Scott Olson, along with his brother Brennan, set up shop in their parents' garage and began manufacturing in-line roller skates for fellow ice hockey players. Hockey players in the state quickly took to the skates for cross-training during the summer off-season, months.

Selling door to door and by word of mouth for the first year, in 1980



Robert O. Naegle, Jr.

Scott and Brennan Olson founded Rollerblade, Inc. A few years after starting the company, Scott Olson sold most of his stock (although his brother did not and remained with Rollerblade) to Minneapolis investor Robert O. Naegle, Jr. Though initially designed to slip on an ice hockey player's boot when the ice blades were removed, in 1986 the company decided to market their

product as fitness skates. The company slimmed down and painted their skates in popular neon colors. As a marketing strategy, the Minnesota firm gave hundreds of Rollerblade® skates to skate rental shops along the beaches of Los Angeles. With the view that trends originated on one of the coasts and then came inland, the Midwestern Rollerblade company exported their skates to sunny southern California. The marketing gamble quickly paid off.

Early History of In-Line Roller Skates

By producing the Rollerblade® in-line skates, Brennan and Scott Olson updated an idea with origins dating back to the 18th century. The first known skates, created in the 1700s, possessed a single line of wheels, and for the next century wheels on skates followed this

alignment. In 1819, M. Petitbled in Paris patented the first roller skate, again possessing three wheels in a row. Four years later, the Englishman Robert John Tyers

invented and patented the 'Volito' skate with five wheels of varying sizes in a line. During the next forty years, all skates had an in-line set of wheels, varying in number (some had as many as six wheels, others as few as two) and in their design. These skates, however, lacked the ability to turn easily.

In 1863, James Plimpton revolutionized the roller skate by inventing a skate with four wheels, two pairs set side by



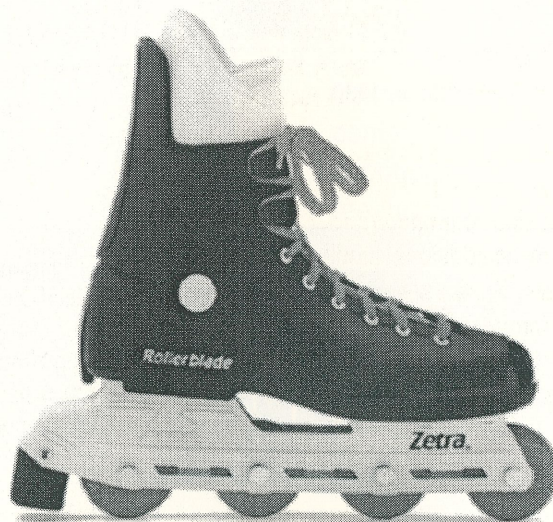
Chicago's Rollerblade in 1966.

side. Because this skate allowed for greater control and ease of skating, the four-wheeled skate, also known as a quad skate, quickly came to dominate the industry. Companies, seeking to tap into the popularity of roller skating on the quad skates, nearly abandoned the in-line roller skate. Though largely renounced in favor of the more popular



Rollerblade® logo, circa 1986.

quad skate, several companies in the first half of the twentieth century designed roller skates using an in-line set of wheels. The Peck & Snyder Company patented an in-line skate with two wheels in 1900, and five years later John Jay Young in New York City patented an adjustable length clamp-on in-line skate. In 1910, the Roller Hockey Skate Company designed a three wheel in-line skate with a leather shoe, and in the 1930s the Best Ever Built Skate Company manufactured an in-line with three wheels close to the ground. The in-line



The Rollerblade® in the mid 1980s.



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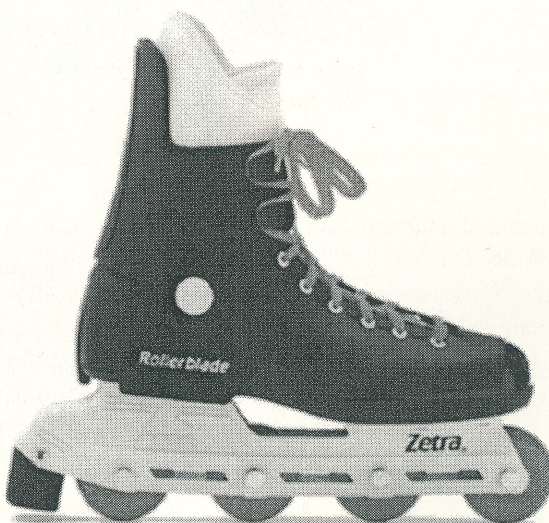
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