

December 2020

Rolling Thru Time
Newsletter

The
National
Museum of
Roller Skating



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Museum Fundraiser Continues

THE RACE IS ON
GET YOUR SKATES ON TO HELP US



The National
Museum
of Roller
Skating's
40th
Anniversary

1980 - 2020

Please consider donating \$40 for 40 years to help support your museum of roller skating history.

Simply visit our website: rollerskatingmuseum.org and find the link to our donation page in the menu bar.

Your kind donation will help to preserve the largest collection of roller skating artifacts in the world for future generations of our global roller skating family to enjoy for years to come.

Donate with



\$40 FOR 40TH



rollerskatingmuseum.org



For more information on how to donate, go [HERE](#)

By Nellie Anderson Lillie, Museum Vice President and Fundraising Committee Chairperson

2020 comes to a close after a historic year for both our sport and industry this a great time to remember our Museum through the \$40 for 40 Years campaign. It was 40 years ago that the National Museum of Roller Skating started to become a reality. There is no doubt that this current time period will be well documented in the National Museum of Roller Skating for future generations. It takes all of you to keep the Museum the spectacular place that it is.

For the rink industry that has suffered great business loss through mandated closures and restrictions it has been awe inspiring to see how rink owners and operators across the country have banded together. The support they have offered each other in navigating a very fluid situation is historic. The innovative ways they have changed their business models to still be an important part of the community even during a pandemic shows brilliance.

For the sport of roller skating during COVID the perseverance of the dedicated athletes and coaches is something to be proud of. From designing online training platforms to inventing important off skates training shows why roller skating is the best sport in the world. With the historic loss of an entire year of competitions from local contests to Nationals to the World Championships, the resolve of people involved to keep the sport alive is a true sign of the dedication and discipline that sport takes.

And for every person that decided lockdown was the perfect time to try out roller skating for the first time, welcome to the family! The major trend of roller skating on a global level is something we can all be proud of. Roller skating is the perfect activity for mental and physical well being and now the entire world has been reminded of that. The manufacturers and distributors rose to the occasion to get skates out as quick as possible while dealing with the COVID crisis. Let's keep the trend going in good times and in bad, that roller skating offers something for everyone.

Each and every one of you have played such an important part in the history of roller skating.

Please consider donating \$40 (or more!) to help document this paramount time in roller skating and preserve the National Museum of Roller Skating.

New Design Completed



A new display comes with a new design model. Midwest Heritage Resource Consultants from Chicago just completed the Museum's new World War II display. The new display model is well organized with text and photos mounted on high-quality sintra PVC. This professional material is more durable than foam core and will provide many years of service.

Midwest HRC is owned by Dan Bartlett and Sara Pfannkuche, museum consultants with many years of experience. Dan Bartlett also works for the Elmhurst History Museum outside of Chicago. He designed the skating display for the Elmhurst a couple of years ago.

Most of the research for the display was done by museum staff. Script and design were by Midwest HRC. Amy Richardson, museum archivist, assembled the design with instructions from Midwest HRC.

The display was funded by special donation, not from operating funds. A donation for a second display has been pledged.

Letter to the Editor

In the Oct. 2020 newsletter, some history of the Arcadia rink in Detroit was presented.

Here is a response.

"Great Newsletter... I learned to skate at the Arena Gardens with my mom, Virginia (Ginny) Darimont and went to the Sunday dance sessions every Sunday at the Arcadia with my mom and the skaters from Rolladium in Waterford. Bert Anselmi was my Godfather and teacher after the Rolladium was built and I was in their first class in 1950. I also took my first dance test at Dearborn Rollerdrome for Alden Sibley. These stories really brought back good memories. I have World Judge credentials so I am still involved after 72 years in our great sport.

Please give my best to Peggy and I will donate to the \$40 for 40 years.

*Skatingly,
Cecelia (Darimont) Kelley*

PS, I was married to Dick Kelley who worked for the RSROA in Detroit until they moved to Lincoln. He was active in writing the magazine and was involved when Wide World of Sports covered the 1963 Nationals (I donated a CD of the show to the Museum) and the World Congress Meet in Las Vegas the same year"

Additional Reflection

In the Arcadia story, there was a picture of Skelly's Skate Shop, and Richard Houston mentioned the Skelly plate. In researching another story, I found an ad for Skelly plates. Here is Houston's reply after I sent the ad to him.

"You can ask anyone in Detroit that went to the Arcadia about Miss Skelly and they will tell you that they might still have their Skelly plate. I still have mine, and she is the one that First started selling the Fo-Mac wheel that we all use to slide on. Thanks for the flash back."

*Manufacturers and
Distributors of*



RSROA Fights Polio

Largest skating fundraiser of the 1940s and 1950s

By Alan Bacon

Editor's Note: All quotes and information, including photos in this article are from the RSROA's official magazine that can be found on the museum's website. Some issues are listed by month and date within the article's attributions.



This polio victim skated at North St. Mary's rink in Antonio, TX for therapy in 1951

Polio killed and maimed—especially children. When kids survived, many were left with braces. Additional anxiety stemmed from the lack of knowledge about the disease, as well as a spike in cases in the early 1950s.

The RSROA's major fundraiser during the 1940s & 1950s aimed to fight back against this dreaded disease. "It's Our Personal Charity Too," said RSROA secretary/treasurer and founder, Fred Martin, in a Jan. 1944 editorial. "The Foundation is the personal and private charity of everyone connected with the roller skating sport. Ours is an activity which builds strong well bodies," Martin added.

"Those who enjoy roller skating are physically fit, and can readily realize the handicap of those who are victims of this dreaded disease," said Fred Freeman, RSROA president. A common RSROA refrain from this time: "We skate today that others may walk tomorrow."

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, himself a polio survivor, was a visible reminder of the reach of the disease. He personally started the National Association of Infantile Paralysis, and it was referred to as the "President's Own Charity." Its March of Dimes fundraiser promotion later became synonymous with the official name of his charitable foundation.

In 1944, 1945, and 1946, Madison Square Garden held the largest skating shows ever organized by the RSROA for fundraising. President Roosevelt even gave his blessing. "The White House Washington; February 18, 1944; My Dear

Mr. Martin: The President asks me to send you this little note in acknowledgment . . . that he is ever so grateful for their fine participation in the cause to which he is so devoted," signed Grace G. Tully, Private Secretary.



Polio fundraiser at Madison Square Garden.

The 1944 Garden show featured 500 skaters from as far west as Cleveland. Cast numbers would double to 1,000 by 1946. "The result will be the biggest event in roller skating history." It was also the largest number of performers for any production in the history of the venue. Skating legends like Shirley Snyder, Betty Lytle and Joan and Bob LaBriola performed. The audience numbered 15,000 in 1944, and grew to 18,000 in 1945. Boston Gardens hosted a similar show with 600 performers in 1946 and 1947.

After these early shows, most of the fundraisers occurred in individual rinks all around the country. "An annual event at most rinks, large and small, the charity marks a very special field that the sport of roller skating and the RSROA has sponsored for over 10 years." Rinks received much publicity for hosting these events.

Perhaps the largest undertaking in any one rink was at Al Campana's Skateland in Cleveland, Ohio. His goal was to raise \$5,000 through a patron's ticket sale. A photo of 10 people at typewriters demonstrated the organization

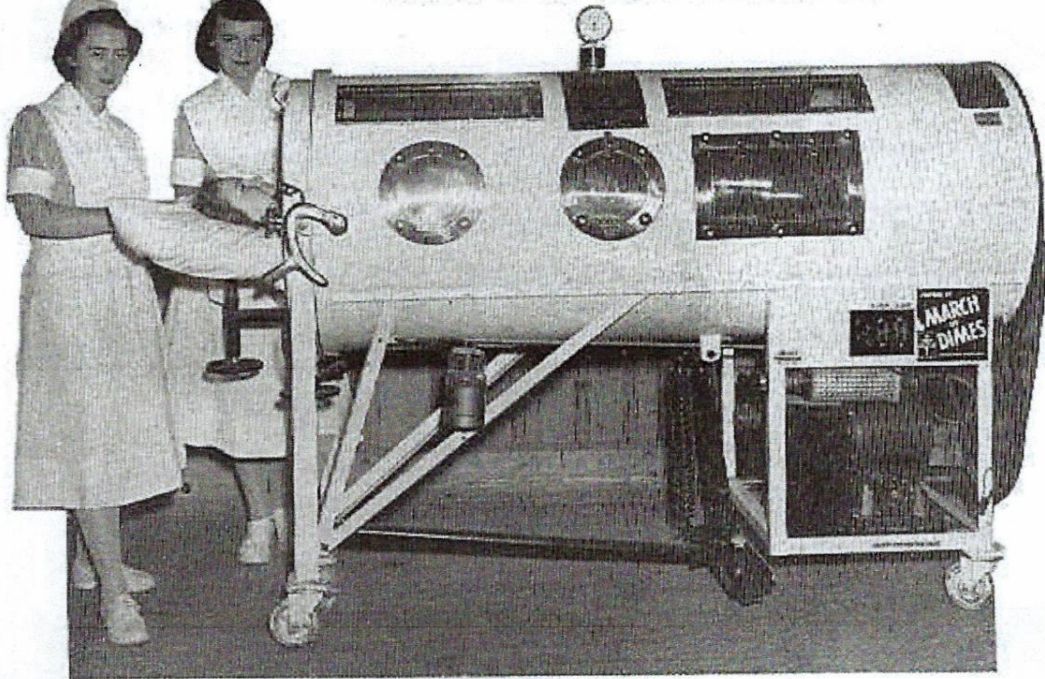
behind his endeavors. Most rinks' results were far more modest, ranging from a few hundred dollars to less than a hundred. (No summary total of funds raised was found).

Roller skating was not only raising funds for the cause, but providing personal rehabilitation for survivors. "Many skaters that had been struck down were using skating to regain full use of their muscles." At the Marin Skateland's show in San Rafael, California, a polio victim skating was the main attraction of the evening. Ray Schmidt, 21, of Detroit, winner of the 1950 State Senior Speed title, had contracted polio in 1949. But even after weeks in the hospital, he was determined to skate. Another polio victim had earned his RSROA Dance Test Bar after being permanently crippled by the disease. After being diagnosed and finding little hope after going from doctor to doctor, his parents were told to find something to exercise his injured limbs. They resumed roller skating.

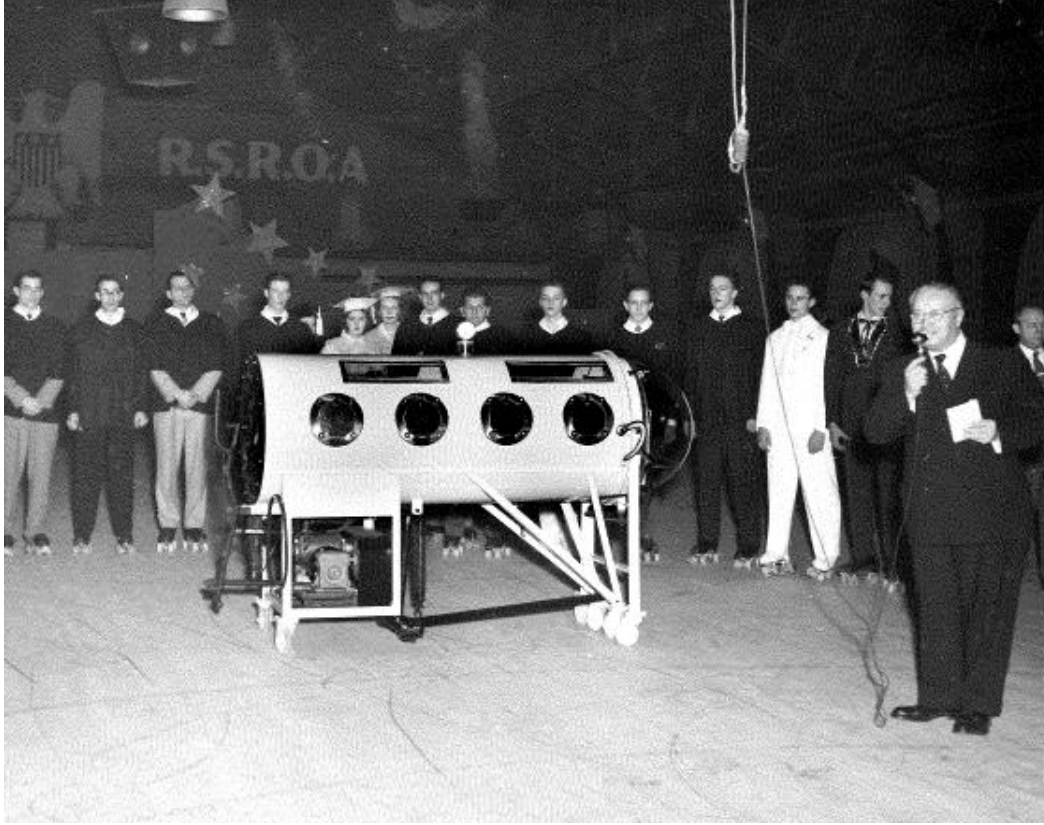
"As a special skating feature, Elaine Camp, 15-year-old polio victim, thrilled the audience with a solo presentation. A victim of polio for the past seven years, Elaine was advised by her doctor to skate to rebuild her body...When the curtain was raised and Elaine started to skate, a dropped pin could have been heard in the vast auditorium."

Donations of an iron lung respirator added another dimension to the fundraising efforts in the 1950s. Skaters at the Wal-Lex Roller Way rink in Waltham, Mass., personally presented one to the Children's Hospital of Boston through their newly created Breath of Life Club. Breath of Life clubs and donations of iron lungs then began occurring throughout the country. It became a visible, tangible donation from skaters. In addition, some rinks donated electric rocking beds. The iron lung and rocking bed cost about \$1,500 each.

Nurses from Lawrina Memorial Hospital at Medford,
demonstrate the Iron Lung at Wal-Lex Roller Way



Nurses demonstrate the iron lung at Wal-Lex Roller Way.



Fred Martin presenting the iron lung to city of Detroit 1951.

Skating clubs played a major role in the fundraising by performing benefit shows. In Norfolk, Virginia, at Mercury Roller Rink, 3,000 people saw their show "and many were turned away each night for lack of space...The show reveals a wealth of skating talent." Two of the performers were national champions. An act titled Springtime Fantasy featured partners "as bees in a pageant of colorful patterns." The "Rollerettes twirled two lighted batons." Club members also performed many dance and freestyle numbers. Other benefits would add racing or a queen contest to the mix. At the Cleveland Rollercade, a cast of 100 produced 35 numbers; at the Gayety Roller Rink in West Palm Beach, Florida, two nightly shows included 37 numbers.



This chariot race was one of the many acts put on by skating clubs for the 1944 polio benefit in Madison Square Garden.

Rinks used additional creative means to raise money. The Bal-A-Roue rink built a Wishing Well in their lobby, where skaters could make a wish and drop in their dimes. Another rink added a 5-cent polio tax on each admission to raise funds.

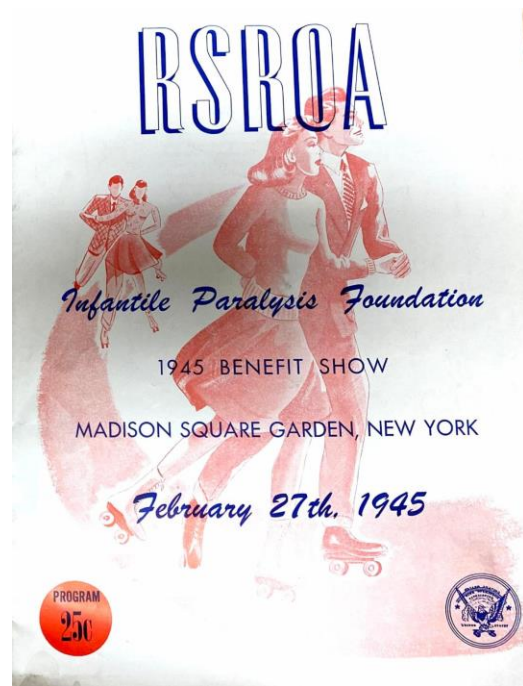
The RSROA through its official publication printed more articles and editorials on the polio drive than any other subject in that era outside of the usual monthly features on some aspect of competitive skating and rink news. Fred Martin and Victor Brown, the two most important founders and leaders of the RSROA in that era, would be the only chairs of the fundraiser over those years, and wrote more editorials on behalf of that endeavor than any other subject.

Skating News announced in May 1955 that Dr. Salk had created a polio vaccine. There was still concern about the 68,000 people already afflicted, but by the 1960s, rinks were involved in other charities such as Easter Seals and

the Heart Association. In the 1970s and 1980s, Muscular Dystrophy fundraisers became prominent.

Robert Martin, secretary/treasurer of the RSROA after his father stepped down, said it passionately in a 1955 editorial: "The writer has seen-and knows personally—just what the National Foundation has done for roller skating and knows what it has meant to roller skaters. . ." He continued, "But until YOU have SEEN the child of a friend in the clutches of the 'crippler' or worse—heard your own cry out for help, when you can't help them—and when YOUR cry for help is answered by 'The Foundation'-THEN you know what all this means."

For more information on just the Madison Square Garden events, check out the August/September 1997 museum newsletter on the museum website.



STAY CONNECTED

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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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