

December 2019

Rolling Thru Time
Newsletter

The National Museum of Roller Skating



Visit our Website

Merry Christmas & New Year Resolutions



Christmas is the time for giving. With the museum's new website that gift of museum membership has been made much easier. For as little as \$35, a new member is created.

More information [HERE](#).

Check the end of this newsletter for a list of members, and add someone that would enjoy this gift throughout the year. Or, check out the museum's store [HERE](#) for a gift for you or others.

Make a New Year's resolution: I will read one book on the history of roller skating this new year, purchased from the NMRS.

Six Members Began Using New Recurrent Membership

With the recurring option on the new museum's website, never worry again if you have renewed your membership. It automatically renews at the same level each year unless you notify the museum.

Events Around the Museum



Museum staff have been busy. Rhonda Cann along with volunteer Bob Culver brought out a straightjacket from storage used by the vaudeville team, the Continental Flyers.

Also, they put up a plaque honoring the service of the Chicago Skate Company during World War II. It was placed above one of several portraits the museum has that the Chicago Skate Company created in the 1950s.

Lastly, a new museum coloring book has been redone and is available to all museum visitors at no cost.

The Continental Fliers

Howard and Meta Bomier started skating at the roller-skating rink in Milwaukee in 1930. They learned different routines and a Vaudeville booking agent liked and signed them.

They skated on an 8'x8' custom portable wood floor. In the beginning they performed in Night Clubs during the Saturday Night Vaudeville time. They liked night clubs, because of the better interaction with the audience over stage performances. They received \$10-\$12 a night and Howard paid the skaters and agent out of this. To transport the skating floor, they purchase a 1936 Ford coupe with a rumble seat. They removed the rumble seat to carry the floor.

During the depression years it was extremely hard to book places to perform. When they were in Lincoln about 1937, the hotels were full and they stayed with a farmer. During this visit they attended a barn dance. In the late 1930s they met a magician and

purchased a straight jacket, along with the trick on how to get out of it, for \$500. They did performances through 1942 in Nebraska, Southern Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois.

Chicago Roller Skate Company



The Chicago Roller Skate Company stopped making roller skates during the war to concentrate on manufacturing of war materials, according to *Skating Review*, July 1942.

The article goes on to mention two awards the company received from the federal government for its war effort.

Also, in spite of the company not making skates during the war, it continued to buy advertisement in the magazine to support it. Because of that support, the magazine could sell for 10c instead of 25c.

The plaque reads: WARE Brothers
Division of Chicago Roller Skate Co.
Army Navy
For Excellence in Performance of War Production

Other Museum News

Two local tour groups will be visiting the NMRS on a regular basis.

Annelle Anderson, museum trustee and past president of the NMRS, sent in a donation in memory of Norman Malone of Pasadena, Texas. She wrote: "Norman was one of our figure coaches for years and years. He was an excellent creator of many National Figure Champions from the South Central Region. His contributions were many to the artistic world."

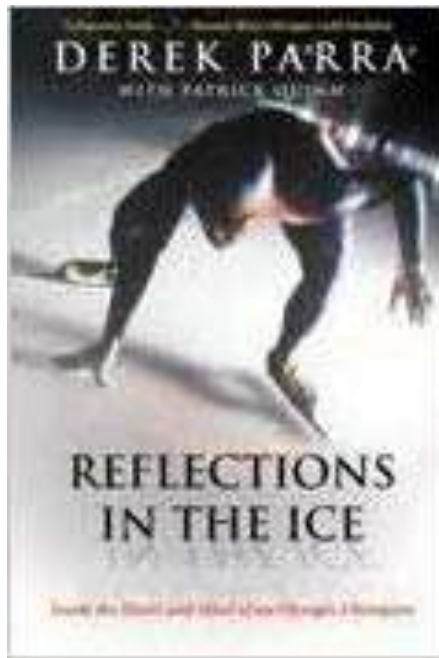
Coloring Book



The Museum recently re-did its coloring book and has made it available to all visitors at no cost.

Book Review: Reflections in the Ice Inside the Heart and Mind of an Olympic Champion

By Derek Parra and Patrick Quinn
Podium Publishing, 2003



Editor's note: I first saw this book at the National Museum of Roller Skating's exhibit that chronicles the recent historical phenomenon of roller speed champions transitioning to successful ice careers. I finished reading it for the first time right before camping out at the USA Roller Sports National Championships in Spokane, Washington, this past summer, just a couple hours from my rink. As an owner whose rink has competitive skating, I've been to portions of USA Roller Sports Nationals before, but had never sat for over two weeks for so many hours, soaking it all in. I thought about this book as I watched competitors in arts, speed and hockey. This book, and my summer experience, made me aware at a deeper level of the

commitment and sacrifices of not only the athletes and coaches, but anyone involved in making competitive roller skating happen. From the effort taken to transport and install the skating floor, to the countless hours spent by volunteers at the reception booth, to the judges and officials out on the floor or up on the stage, the entire event requires an enormous team effort.

The NMRS includes many displays of older eras of roller skating, from Vaudeville to the Vanities. Few people are still with us who have first-hand experience of those events, and it's important we keep those memories alive. But history moves on, and the museum must, too. Roller skating history is being made now, and there is a continuous need to stay current.

I also reflected on the speed skaters of the early 1900s. The museum offers the reprint it did of the 1916 book *Skaters History on Ice and Roller Skating*, another era when roller and ice racing were connected. I can't help comparing those speed competitors to racers today. Nowadays, technology might make it easier to travel to a meet, and urethane wheels have replaced wood, but the same basic challenges and determination still persist. I want to examine the museum's archives, including speed champion Fred Martin's scrapbook, and compare it to Parra's accounts. With few books about roller skating history available, Parra's book is a needed addition to this history.

I also thought about another book I've read in this genre, *Assisted, an Autobiography*, by John Stockton. A Spokane native, he grew up just a few blocks from where USA's competition took place this year. While in grad school at Gonzaga University in Spokane, I was a cameraman for an interview with Stockton. Yes, he was an outstanding college athlete, but few thought he could make the NBA. Like Parra, he didn't possess the physical attributes usually associated with rising so high in his sport. After reading both books,

it's clear it was the athlete's attitude, dedication and hard work that made the difference, as well as the people around him. have

I've been an occasional spectator of speed skating since listening to Tom Peterson at Section I meetings of the RSROA in the late '70s. He could convey the excitement of the sport as Parra does. He, too, skated in an important historical era when powder was eliminated and roller skaters began competing in the Pan American Games. I'm sure many more stories are waiting to be told. The museum has a role to play in that.

This book and my summer experiences reintroduced me to this amazing sport that I had virtually forgotten. Like me, other readers in and out of the skating community hopefully will come away with renewed interest in the sport.

-Alan Bacon



Review: The book describes Derek Parra's 17-year journey from winning Coke tickets to gold medals. From being under the disco ball to the winner's podium at the Olympics and the front page of *USA Today*. His first encounter with roller skating was at the Stardust Roller Rink in San Bernardino, California, at age 13. After winning 18 gold medals on wheels, he won a silver and gold medal at the 2002 Winter Olympics, while helping carry in the World Trade Center flag in the opening ceremonies. In the book he doesn't forget his roller skating roots. They dominate almost half of the 294-page book.

Parra recalls those initial roller skating years in the '80s: "I think going to the rink and interacting with others, realizing they weren't all that different from me, was one of the most valuable experiences I've ever had." "George (Cottone) and his wife Virginia are two of the greatest people I've come across on my journey through life on skates." Cottone was the rink manager who first approached Parra about joining the rink's speed team. "George always wore a smile and spent plenty of time joking with the kids at the counter."

In the last pages of the book, the Cottones present Parra with a "Life-Time Coke Ticket" in his hometown celebration after his Olympic victories. Parra goes on to mention many other owners/managers, coaches and others who helped him on his journey.

He reflects on his challenges, the first of which was getting home from the roller rink. He says he was from the other side of the tracks, "literally and figuratively." After midnight .

. . "I did what I had to do. I skated home crossing over the railroad tracks the seven or so miles to my home."

One rent payment, one injury, one bad meet, one bad call, one clerical error, one stripped bolt shortly before an Olympic race, all could have ended Parra's or any competitor's dreams. He adds he wasn't an "overnight success" or a "natural on wheels." From obstacles like tree stumps to snow storms, even being clipped by a pace car, the reader follows the challenges and emotional ups and downs of his skating career.

In 1988, just after graduating from high school, he decided to leave home and travel across the country to train. "Leaving home at seventeen was one of the hardest things I've ever done, no doubt about it." Another major decision was whether to follow the instincts of the experts, or his own. Anyone who has or will make those kind of life changing decisions will appreciate this book.

"If you can make it from the heat of San Bernardino to Winter Olympic ice, there's no real reason why you can't do whatever you want to do with your own life." Reflections on each step of his journey is a major theme of the book. He learned something about himself and life in each challenge. This upbeat tone is a reason anyone who cherishes the triumph of the human spirit should appreciate this book.



Speed skaters of the early 1900s with wood wheels



Quad speed skater with urethane wheels



Inline speed skaters

His story is the closest most spectators of the sport will come to leaning against a competitor on the corners of a speed race. It's amazing that one can remember the details of so many races over so many years. It attests to the emotional searing of each event into his mind. Though the book delves into enough details of each race to put the reader inside the action, the details never bog down the fast tempo of the book.

It's also a book about his family, and his skating friends who were also his competitors for the few spots on the team. He is hard on himself, and sometimes those closest to him. He doesn't hold back his feelings. He said he was encouraged to write about his feelings. An outsider to the sport learns the incredible physical and emotional endurance required over many years.

This book is not only for speed skaters, not only for competitive skaters or athletes, but for anyone who might have what seems to be an impossible dream. Some people might read the book with a different emotional response, having an "insider's" knowledge of those years, the races and the personalities mentioned in the book. I don't, and it's certainly not necessary to find great value in Parra's recounting. His story is meaningful for readers from many different perspectives.

This book is current history. Unlike viewing the old pictures of those early 1900 speed skaters, this chapter in speed skating history is still being written. But what an incredible history so far. Parra went from quad to inline skates, and then to ice. How many sports or athletes have gone through such changes in one career? Perhaps the next chapter in this current historical saga will be Olympic inline speed skating.

Current Museum Members

We apologize for any mistakes in this list. Please let the museum know. 402-483-7551 Ex 203 or directorcurator@rollerskatingmuseum.org. If there are any questions about when your membership expires, please let us know also.

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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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