

April 2002  
Issue No. #81



Historical  
Roller Skating

# Overview

National Museum  
of Roller Skating





# Curator's Column

**Dear Members:** The museum is in the home-stretch for this year's raffle. Have you bought your ticket yet? The museum relies upon the raffle for our chief source of funding for the day-to-day activities, as well as the employment of a professional staff. Without the raffle, the museum would not be able to fulfill its primary mission of preserving and publicizing the rich history of your roller skating sport, business and recreation. Help us to preserve the history of this great American activity. Be that lucky one out of 500 purchasers who wins the grand prize of \$5,000. Fill out the raffle form on page 6 today and return it to the museum with your \$50 payment by May 8, 2002. The drawing will take place on Wednesday May 15, 2002 after the President's dinner during the RSA Convention in Orlando, Florida. You do not need to be present to win any of the 24 cash prizes. Help us today by sending in your raffle form!

The cover photo on this issue is a snapshot of a young lady posing outside in a skating costume circa 1940. Unfortunately, that is all we know about the photograph. If you know who she is or any other information, please contact us. We did not hear from anyone with information on the last issue's cover of a roller skate queen. We have been featuring undocumented photos on the cover of each issue with the hopes of someone out there might have a clue or just some tidbit of information that would unlock the mystery of the photo. This is your chance to be involved in the behind the scenes activities of the museum. If you happen to know anything about either of these photos or know someone who might have information, please contact us. We would like to hear from you.

In the last Curator's Column, I briefly mentioned that USA Roller Sports will host the Lincoln Roller Rendezvous, a Reunion of roller skaters, during the National Indoor Speed and Figure Skating Championships to be held this summer here in Lincoln, Nebraska. The dates of the Reunion will be Monday August 5 through Wednesday August 7. Check out the ad on page 5 for more information. To register for the Reunion, print out the registration forms from the link on the museum's website, [www.rollerskatingmuseum.com](http://www.rollerskatingmuseum.com), to the Reunion or go directly to the USA Roller Sports' website, [www.usarollersports.org](http://www.usarollersports.org) for the registration forms. We have planned some fun events with plenty of opportunities for you to reminisce and renew friendships while watching the newest alumni receive their medals.

In this issue you will notice a new column on the last page. We have changed the "Another Artifact" column to "A Roller Skating Poem" column that will feature poems with a roller skating theme. Our first featured poem was published in the October 1946 issue of *Skating News* and hopefully it will bring you a chuckle for the day as it did for me. In future issues, we hope to feature poems in this column that were published in past roller skating magazines as well as poems sent in by our readers. If you would like to submit a poem, please send it to my attention at the museum. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this new column and reading your poems.

Thank you to all of the members for your continued support of the museum.

Sincerely,

*Deborah L. Wallis*

Deborah L. Wallis  
Director and Curator

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#### Museum Hours

9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

Closed holidays and weekends.

Phone: 402/483-7551 x.16 Fax: 402/483-1465

Internet: [www.rollerskatingmuseum.com](http://www.rollerskatingmuseum.com)

E-mail: [postmaster@rollerskatingmuseum.com](mailto:postmaster@rollerskatingmuseum.com)

**Mission Statement:** The museum exists as an autonomous entity, to acquire, preserve, research and interpret the history of roller skating through its collection of artifacts, photographs, archival material and other skating memorabilia. It strives to document roller skating's historical progression, current status and its future development in context of the associated people and events.

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# Memories of a Roller Skating Act

*The museum recently received a donation from Judith Morrow of an archival collection of photographs, rink stickers, rink programs from her parents Fran and Liberta Holland, two thirds of a vaudeville roller skating act. Fran and Liberta preformed with Mark Berrios in the Three Pirouettes. Or they would change their name if only two were skating to the Pirouettes or a combination of Bobbie and Owen, Bobbie and Fran or other similar titles. The act performed throughout California and Nevada at various locations. During War World II, Liberta continued skating professionally with another partner while Fran was serving in the Merchant Marines. Although Liberta was the flyer part of the act, she never learned to roller skate. She was only able to get herself on and off of the stage. However, she was invaluable to the act as a flyer due to the fact that she never got dizzy as she was spun around. The oak mat mentioned in the article was made in 1935 for the act. The mat consisted of two pieces that rolled up for easy carrying and locked together flat for a skating surface. It cost a total of \$50 that was paid off in weekly amounts of \$5.00 for ten weeks.*

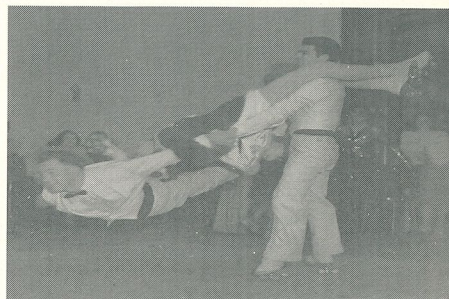
*The following article was written by Fran Holland following a severe stroke, circa 1970, of his memories of the roller skating act.*

Many years ago, my wife and I were 2/3 of an acrobatic roller skating act in show business. We whirled and twirled on our own portable oak floor that we would set up on dance floors in theatres and nightclubs. The other fellow in the act, Mark, or I would supply



Publicity photograph for the Three Pirouettes. L to R Mark Berrios, Liberta Owen Holland and Fran Holland.

the power to start up spinning in a fast circle on the oak floor. This person is called the "pivot." The person who is whirled about in various positions is called the "flyer." It's the flyer who gets all the applause. To practice or to invent new tricks, we would go to a local roller skating rink. Mark and I



The Three Pirouettes twirling.

had discussed trying a one-foot airplane spin, a difficult and dangerous trick. The airplane spin we already used was with the pivot holding the flyer by one hand and one leg, and was pretty simple.

One night, Mark wanted to try the on-foot airplane spin. It started out pretty well, with us holding hands and pumping to pick up speed. Then Mark swing is left foot forward and to the side. I grabbed his ankle with both hands and he threw his right leg back and arched into a nice airplane. Our problem came when Mark said, "Let's come out of it."

It was a very hot night and the club had opening the fire exit doors to the street to try to get some cool air inside. They had hung some drapes across the opening to discourage gawkers. My hands were getting very sweaty, and our skating shoes were made of white suede leather. They became very slick and slippery. When I tried to swing Mark up so that he could get his skates down, I could feel my hands started to slip. I told him I couldn't hold on any longer. I did manage to get his right foot down before I had to let go. Poor Mark flew across the floor on one skate, hit the drapes, when through the fire exit doors and sailed out into the street, taking the drapes with him. I guess the people on the street thought he was with either Dracula or Superman on roller skates because the drapes streamed behind him like a long, flowing cape.



The audience went wild! The only problem for us was that they were applauding the exit, not realizing they had just witnessed our first and only one-footed airplane spin.

We worked at a fair one time. They built us a platform to work on that was about eight feet off the ground. There was a Hollywood stunt man there who wrecked old cars, did tricks

on a motorcycle and also did parachute jumps. His name was Jack Steel. One day he pulled me aside to give some "good advice." He said we were crazy to work on a platform that high, because one slip and we could fall off and break our necks when we hit the ground. Well, we continued to do our act without incident, but poor Jack was killed in a parachute jump some time later. Fortunately, we did not see it happen, but read about it in the newspapers.

Some time later, Mark dropped out of the act to work with his father. That left my wife and I to become a duo. We got work at the Westwood Theatre in a lumber mill town in Northern California. They had a huge movie screen fixed permanently to the center of the stage. When I put the edge of our mat up against the bottom of the screen and spread it out, the other edge was up against the footlights. This meant that to keep from hitting the screen, I had to swing my wife out over the edge of the stage to make sure that her skate would not rip a hole in the screen.

Even so, the manager would come running out of the wings screaming, "My screen, my screen, stop it, stop it! That is a twenty-five thousand dollar screen and you people are going to wreck it!" Every few minutes, he would come out yelling, and the audience did not know if it was for real or just part of the act, but they howled anyway.

If we had torn that screen, I guess we would have left town quickly but quietly, leaving our paycheck as a down payment for a new screen.



The Three Pirouettes

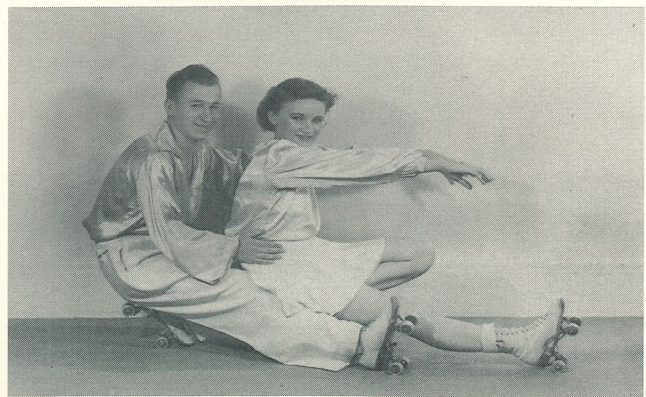
The Westwood Theatre had a huge old pipe organ. It had keys for automobile horns, ship and train whistles and all kinds of other sounds. Mark found the fire siren sound but after a minute I told him to stop making noise because I thought I heard something outside. We went out and truck pulled up and a man in a hard hat told up to get into the truck. When we objected, he told us that the lumber mill was on fire and that we had to help the fire crew. We tried to explain that we were just skaters, passing through town, but were told again and in a louder voice to get into the truck. Soon we were at the fire and pulling hoses with the rest of them. When we finally got back to our room, we were soot from head to toe and we were dead tired.

Normally, we would do three tricks and then Mark or I would do a solo routine consisting of a few fancy figures and then a fast toe-spin. Then we would do a few more tricks and finish up with a double lift. That's where the pivot lifted both of the other two at the same time and spun them. This spin was quite dramatic, and is a spin that we invented.

By Mark and I doing solos, it gave the others a chance to rest and catch their breaths a bit. But when Mark retired, that left me to be the pivot AND do the solo. So I suggested to my wife that she learn a solo routine, but without the toe-spin.

Finally came the big night for her to do her solo while I rested. Things went well for a few seconds, then she got her two skates locked together and, turning a panic stricken face towards me, she said, "Come and get me, I'm stuck!"

The audience thought it was great, and I later threatened to make an announcement during the act that, "All right folks, here is what you have been waiting for. Tangle-Foot and her famous solo routine. Let's hear it for Tangle-Foot!"



Fran and Liberta Holland





# REUNION OF CHAMPIONS

**CELEBRATING 40th ANNIVERSARY of the  
FIRST NATIONALS IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA  
1962-2002**

For 65 years USA Roller Sports has conducted National Championships for the nation's finest roller skating competitors, beginning in 1937 at Arena Gardens in Detroit, Michigan. While the name over the marquee has changed several times over the years, from RSROA to USFARS to USACRS to USA Roller Skating and now to USA Roller Sports, this prestigious event has been attended by an unbroken stream of athletes coming to the Nationals seeking affirmation of their accomplishments. Over a hundred thousand of the nation's finest roller skaters have competed for national titles, the best of

these coming away victorious with bronze, silver and gold medals in one or more of these events: figure skating, singles, pairs, dance, individual speed, relays and roller hockey.

This year marks the 20th time that the Nationals have been hosted by the City of Lincoln, Nebraska, and at the same time is the 40th anniversary of Lincoln's first such event in Pershing Auditorium.

Headquarters for United States competitive roller skating was established in Lincoln more than three decades ago. The National Museum of Roller Skating and the Sport Hall of Fame is also located in Lincoln.

When will there be a better time or opportunity than 2002 for you to revisit roller skating's mecca than during these nationals? Be there! Renew old friendships and celebrate your sport's roots, and acknowledge that roller skating has made a contribution to the enrichment your life.

- **Do you wonder if time has been as kind to your skating contemporaries as it has to you? For many, this can be a form of high school reunion.**
- **When did you last have a chance to mix with the dozens of close friends developed during your competitive years?**
- **Are you a bit curious about how your sport's techniques have evolved?**
- **Are there warm feelings that wrap around your memories of competitive experiences and travels?**

**Let our first Nationals Alumni Reunion provide the answers to these questions.**

Alumni Dinner on Monday, August 5, 2002 .....	Cornhusker Hotel, Lincoln, Nebraska 2002 Hall of Fame Athlete Awards.
Evenings August 6 and 7 .....	Finals for World Class Figure Skating Events (Artistic) and selection of 2002 USA World Championship Team.
Morning and Afternoon August 6 -7 .....	Visit National Roller Skating Museum and Roller Skating Hall of Fame, view old Nationals videos.
Evening Wednesday, August 7 .....	Exhibit reception at the Museum of Nebraska History, Lincoln, Nebraska

**Alumni is defined as anyone who medalled (gold, silver or bronze) in any discipline (figure, speed or hockey) in any event of a National Roller Skating Championships.**

A \$25 registration fee will provide the following: Alumni Dinner for August 5, tickets for the final 3 days of the Artistic National Championships, including World Class Night, special skating exhibitions (Fours), a 40th anniversary pin and other souvenirs of the event.

A photograph exhibit will be set up at Pershing Auditorium, entitled "Wall of Champions" and will feature photos provided by alumni, listing name and titles won.

**INTERESTED? - Register today! Pass the word along to your other competitor friends/current or former skating pupils. The hardest part of this task is making contact with those out of skating for decades. Help us out!**

**CONTACT:** Deborah Wallis, Museum Curator, 4730 South Street, Lincoln, NE 68506  
Phone: 402-483-7551 • e-mail: [directorcurator@rollerskatingmuseum.com](mailto:directorcurator@rollerskatingmuseum.com)



## Donations

The National Museum of Roller Skating's collection has grown each year because of donors who have contributed to the growth of the museum. If you have an artifact that you would like to donate, please contact the museum before donating. Thank you for your continued support!

The following donors have contributed to the collection since our last issue:

Roger Adams/Heelys	Jim Jost
Jeff Aurich	C. W. Lowe
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Michael Carlin	David Paden
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Chester Fried	USA Roller Sports
John Harrington	Deborah Wallis
Jeff Higgins	Sondra Wendell
Mark Howard	Sandy Wollin
	Michael Zaidman

## MEMORIALS

The Patron Memorial Plaque was created to honor those individuals who have contributed to the growth of roller skating as a sport, recreation or business. A plaque may be purchased for a minimum contribution of \$250. Please fill out the information below if you are interested. All other donations are recognized in the newsletter.

*In Memory of*      *In Honor of*      *On Occasion of*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Event \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one:

\$25    \$50    \$100    \$250

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*This contribution was made by:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form & payment (NMRS) to the museum.  
All donations are tax-deductible.

### NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ROLLER SKATING

#### 2002 Raffle

PRESERVING OUR PAST FOR THE FUTURE

Price \$50. Total of \$10,000 in cash prizes. Grand prize \$5,000! Drawing to take place, May 15, 2002, at the RSA International convention during the President's Dinner. Ticket holders need not be present to win. All proceeds benefit the museum.

The National Museum of Roller Skating is a publicly supported, charitable organization.

Purchaser \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Cut or photocopy and mail with payment to the museum

**Where:** At the RSA Convention

**When:** Wednesday night, May 15, 2002

**Why:** To Give You A Chance To Win while helping the National Museum of Roller Skating.

*Prizes Consist of:*

15 winners of \$100 each

4 winners of \$250 each

3 winners of \$500 each

1 winner of \$1,000

1 winner of \$5,000

*Total Prizes: \$10,000*

Tickets are sold for \$50 each

**How:** Buy a raffle ticket from the museum by calling 402/483-7551 ext. 16 or by sending in this form.

**Ticket holders need not be present to win.**

**Deadline for this form is May 8, 2002.**

*Send to:* 4730 South Street, Suite 2, Lincoln, NE 68506



# Thanks

The National Museum of Roller Skating would like to thank these members who have either joined or renewed membership with the museum since our last issue. Thank you for your support!

## Patron (\$250)

George Pickard

## Association Patron (\$100)

Edward Byrnes  
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## Donor (\$50)

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Irene Taylor  
Nick Viscuso  
Virginia Wadleigh  
Warrington Skating Rink  
Sandra Lee Wollin

\*Also made an additional  
Cash Donation

# Membership Matters

**Membership support is greatly appreciated!**

Join Here!

Renew

New

Check one:

Benefactor	\$500
Patron	\$250
Associate Patron	\$100
Donor	\$50
Individual/Family	\$35

Additional Contribution ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Gift Membership ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Payment Method

Check Payable to National Museum of Roller Skating

VISA MasterCard

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### Member Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for joining!*

**Gift Membership Form (Makes a Great Gift!)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Benefits extend one year from join date. Please allow 3 weeks for processing. 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

All donations are tax-deductible up to the amount permitted by law. Please clip/return to: National Museum of Roller Skating, Suite 2, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506



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VISIT YOUR MUSEUM THIS SUMMER!

# A Roller Skating Poem

## The Skaters' Lament

by Robert Cawley

from the Park Circle Skating Club, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Published in the October 1946 issue of *Skating News*

Axel Paulsen! Jackson Haines!  
Bumps and bruises! Aches and pains!  
Charlotte spiral, flip and a half,  
Believe you me, it's not a laugh.

Also Boekels-not for chumps,  
They turn bruises into bumps.  
Then the camels, front and back,  
That cause so many wheels to crack.

Salchows, Mapes', Wallys, too,  
That make the skater black and blue.  
Lutz's, flips and stags and splits,  
That's why novices throw some fits.

Pairs and fours have yet to come,  
And their contents number some,  
Like double Jacksons, camels, too,  
And other stuff that's up to you.

So let me warn you one and all,  
Don't be sorry if you fall.  
For there's one who fells it more,  
The always present Maple Floor.