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President Meets with New Executive Director



Pictured above is Kim Wall, museum president, and Eric Steele, new executive director of USARS, who meet in Lincoln, Neb., in January to discuss the museum. While he was in Lincoln, Wall hired Rhonda Cann for the museum, pictured in the next article.

Wall has encouraged all museum trustees to speak on behalf of the museum at this year's winter and spring RSA sectional meetings. A push is on for greater museum membership. But you don't have to be a museum trustee to help. Your support at these meetings is important in making others aware of the critical support membership fees are to the operation of the museum.

Rhonda Cann Hired For Museum Operations



Rhonda Cann joined the museum as a part-time staff member Feb. 1. She had been assisting the museum as a USARS staff person but now will be serving in an official capacity for the museum. She will continue conducting tours, as well as manage the day-to-day operations of the museum, including logging in new artifacts, overseeing membership lists and renewals, and digitizing museum photos from the archives.

Cann skated competitively in dance and figures for seven years at Sunset Rollarama in Tucson, Arizona. She spent 25 years in the mental health field with responsibilities as a front office staff person. She has also led tours for the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln.

Cann said she enjoys the community engagement this position affords. She enjoys hearing the responses of visitors discovering the museum for the first time. They usually associate skating with sidewalk recreation, she said. "Most people are really surprised at the depth, and that the history of skating is that old. They are blown away," she added. "They can't believe the museum has the first patented skate back to 1819. Visitors will say 'are you serious?'"

One role Cann has is museum interpreter. In a museum, zoo or park setting, interpreters "translate" artifacts, collections, and physical resources into a language that helps visitors make meaning of them. Without providing context for the displays of any museum, the visitor's experience maybe less rewarding and meaningful.

Cann's words are echoed in George Pickard's 2001 oral interview (at the end of this newsletter) that is included in this issue. They agree that the history of roller skating is unknown to most people. Their observations show the museum serves a vital purpose for those within the roller skating community as well as to the general public.

Fundraising News: May is Big Financial Month for Museum

Digital Payment: Cash or check will not be required to purchase \$50 raffle tickets or memberships at the upcoming RSA convention in Las Vegas. Credit cards will be able to be processed at the museum booth, at the President's dinner, and other places. The museum's biggest fundraiser of the year has now been made easier for you.

Bowling: Bowling fundraiser for the museum at the RSA convention will be held on Monday night, May 14, 9:30-11:30 p.m. at the South Point Bowling Center. More details coming in the late April museum newsletter.

Lincoln Day Fundraiser: It's coming in May. All donations to the museum will result in a percentage matching contribution by the Lincoln Community Foundation.

Roller Skating in the Limelight LA Roller Girls: 21st Century Version of Vaudeville and the Vanities



vice president, had this to say about the LA Roller Girls, who she met in New York recently before they competed at the Apollo Theater for Showtime.

"LA Roller Girls Entertainment sources the top World Champion ranked roller skaters in Los Angeles. Founders Candice Heiden and Crystal Rosenborough have taken their years as competitive skaters and transformed their talents into professional level entertainment experiences."

"Training other roller girls has become a passion and now their group is the top source for roller skating entertainment

ranging from LA's hottest parties, commercials, television shows, films and music video. You might recognize the LA Roller Girls from many movies, music videos, national commercials and ad campaigns and even the Grammy Awards!"

Top: LA Roller Girls

Right: Gloria Nord and the Skating Vanities performed around the world between 1942-1956. Nord also appeared in Betty Gable's movie Pin Up Girl. The museum has an entire display cabinet devoted to them, including many personal artifacts of Nord's.



Memorial Donations for 2018

The museum would like to express its condolences to Dianne Braun, museum trustee, and to the entire family of Robert "Bobby" Braun, for their loss. Bobby Braun, of San Antonio, Texas, served as a past president of the RSA and was in the roller skating business for over 40 years. The museum would also like to express its condolences to the family of Peter VanOrnum of Lynden, Wash., another rink operator for over 40 years, and to the family of Lacey Brock Warner, speed skater of Fort Worth, Texas. The museum received donations in their names.

Donors in memory of Bobby Braun:

Annelle Anderson, Terry Anselmi, Paul & Anita Artt (QNC, Inc.), Alan & Judy Bacon, Valerie Carol, Carol Gordon, Larry Hayes, Lindsey Hinzmann, William Hoefler, Landmark 2, Inc., Ron & Julia Liette, Damion Lacy, Stacey Leonard, Dustin Long, Doug Pratt, R. David Ramsey, Wayne Ramsey, Anita Roberts, Cort Wahlig, Rick White, RSA Section 10

Donors in memory of Peter VanOrnum: Alan & Judy Bacon, Section I

Donor in memory of Lacey Brock Warner: South Central USARS Chapter

In addition to honoring very fine people of our sport and industry, these memorial contributions help the museum tremendously. A total of \$1575 has been donated in their names. Thank You.

Also, the museum would like to thank Ed Hughes, museum trustee, for a contribution to the museum in celebration of Dorothy McDonald's birthday. She was a rink operator for over 50 years in Independence, Missouri. She is a Life Member and Hall of Fame Member. Happy Birthday Dorothy.



World Ambassador

Nellie Anderson Lillie, museum vice president, is pictured with Sabatino Aracu, president of World Skate. Both were attending a seminar in Rome with 450 delegates from 30 different countries to learn about a new scoring program that will be instituted at the 2019 World Championships.

Lillie said they had a good conversation about the museum, which Aracu was familiar with. She gave him a museum pin. She added, "it is nice to know we are on the radar of the World Skate president . . . Just wanted everyone to know that the world knows about our amazing museum!"

Special Events in the Life of the Museum

The museum is now over 35 years old. It has a historical story to tell of itself. With all the original trustees now gone, it's important that the hard work and sacrifices of past trustees, curators and others are not forgotten. Newsletters will contain highlights of past events from the museum's history.

2002 - The museum loaned four skating items to the Experience Music Project in Seattle, Wash. The museum exposition was titled "Disco: a Decade of Saturday Nights."

1989 - Elizabeth Plimpton donated her grandfather's, James Plimpton, personal skating collection to the museum. James Plimpton, known as the father of modern roller skating, developed the first turning skate in the 1860s, which allowed a skater to turn corners and revolutionized the industry.

1988 - The museum participated in World Expo 88 in Brisbane, Australia. Displayed in the United States' Pavilion, on loan from the museum, was a Vineyard model skate from the Samuel Winslow Company, the most popular skate during the 1800s. The Expo's theme was "Leisure in the Age of Technology"; the U.S. Pavilion featured many sport-related exhibits.

Trophy in Honor of George Pickard

David Ninzatti, president of Master In Line Hockey World Association (MIHWA) sent this picture recently to Peggy Young, museum secretary. Since this edition of the newsletter features George Pickard, it is fitting to give an example of the lasting influence he has had on roller skating. Gilbert Portier, president of Comite International de Roller In Line Hockey (CIRILH) wrote in 2016 why this trophy was in Pickard's name: "On behalf of USA Roller Sports, in 1994 he proposed that FIRS organize the first In Line Hockey Championship in Chicago in 1995. And thus, FIRS became the umbrella of In Line Hockey... I estimate that this man is a TITAN for our support."

The trophy inscription reads:

Veterans World Cup

George Pickard Trophy

F.I.R.S. General Secretary 1982-1990

C.I.R.L.H. 2000 - 2008



Feature: George Pickard's Oral History



Pictured Above: George Pickard, far left in 1980, with the other founders of the museum. Not only was he an original trustee, he was secretary and treasurer for the museum for most of the next thirty years. Also pictured from left to right are Burt Anselmi, Richard Young, Mike Brooslin, Marvin Facher, Bob Bollinger, James Turner, and Chester Fried.

George Pickard's Skating Biography Highlights

1942 Recreational skater at Arena Gardens and Arcadia in Detroit. (His friend's dad owned the Arcadia.)

1945 Began competitive skating after seeing a Jackson Haines sit spin being performed. One of his teachers was Rose Martin. He bought his amateur card for 25c from Fred Martin.



George Pickard, four years before his passing in 2016, was instrumental in not only acquiring this favorite artifact of the museum, a replica band organ, but literally bringing it in the museum door. In 2013, he and James Vannurden, former museum curator, reorganized all the photos in the museum archives. Many artifacts in the museum are the result of his hands-on work and dedication to the museum.

The following are highlights of a 25-page written transcript of an oral interview with George Pickard conducted by Robin Henry, recorded on Jan. 26, 2001, for the Indiana University Oral History Research Center. The original tape and final transcript are kept on file in the University Archives. These highlights are not necessarily presented in the order in which the information appeared in the interview; changes in sequence are intended to emphasize Pickard's thoughts on the museum and the history of roller skating.

The biggest WOW from George Pickard's comments concern the founding of the museum in 1980. He said, "Even a person like myself that has been involved in this sport and industry since the 40s didn't realize what the rich history of the sport was . . . I didn't even know James Plimpton existed . . . We initially had a couple of shoe boxes full of old roller skates and we went forward from there." He added: "I think that the founding of the National Museum of Roller Skating was very important to establishing the history of roller skating. It isn't a fad of the moment. It wasn't merely a sidewalk sport as many people believed. A lot of people always associated roller skating, prior to the museum, with roller derby or with sidewalk clamp-on skates. So the museum brought, I believe, a measure of pride in the accomplishments of our industry, made over one-hundred and twenty-five year or more."

He said his favorite memory from a RSROA or rink management perspective was the 1980 convention at the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Honolulu, the finest hotel in town according to Pickard. Close to 2,300 people attended the President's dinner, spilling out into the corridors of the grand ballroom. Jerry Lewis came to thank the RSROA's membership for being the largest single organization fund-raiser for Muscular Dystrophy, raising millions. Lewis then performed an hour-long show.

Pickard said his favorite memory from a USAC or competitive skating standpoint was working with Gordon "Budd" Van Roekel to get skating in the Pan-American games for the first time. This occurred after USAC took a risk and guaranteed a \$200,000 note in order for a skating facility to be built in Puerto Rico, the site of the games. Eventually this would lead to receiving over 1 million dollars from the surplus of the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984, because being a Pan-American sport made roller skating a class A member of the Olympic committee.

Interviewer Question: "What were some of the most influential events which took place in the roller skating world, either good or bad, that significantly affected the state of roller skating today?"

1950s Writer then editor for RSROA magazine. (Pickard notes he was an English major.)

1956-1961 Taught skating at the Acadia (also assistant manager) and two other rinks.

1961 Began working for the RSROA to be their "sport guru," working with coaches and judges, etc.

1971-1988 Executive director of the RSROA.

1988-2001 Executive Director of USA Roller Sports

1865: James Plimpton invents the rocking action, steerable quad roller skate, and promotes roller skating.

1937: Founding of the RSROA. Pickard talked about how the creation of the RSROA brought respectability to roller skating by fostering a family-friendly environment, with strict conduct rules and dress codes that brought churches and schools to the facility. He said that creating competition provided a sport aspect, which also enhanced roller skating's image. He also cites that dance skating helped session programming.

1960s: The emergence of the new concept recreational roller skating rinks, with hi-fi sound, lighting effects, carpet, etc. He said before this most rinks were "stark gymnasium-type affairs." There were no customer relations or crowd control. The quality and sound of the music was poor. Many of these new rinks were built by investors who had little previous experience in roller skating "The RSROA promoted the new techniques, the new technologies . . ."

Pictured Right:

Entrance to Skate Ranch in Santa Ana, California, owned by Budd and Ruth Van Roekel. Pickard mentions the new concept rinks that were built beginning in the 1960s; this rink was a forerunner. RSROA's magazine *Skating News* described the rink in 1956. "On into the rink we find ourselves in the lobby, where for just a moment or two we are overwhelmed. Can this really be a skating rink? The entire lobby is carpeted . . ." The rink was themed with a western decor.



1977-83: The roller disco era. Adults, Hollywood and the media discovered skating. He noted that the RSROA grew from 600 rinks in 1973 to 2300 in 1983.

1980: The founding of the National Museum of Roller Skating. "The new curator and I went around to some of the big manufacturers that we knew that had antique skates." The Chicago Skate Company, for example, "had a whole row of shelves with all these skates on them and they gave them all to the new museum."

1990s: The return of the in-line roller skate. "I think it created benefits and problems." One benefit he cited is that it brought adults back to the rink. He talked about how initially, many rink owners did not like inline skates. He said "The RSROA soon saw the error of this attitude and coped with this by encouraging skate manufacturers to cure the axles problems." (Early inline skates had axles that could gouge the floor.)

Pickard contrasted the effect that the disco era and inline era had on skating. He said the disco era had little effect on competitive skating. Inlines were "an entirely different thing." "The in-line skate almost pushed to oblivion the quad skate in speed skating, and in hockey...I think that the in-line skate had more impact on USAC than the RSROA, whereas it was the opposite in the disco era, where it was all RSROA and not USAC at all."

He discussed some important people he personally knew in skating history: Gordon "Budd" Van Roekel, Joseph Nazarro Sr., Meredith "Red" Shattuck, Fred Martin and Victor Brown. For more information about his thoughts about these individuals, see his book *Titans and Heroes of American Roller Skating*, which can be purchased from the museum.

When asked what he thought the greatest failing of the public image of roller skating has been, he said: ". . . the abandonment of adult roller skating after the demise of disco roller skating." He cites the Plimpton era, the 1940s, Disco era, and the inline era when adults were active in the sport. He adds that

teens don't want to be associated with a kid's sport, but rather with an adult one.

When asked what's the greatest success of the public image, he said: "It's a healthy and fun activity, that exercises the body without stressing the joints." He also said it's seen as a bargain.

His advice to rink owners: Create more profit centers in a rink, and don't put all your eggs in one basket. He added, "People still crave fun, companionship, health, and physical release. Roller skating can provide this but not in the packaging of the 40s because that is now obsolete. . . Tradition is only a religious experience. It's not a recreational experience."

Editor's note: I only had the pleasure of meeting George Pickard the last three times he attended the meeting of the trustees of the museum. Before one such meeting, I talked with him for about an hour on the history of skating. But unfortunately, I only came to know him through his writings and not a personal relationship. I do know from spending a week during Nationals the last couple of years, how much the museum is indebted to him; his influence permeates the museum. He was an original trustee, and remained active until his passing in 2016, many of those years being the secretary and treasurer. One of the pleasures of hanging around a museum is to explore the archives. It was this exploring that led me to discover this document. I have had the pleasure of conducting a couple of oral histories for a local museum. Hearing history firsthand is a fascinating experience with a treasure of interesting insights acquired over the course of a person's life. George Pickard's lifetime of roller skating experience is no exception. Alan Bacon

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.