

National Museum of Roller Skating

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1999 #72

Historical Roller Skating Overview



Curator's Column

Dear Members,

What an exciting position I have found myself in! For the past year I have been the Assistant Curator here at the museum and with former Director Mike Zaidman's move to Florida in August, I had the pleasure of being promoted to the position of Director & Curator. In my job as Assistant Curator, I had the opportunity to work with the outstanding collections the museum has and learned a great deal about our fascinating history. While I am excited at the opportunity to serve the museum's mission full-time, I certainly feel the empty place created by Mike's departure. I have no doubt that he will bring the same energy and enthusiasm to his new job that he always showed here.

I am not the only new person associated with the museum at this time, the Board of Trustees has elected four new members. Our welcome goes to Nellie Anderson, John Chrien, Bill Kelly, and Gladys Kelly. We truly appreciate you accepting the board position and your support of the museum and its work.

Thanks go to new board member John Chrien for responding to our request for a new TV/VCR for the exhibit gallery. The new combined unit is mounted on the wall, making it easier for visitors to see while they tour the exhibits. The unit mount also swivels so I can adjust it for school groups sitting on the floor. The museum is becoming quite popular with Lincoln schools, I already have had several teachers schedule tours for their grade school classes.

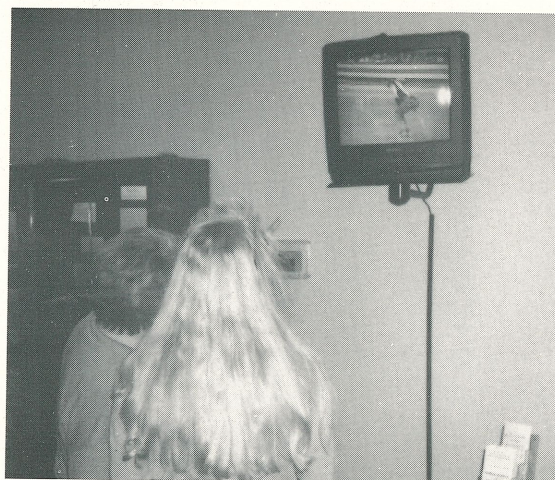
This issue's feature article highlights a few of the fascinating donations the museum received this past summer. Many areas in roller skating history were enhanced by these donations: artistic skating, vaudeville, roller derby, dance skating, new technology, individual skaters and clubs, and national championships. Donated artifacts include skates, skate covers and carriers, costumes, trophies, videotapes, sheet music, patches, photographs, programs, and decorative items. I regret that I did not have room to describe all of the recent donations. They are truly wonderful. However, all of the donations received since August are recognized on page six.

Exhibits displaying new artifacts since the last newsletter include a new Mercury in-line skate from Tecnica in the "Recent Donations" exhibit and two nineteenth-century patents in the "Patented Perfection" exhibit. Because of the fragile nature of the paper used in these over one hundred-year-old patents, this exhibit must be changed every six weeks. One of the patents currently on display shows the big-wheel skate featured on a t-shirt in the Museum Store.

Thanks for your continuing support of the museum.

Susan Curtis

Director & Curator



The new TV/VCR in the museum exhibit gallery.

On the cover: *Emma Ellis was a talented amateur skater who turned professional in 1943. During her career, she worked as a rink professional at the Great Leopard rink in Chester, Pa., the Southern Roller Rink in Pittsburg, Pa., and the Brooks Recreation Center rink in Raleigh, N.C. Linda Katz of Rinkside magazine donated some of Mrs. Ellis' personal papers this past summer.*

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9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.
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Preserving the Past for the Future

By Susan Curtis, Director & Curator

This summer, the museum was fortunate to receive numerous donations. The quality and variety of these donations add to our knowledge of roller skating's history in such diverse areas as artistic skating, dance skating, roller derby, vaudeville, individual skaters and clubs, advances in technology, and American popular culture. Each donation has broadened our understanding of roller skating's rich heritage and bright future.

Just as important as the artifacts themselves, are the stories that come with them. Putting an object into context gives us a more complete picture. Knowing the history of each costume, skate, and photograph adds greatly to the museum's ability to illustrate roller skating's history. These artifacts allow us to understand and share with the people, times, and events that have brought us to where we are today. The following are highlights of just a few of the donations we recently received.

Vaudeville Equipment

On weekends between 1930 and 1942, patrons of Midwest nightclubs and outdoor fairs were treated to feats of gravity-defying spins by the Continental Flyers. Howard and Meta Bomier of Milwaukee, Wis., were the founding and permanent members of this roller skating act. Throughout the years, the Continental Flyers performed as a duo or a trio.

Both Howard and Meta worked full-time during the week, Howard as a pattern maker for a clothing manufacturer and Meta as a telephone operator. On the weekends, their



The Continental Flyers performing a spin at an outdoor fair, circa 1930-1942. Gift of Howard Bomier. (99.26.11)

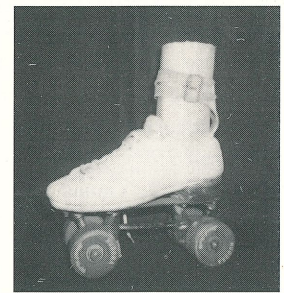
booking agent would line up an engagement. The Continental Flyers would then pack up their skates, costumes, and portable skating floor and drive to a regional nightclub, fairgrounds, or even a cruise ship and perform. Their act consisted primarily of spins on a custom-made, twelve-foot-square wooden floor made by the Chicago Skate Company. For an encore, Meta

would escape from a straightjacket while Howard spun her by her ankles around his neck.

Howard donated their costumes, photographs, skates, and portable skating floor to the museum in July. In addition to the excellent artifacts, he shared many wonderful stories of their performing days. Look for a feature article on the Continental Flyers in an upcoming issue of the *Overview*.

English Shoe Skate

Museum member Margaret Brooks of Suffolk, England, donated a pair of English "Shoe" skates worn by Dorothy Howell in the 1940s. Dorothy was the British National Champion in Roller Figure Skating, International Style, in 1944. In a review of the national championships held in Leeds, Cyril Beasall wrote that while Dorothy's figures were nearly flawless, it was her calm and stylish manner of performance that should be an education to all skaters.



The English shoe skate worn by Dorothy Howell, circa 1940s. Gift of Margaret Brooks. (99.53.1a)

Dorothy started skating in Birmingham, England, in 1933 at the age of fourteen. She passed her Gold Medal Test for both Roller Dance and Roller Figures (International Style) in 1939 and represented Great Britain in the European Championships. Dorothy was considered the finest English figure skater of her day.

The same style of shoe skates that Dorothy wore were used in 1961 by another English artistic skater, Maureen Jackson, at the World Championships in Bologna. Maureen competed in the 1958, 1959, and 1961 World championships, finishing tenth overall in the 1961 championships.



Dorothy Howell with the Devonshire Park Bowl trophy, 1944 British National Figures Champion.

Roller Derby

Jim Greene, Derby Games President, donated the group's Skater of the Year trophy. The trophy was created by



Skater of the Year trophy awarded by the Roller Derby/Games association between 1990 and 1997. Gift of Jim Greene, Derby Games President. (99.47.1)

several Roller Derby and Roller Game skaters of the game. This travelling trophy was awarded between 1990 and 1997 to the current or past skater who has done the most for the sport. Recipients are selected by a vote of the over 200 skaters who are members of Roller Derby/Games. For each of the eight years this trophy was given, it has been awarded not to an individual but to families. Recipients of the Skater of the Year trophy include the following families: Atkinson, Gardner, Massro, Wall,

Gammon/Murry, Lewis/Kemp/Payne, Bogash, and Jensen/Baker.

Jim is also the editor of the *Derby Games Family Newsletter* and donates a copy of each issue for the museum's archives. Other derby publications donated to the archives are the *Banked Track News* from Mike Yohnicki at the Roller Derby Preservation Association in Canada and *Roller News* from Rod Helton at the American Roller Derby League. In addition to use by museum staff, archival materials are available for use by outside researchers. Magazines, newspapers, newsletters, and product brochures are invaluable to researchers studying areas such as individual skaters, teams, equipment, and events.

Canadian Skate

Beverly Preston's father, Harry Bowers, was a mechanical engineer who maintained Beverly's skates. In addition to his daughter's frustration over the slow reaction of the action of her current skates, Harry was frustrated with the number of broken parts he was continually repairing. So beginning in 1953, he began to make improvement to her skates. First he took her toe stops to the Dunlop Tire Company where he worked. He created a compound similar to India rubber and coated the stems of the toe stops. This improved the bounce and Harry told Beverly that it might help her doubles and triples. Even though it wore down quickly, Harry would simply apply another coat. Harry's next step was to build a skate for Beverly to meet three criteria: 1. light weight; 2. fewer parts than typical skates; and 3. quicker

action. After consulting with Norman Latin, Fred and Rose Martin, Harry created the perfect skate for Beverly's competition needs. His Canadian Skate design eliminated the kingpin and had a rockover layover action so that there was no lag time when creating or changing edges. Every



Beverly (Bowers) Preston, circa 1961-1962. Gift of Beverly (Bowers) Preston. (99.43.4)

Beverly with her Canadian Skate, 1999. Gift of Mike Zaidman. (99.3.74)



action of pressure had an instant reaction helping the speed of pivoting for spins and edges.

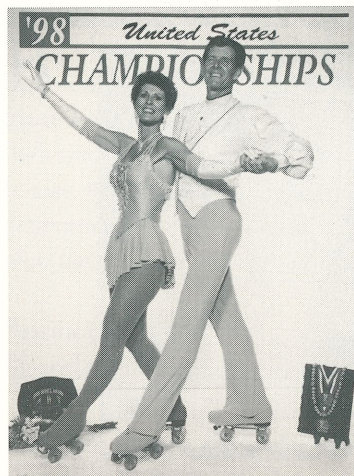
Beverly competed on her father's prototype skate from 1956 to 1962. Even though the plate has small fractures in the toe end, nothing was ever replaced on it. Beverly won the American Elementary Girls Singles title in 1953. She then became the first Canadian to win the American Senior Ladies Singles title at the 1961 Nationals in Ft. Worth, Texas. She successfully defended her title at the 1962 National Championships in Lincoln, Neb., then retired from competition.

Beverly donated her skates to the museum at the 1999 National Championships in Syracuse, N.Y. The Hinchcliffe Brothers Challenge trophy seen in the photograph of Beverly with her awards is already a part of the museum's collections. This trophy was awarded to the Ladies Artistic National Champions between 1939 and 1965. Beverly won the trophy in 1961 and 1962. Sylvia Haffke, who won the American Senior Ladies title and the Hinchcliffe trophy in 1959 and then in 1963, 1964, and 1965 donated the trophy to the museum in 1984.

National Championship Costumes

Bob and Sharon Behrendt dominate the Masters Dance division. They have successfully defended their national title every year since their first victory in 1990. This summer they donated the skating costumes they wore at

the 1998 National Championships. They also donated



Bob & Sharon Behrendt, 1998 Masters Dance National Champions. Gift of Bob & Sharon Behrendt. (99.48.7)

wearing these costumes, with only a slightly different look.

Bob and Sharon first skated together in 1957 at the ages of twelve and fourteen. That same year they won the California State and the Pacific Coast Regional Championships. They were awarded the California RSROA Don Bromley Challenge Award Junior Dance trophy on July 4, 1957.



1957 California State and Pacific Coast Regional Junior Dance Champions. From left: Nancy Lumpkin and Richard St. Hillaire (2nd place), Sharon Parker (now Behrendt) and Bobby Behrendt (1st place), Barbara Shepherd and Gene Tabor (3rd place). Gift of Bob & Sharon Behrendt. (99.48.6)

This is the trophy they donated to the museum. This California-shaped trophy was first awarded in 1956 to Gary and Claudia Leontini and retired in 1960 after the title was won by Ben and Darlene Needham.

Bob and Sharon hold the record for consecutive wins by one team at the National Championships. They are planning to defend their title again next year in Lincoln, Neb. The museum is pleased to be able to preserve a part of the history of this talented dance team.

the very first trophy they won as a team in a regional Junior Dance competition in 1957. Sharon designed her green and white costume and did the beading after it was sewn by Marian Spooner and Eunice Pickup. Both Sharon's and Bob's costumes were recycled several times, updating and changing pieces when needed. A photograph in the October 1992 issue of *U.S. Roller Skating* magazine shows Sharon and Bob

New Technology

In addition to historical artifacts, the museum collects new skates and equipment that add to our documentation of the progress of the sport. Former director Mike Zaidman attended the National Sporting Goods Association trade show in Chicago in July and contacted many manufacturers about donating items to the museum.

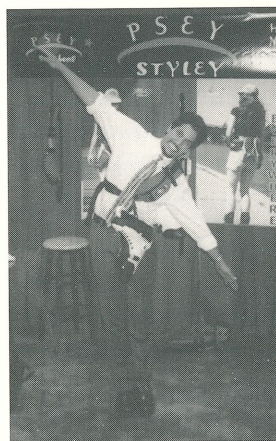
Corrine Griffiths from Hypno donated a pair of convertible skates from their new Skating Transportation System line. With two movements, the skates convert from a soft boot, in-line skate to walking shoes. Hypno markets the advantages of this skate as



Hypno convertible skates. Gift of Corrine Griffiths, Hypno. (99.41.1ab)

its convenience to skaters who "live in their skates" and for novices who can remove the wheel chassis when confronted with obstacles beyond their skills, such as steep hills or rough pavement.

Sammy Sharma of Psey Inc. donated one of their BagAbonD skate carriers. This system works as a fanny pack, holding your skates while freeing your hands. Sammy's donation certainly shows how far we have evolved from the wooden skate cases of the 1940s.



Sammy Sharma of Psey Inc., modeling the BagAbonD skate carrier, 1999. Gift of Mike Zaidman. (99.3.37)

Museums have a responsibility to provide care indefinitely for every artifact they accept. It is unfortunate that we cannot accept every item offered to us. But limited space, staff time, and the money needed to preserve each object forces us to consider these requirements before the acceptance of any offered donation.

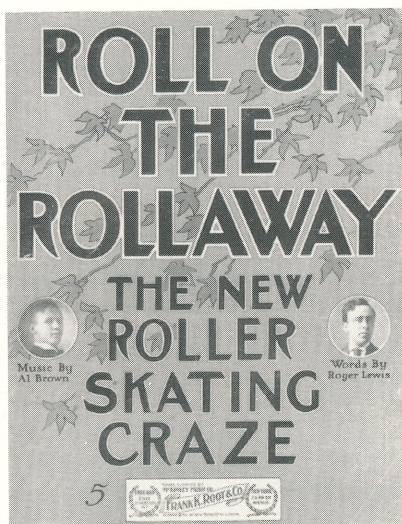
The donations listed above are only a fraction that the museum has received this summer. As with all our collections, we attempt to rotate them through the museum's displays, giving our visitors a chance to understand and connect with the history and people of roller skating. We would love to see you here!

Donations

The museum exists to acquire, preserve, research, and interpret the history of roller skating through its collection of artifacts, photographs, archival materials, and other skating memorabilia. If you have an artifact you are interested in donating, please contact the museum. The following donors have contributed since the last issue of the Overview: Leslie Baker - Tecnica, Sharon & Bob Behrendt, Nellie Boucher - Silver Roller Club, Robert W. Brockway, Margaret Brooks, Gene & Robbie Cox, Jim Greene - Derby Games, Corrine Griffiths - Hypno, Linda Katz - Rinksider, Beverley Bowers Preston, Don Ritchie, Christy Schwalm, Sammy Sharma - Psey Designs, Reese D. Wilson, and Michael Zaidman.



1965 RSROA Championship patch. One of the patches from the collection donated by Gene & Robbie Cox.



Roll on the Rollaway, copyright 1908, sheet music donated by Reese D. Wilson.



Museum Board of Trustees member and one of the museum's founders, Marvin Facher, with former director Mike Zaidman at the 1999 National Artistic Roller Skating Championships in Syracuse, N.Y. Photograph by Bill Wolf, donated by Mike Zaidman.

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 Angie (Megaro) Kerr
Blanche Doorn*

*In memory of Mrs. Leonella E. LaMay
Michigan Chapter USARS*

*In memory of Irma Libke
Coaches & Operators of the Rolladium, Inc.*

In Memory of In Honor of On Occasion of
Name _____
Event _____

Please check one:
 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 (plaque) Other \$

This contribution was made by:
Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____

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

Membership Matters

By becoming a member you are making a commitment to the museum and its mission. The museum strives to enriching people's lives by increasing their understanding and enjoyment of roller skating's past. It also works to protect and preserve this history for generations to come. Below is a listing of those members who have joined or renewed since the last issue.

Patron (\$250-\$499)
Skateland Fun Center, Inc.

Associate Patron (\$100-\$249)
Charlene Conway
Jeff Duensing
Dave & Judy Geiger
Mack & Beverly Harris
Joe & Nancie Nemanich

Individual/Family (\$25-\$49)
Robert W. Brockway
Mr. & Mrs. Charles D. Derry
Edna Jackson
Connie Long
Dana Meyer
Reese D. Wilson
Peter & Linda Wood



Members who join or upgrade their memberships to the Benefactor or Patron level, receive a complimentary museum tote bag.

DID YOU KNOW? MEMBERSHIP QUIZ RESULTS

Who is the editor of BOX magazine?
Answer: Chris Mitchell
Winners: John & Luella Scollo and Larry & Mary Hayes

DO YOU KNOW? NEXT MEMBERSHIP QUIZ

In what standard division do Bob & Sharon Behrendt compete?
The first two correct answers mailed to the museum will win two items from the museum store. Good luck!

Membership support is greatly appreciated.

Join Here!

- New Renew
- Check one:
- Benefactor \$500
 - Patron \$250
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Member Form

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Thank you for joining!

Gift Membership Form (Makes a Great Gift!)

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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, PO Box 6579, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506

A n o t h e r A r t i f a c t



Commemorative patch from the 8th Annual Thanksgiving Meet at the Skateland Rink, Springfield, Mo., 1982. Gift of Gene & Robbie Cox. (99.51.66)

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIPS MAKE GREAT GIFTS!

Change Service Requested



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