

## Sad News



Willy Bietak Productions is extremely saddened to report the passing of Bob Bennett, Senior Ice Engineer for the company since its inception in 1986. Bob was instrumental in our success due in part to his exceptional skill with the mechanics and operation in the Ice making process. His creative genius allowed for ice equipment and rinks that could be quickly installed and precisely maintained to allow all skaters from Olympic Gold Medal Winners and Championship Hockey Teams to family's who first ventured onto a Holiday Ice Rink the absolute best experience available.

Robert "Bob" Bennett was born on Nov. 18th 1920 in Oklahoma one of six children. His family was part of the Oklahoma Land Rush. His grandfather delivered ice to the Calvary. They kept the ice in large holes in the ground. He had ice in his blood from early on!

His brother was an assistant to Gypsy Rose Lee. Bob was very proud of that. Because of his expertise, Bob was in demand for all Ice skating related film projects. He was the Ice Engineer on the 1951 Live TV series "Frosty Frolics" and many "Holiday On Ice" broadcasts. One of his early projects was the 1961 film "Snow White and the Three Stooges" with the Stooges and Olympic Gold Medalist Carol Heiss. On another film starring Olympic Gold Medalist and film star Sonja Henie they put black dye in the ice. They had to have 2 dresses made because the black spotted the dress!

Bob's first ice rink installation was for a show on the Aircraft carrier USS Lexington. He went on to travel America and the world making ice for shows in Mexico, Japan, South Africa, on the beach in Santa Monica and even at the Hollywood Bowl. He was a champion of Ice innovation and improvement. Always seeking ways to improve the ice skating experience, he was instrumental in the invention and creation of the aluminum plate floor system universally used for today's touring ice shows and portable hockey rinks for the NHL.

Although he did not have his own Bob was a fan of children. He had a teddy bear mounted on the Zamboni at the Ice Capades. He rigged a string to pull so it would wave at the kids in the audience while he resurfaced the ice.

Bob cultivated many skills and talents in his remarkable ninety seven years of life. During WW II he was employed as a carpenter by the military and lost his hearing when a shell from a Japanese plane landed near him on Midway Island just after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He went stateside and utilized his skills to build prototype airplane models for the Air Force. He had an artistic eye and appreciation for beauty. He was an amazing portrait photographer. He was the only one to photograph Elvis Presley when he visited the Ice Capades a few decades ago and that picture made the papers! He was also a creative leather and wood carver and collector of magnificent wood boxes and sculptures. He had an extensive collection of vintage and antique ice skates and was a collector of scientific mechanical tools, sculpture and porcelain. He was a good craps player who always reinvested his winning in art. He liked fast cars and motorcycles.

One of Bob's closest associates and host of the Ice Follies and Ice Capades "Mr. Debonaire" Richard Dwyer beautifully expressed how he felt about Bob: "He was a wonderfully talented gentleman who contributed so much to our success in the professional Ice Skating World. He kept our careers going and always was so supportive and encouraging."

Bob Bennett represented the "Best of Everything"; he bought beautiful carvings, artwork, everyday items; he drove Mercedes and Porsches, he rode the best BMW motorcycles (with a Lalique statue on the front fender). If it was not top quality he would not have it. The same applied to his work. He always looked for a better solution when it came to portable ice rinks. He and Bob Ullrich (from Beverly Pacific Refrigeration) would get into lengthy and sometimes heated discussions about the available technologies and how to implement them. The outcome was always as close to a pristine quality as it could be. Bob had a great appreciation of everything beautiful, whether it was Nature or the applied- and the performing Arts, he loved it all. We will miss him very much!

## **Mini Reunions are Happening**



**Pam (Parent) Dinet, Gloria (Lor) Spoden, Danielle Masson, Stacy Jackson, Anita (Churchley) Jackson  
Liz Taylor, Nicole (Masson) Matuzak - In Toronto**

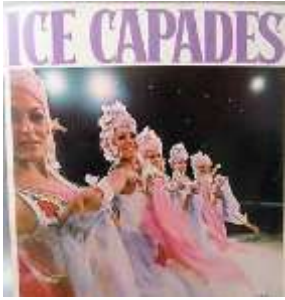


**Dick Shedlowski, Frank Taylor, Chris Shedlowski, Ken Shook, Lynn holly Johnson and Jean Pierre Romano  
In Seal Beach, CA**

**Send pictures of your own mini reunion from around the country.**

## More Trips Down Memory Lane

Doug Martin gave us some untold stories from our time on the road. How about sending in some new ones to share? Send them directly to [gspoden@rogers.com](mailto:gspoden@rogers.com)



Here's one that some might remember. Craig 'Twiggy' Carr sent this on in about the "Petite" southern Belle production while in Calgary. It was from the 71<sup>st</sup> edition, West Company (Sights & Sounds)

In East the girls wore vivid hooped skirts in pastels that glowed in the dark with mid-formed "hats" that were replaced the following year in WEST with white lace overskirts over the pastels... looked lovely as they swizzled down the ice. Well, the white lace ruffles on the hoop covering got a bit soiled in the Stampede Corral of Calgary... we had a lighter 3 day show on Saturday in the following city.. Winnipeg...

So our wonderful wardrobe lady.. Bev Banville..... looked at the hems and said this is just too shabby " and had washed in woolite the lace coverings to dry overnight from Friday until the 1 pm matinees on Saturday.

Well.. no one bothered to tell her that the new lacy overskirt were 100% cotton and not a speck of polyester in the weaving. All the over skirts were hung to dry on wooden hangers backstage overnight. The wardrobe lady assistants came in and picked off the coverings and laid them over the appropriate girls skirt laid out on the backstage floor like a collapsed Chinese lantern.

The girls went to their assigned hoop spots and had the overskirts lifted up and bunched in their arms to pick up their lace umbrellas and then walking backstage holding the skirts up to keep them clean from any dirt on the floor. and then promptly dropped them as they got onto the ice.

What no one realized until too late.. was that the lace in woolite had lengthened from the water dripping weight, and the ruffles were now 12 inches longer than the night before...resulting in one heck of a costume malfunction... as the girls swizzled down the ice to split up at the front of the ice.. the hems slid under the hoops and caught the girls toe picks. .throwing them face first and backwards to the ice like dominoes... and what was once a LOVELY ELEGANT ENTRANCE of southern belle showgirls...

AND the more the girls swizzled the curved of the chorography... the more casualties were laid out across the ice....and created a much unexpected Hans Leiter moment of a skating traffic wreck across the ice.... I recall seeing 2 of the girls face first with their hoops popped over their heads with their feet kicking and trying to do a push up to get back on their feet.. and a few ladies in the audience covering their children's eyes as the nude bikinis revealed made the girls look as though they were bottomless ala a Parisian review...

MON DIEU! One of a few hazards of touring in a LIVE GRAND SPECTACLE! Who remembers being in this number and what were your thoughts?

## Videos of the Month



Take your video trip down memory lane to 'The Best of Times'

[Ice Capades 1986 - Part 1](#)

[Ice Capades 1986 – Part 2](#)

## Comments from July Blade

*Bob Bennett got me my first \$25. raise at Ice Capades from Dick Palmer after working ice rink installation in Champaign, IL. in 1972.- Bob Recker*

*Thank you for keeping us all connected with "The Blade" and to never forget that these were..... The best times of our lives! – Sue 'Packy' Rodeghier*

*In response to the picture of Otto & Maria, JoJo & Ken at Toronto's city hall - My two all time favorite IC free style pairs! Very cool.- Edwin Loeb*

*I look forward to reading "The Blade" every month. You do a wonderful job keeping all of us alumni informed. – Teri Andrews*

## Upcoming Events



### **Skater's Reunion 2017 Prague**

September 7 – 10, 2017

It is open to all skaters and crew from all different ice shows and ice circuses worldwide.  
More information will be sent shortly, Questions: [praguereunion2017@gmail.com](mailto:praguereunion2017@gmail.com)

**OLYMPIAN JOJO STARBUCK'S ADULT FIGURE SKATING CAMP**



**"COME SKATE WITH ME IN BEAUTIFUL BUDAPEST!"**



*Join adult recreational skaters from all over the world!*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

September 28th-October 1st  
Jegpalota Ice Rink  
Budapest, Hungary  
\$750 (US)\*

Two time Olympian & World Medalist JOJO STARBUCK is bringing her "Cool Workout" camp for **adult skaters of all ages and levels** to Budapest!  
The camp includes Great 8's Classes, Edge Classes, Choreography, Ballet and Stretching.

\*Includes welcome reception, transportation to and from arena, 16 hours of ice time, 4 hours of ballet/stretching, daily lunches at arena, farewell dinner, camp t-shirt, special rates at the Lion's Garden Hotel AND new skating friends!

To register, for hotel or more info contact: [info@jojostaruck.com](mailto:info@jojostaruck.com)  
[www.jojostaruck.com/camps](http://www.jojostaruck.com/camps)

## Website Update

The reunion website – [www.icecapadesreunion2015.com](http://www.icecapadesreunion2015.com) is still there. Even though the reunion is over, the plan is to continue to use this site for alumni updates so please keep checking back from time to time as news will be added periodically. Don't forget, there are also show rosters for your reference, updated obits, reunion pictures and upcoming events.

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