

## Our Alumni in the News

### Figure Skating Olympic silver medalist Elizabeth Manley shares her story of depression and resilience in Stratford

By [Laura Cudworth](#), The Beacon Herald



Elizabeth Manley was guest speaker at the annual general meeting of the Stratford General Hospital Foundation this week. Laura Cudworth/The Beacon Herald

It was an unforgettable moment for the whole country. Elizabeth Manley skating off the ice wearing a white cowboy hat thrown from the crowd after nailing the long program at the 1988 Olympics in Calgary.

An effervescent blonde without an ounce of pretension, she beat out American Debi Thomas for the silver medal in figure skating and nearly knocked East German skater Katarina Witt off the top of the podium. Overall the Calgary Olympics were not the games the country had been hoping for. The games were nearing the end when Manley won the long program. She became Canada's Sweetheart in an instant.

"I was an underdog. I wasn't expected to win a medal. I feel the country was just kind of starting to fade off a little bit and I came out of nowhere and had this amazing skate. It doesn't matter who I run into today they know exactly where they were sitting at that moment. I even had a lady in labour that held back just so she could see me skate. Some of the stories I've heard are just incredible."

But the road to get there was harder than anyone knew. Like all elite athletes she devoted herself to her sport but there were hurdles to overcome that made reaching the top even harder.

She had serious bouts of depression and suffered under the stigma.

A year before her first chance to go to the Olympics in 1984, she suffered a breakdown after the trauma of life events began to pile up. Her dad had left her mother and moved to Europe, her coach left unexpectedly and she had to quit skating because they couldn't afford to send her to someone else.

Skate Canada stepped in and sent her to the United States to train but she was lost without her mom.

"All these things happened but as an athlete you're trained never to show your feelings and I didn't even realize I was doing that. I just knew I was really sad and I was really struggling. The only way we found out was I completely lost all my hair and gained 35 pounds in water retention. My whole body just completely broke down."

She was 16 years old at the time and had no idea what was wrong.

"That was when people turned their backs. People I thought were in my camp were just scared, they didn't understand it and they disappeared from my life. It was really just my mom and me left to deal with it."

After going to specialists she was finally diagnosed with depression. She calls it the best thing that ever happened to her. Because it was so serious, there was nowhere to go but up, she said.

After winning that silver medal, she wanted to take on depression by talking about it. But no one was listening.

“I tried to use this platform right after ’88 but mental illness was at its highest in terms of stigma and people did not want to put ‘Canada’s Sweetheart’ and mental illness or depression in the same paragraph and no one wanted to hear me. No one wanted to listen.”

Perhaps it’s the athlete in her but she didn’t quit in the face of adversity.

It took years but eventually people started listening and they were listening on Wednesday evening when she told her story at the Stratford General Hospital Foundation annual general meeting.

Manley still suffers from depression but she’s learning to recognize when she’s starting to struggle and when she needs help. She’s found a way to live a “satisfying” life.

“I want people to know you can be resilient through very difficult times. That’s really what my story is about, it’s about resilience. And that you’re not alone. The person sitting right next to you while they’re listening to me could be suffering in silence. It’s really important we all understand it and it’s really important that we are there for people.”

Manley is candid about her struggles. Part of her goal is to continue to ease the stigma associated with any mental illness. It’s why hospital foundation executive director Andrea Page thought she would be a perfect fit for the AGM.

Manley is warm, exceedingly charming and genuine. She’s someone you’d love to invite to dinner. The girl photographed in ’88 biting the silver medal with the giant smile is the same person who talks today about mental illness.

No one watching the Calgary games knew the struggles she was facing. The night before the long program she was sick. Really sick.

“I was five minutes from pulling out of Calgary. We were going to a meeting to announce that I was withdrawing because I was so sick. A complete stranger stopped me in the hallway, it was the hockey coach, which I didn’t know, and he said the most powerful words to me.”

That was the moment she called the meeting off and committed herself to compete. She won the medal the next night.

“I never got to see that coach again and I never knew if he knew the impact he had on me. Two years ago I spoke to 500 of Canada’s top coaches as their keynote. They stopped me in the middle of my story and told me to turn around. It was Dave King, on the screen behind me, he had been skyped in and had been listening. So there was this moment I finally got to say thank you.”

That encouragement has stuck with her. It’s what she passes on each time she attends an event and talks about her life—her struggles and her triumphs. She insists a few kind words can change the course of someone’s day.

She knows too the power of negative words.

“I avoid negativity and I live in a world where there’s so much of it, especially in figure skating, and it’s very difficult especially coaching. But I will remove myself from situations that I know are going to affect me and make me feel horrible or down.”

Her mother once told her if her personality changed she would pull her out of sport. Holding true to her values have been an important part of her life. She prides herself on being an ordinary person.

Her medal is tucked away in her underwear drawer and there are no skating pictures on the wall of her Ottawa home.

“I’m just really a normal person and I was blessed to have a dream come true. It’s OK to be normal in the limelight. My passion today is doing what I’m doing.”

She lost her mother to ovarian cancer and her father to Alzheimer’s disease in recent years. Both were heavy blows but the loss of her mother was particularly hard. Her mother had been her source of strength through both the ups and downs.

“I was in the hospital sleeping on a cot beside her for 30 days and there was a moment one day when I looked at her with the tubes, trying to fight this cancer and realized she’s where my strength came from. She was the one who kept it together for me and when I lost her it was a really hard time for me again.”

She went back to therapy. She recognized she needed the help and that there was no shame in getting some.

“Every challenge I’ve had in my life brings me back to earth. I’m passionate about mental health and telling my story.

“I never dreamed I’d be doing what I’m doing today. I think just going through so much I just want to tell the world. I want to tell people it’s OK.” [lcudworth@postmedia.com](mailto:lcudworth@postmedia.com)

## Flashbacks

### 1960 Winter Olympics Squaw Valley

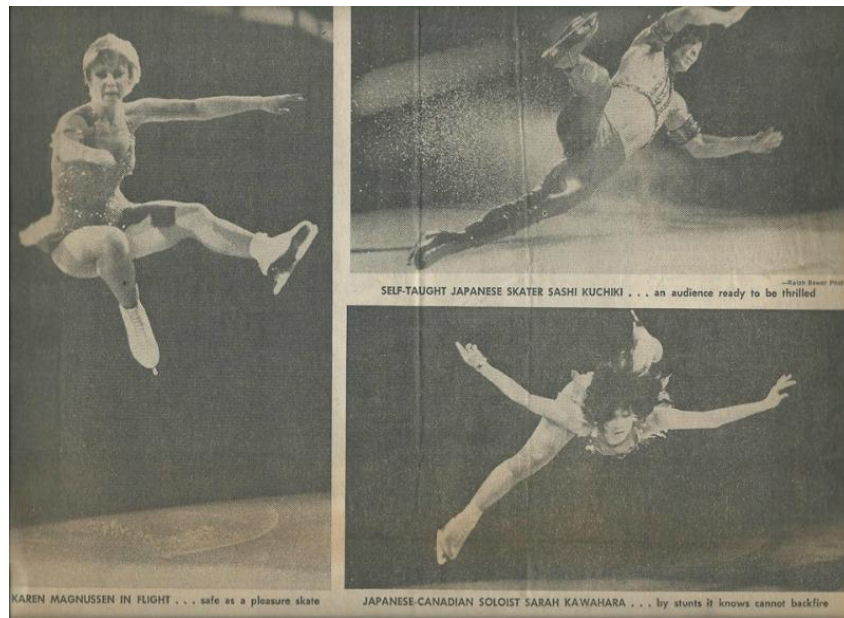


*The Canadian Olympic Figure Skating Team in Squaw Valley, California. L-R: Sheldon Galbraith (coach), **Barbara Wagner, Bob Paul**, Wendy Griner, CFSA President Granville Mayall, **Maria and Otto Jelinek**, Sandra Tewkesbury, Donald Jackson, Donald McPherson*



Opening night boy's dressing room Ice Capades 50th Anniversary Sept 28 1989 Duluth MN It was a long night :) — with [Louis Vachon](#), [David Malpass](#), [Jerry Wheeler](#), [Martin Kennedy](#), [Jonathan Oldham](#) and [Greg Bonin](#).





Great principal skaters: Karen Magnussen, Sashi Kuchki & [Sarah Kawahara](#) - posted on 1/4/75 in The Vancouver Sun

## The Accolades Just Keep on Coming for Richard Dwyer



PSA banquet & awards night. ISA & PSA had a joint convention in Las Vegas recently.

Mr. Debonaire receives the F. Ritter Shumway Award for unending dedication to our sport!  
He also holds the Guinness world record for the longest professional figure skating career and,  
at 80 years old, can still be fun..

What's next?



Tai & Randy Inducted into the Hall of Fame at the PSA Convention, celebrating with Ted Bogdanowicz, Marina Drasnin & Linda Haack - [Photo](#) by [Ray Benenate](#)

## Our Sport Moves Forward

**PRESS RELEASE: ISI, PSA MERGER STRENGTHENS SERVICE TO ICE SPORTS INDUSTRY - Historic organizations align efforts with eye toward future.**



LAS VEGAS, June 1, 2016 -- After years of working collaboratively to best serve the ice sports industry, the Ice Skating Institute (ISI) and the Professional Skaters Association (PSA) will move to consolidate operations to strengthen and unify national industry programs and services.

The announcement was made jointly at the ISI/PSA Conferences & Trade Show in Las Vegas.

“Our commitment to both memberships remains strong,” ISI President Robert McBride said. “This merger preserves the mission and founding principles of both ISI and PSA as we seek new and more effective ways to deliver critical services to our constituencies.”

“The merger of these two outstanding associations is a benefit to not only PSA and ISI members, but the ice sports industry as well,” PSA President-elect Christine Fowler-Binder said. “Together, we will more effectively

provide the critical leadership and programs of both organizations in a manner that will best serve the ice sports industry in the future.”

In a move to standardize many ice sports industry services, PSA and ISI leaders have discussed the possibility of their merger with U.S. Figure Skating, the national governing body of the sport in the United States, to ensure there would be no duplication of programs or services. All three organizations have pledged to work together to achieve this goal.

As one example, the PSA and ISI will work with U.S. Figure Skating to collectively support a single introductory skating program – Learn To Skate USA.

Endorsed by U.S. Figure Skating, USA Hockey, U.S. Speedskating, Learn To Skate USA will eliminate confusion for parents and skaters, allow more effective training for coaches and programmers and provide greater marketing opportunities to grow and retain members.

Over the next 18 months, ISI and PSA will consolidate programs and services such as coaches’ education, publications, conferences, seminars, memberships, advocacy and marketing to more effectively deliver programs at reduced costs to participants, coaches, programmers and arena management.

The process of melding these two historic organizations begins immediately and will be completed over a 1 to 2 year period.

Founded in 1959, Ice Skating Institute is a U.S. trade association for ice arena owners, operators and programmers that also represents recreational ice skaters.

Founded in 1938, the Professional Skaters Association is the world’s largest figure skating coaches association.

## Upcoming Events

"Come Skate With Me in  
Beautiful Budapest!"



photo: Robyn Roth-Moise

www.jojo-starbuck.com

Join adult skaters from around the world  
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**JOJO STARBUCK'S COOL WORKOUT**  
Adult Figure Skating Camp

Two time Olympian and World Medalist JoJo Starbuck will bring her camp for adult skaters of all ages and levels to Budapest. The camp includes Great 8's Classes, Edge Classes, Choreography, Private Lessons, Ballet and Stretching.

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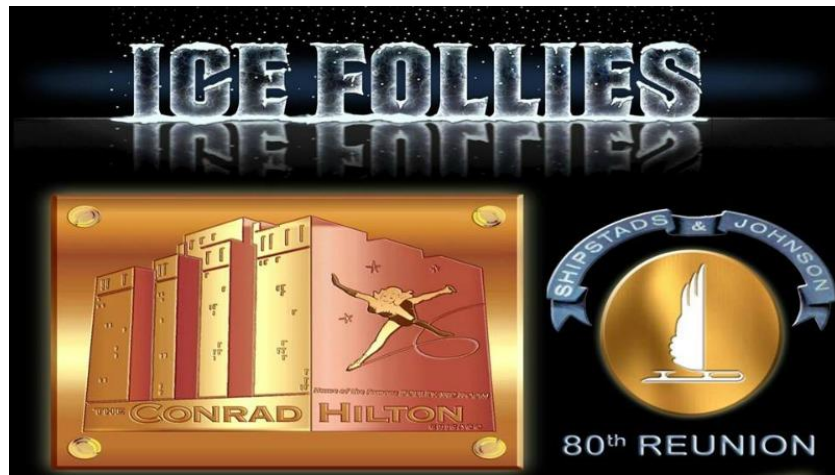
Budapest, Hungary  
July 27th (welcome reception)  
July 28th-31st 2016  
\$750

(includes 20 hours of coaching, 16 hours of ice time over four days, daily lunches, transportation to/from Rink, welcome reception and farewell dinner. campers are responsible for transportation to Budapest, hotel and other meal expenses.)

contact: [info@jojostarbuck.com](mailto:info@jojostarbuck.com)

For further information about JoJo's Workout Camp, [click here](http://www.jojo-starbuck.com)





**Chicago – Sept. 29 – Oct. 2, 2016**

**[See attached for Reunion Information](#)**

## **World Figure Championship & Figure Festival**

Welcoming the World to join us on the ice in **TORONTO!**

Mark your calendar!



[Click here](#) for details

## **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 and upcoming events.