



A Special Request

From Glynnis Gallagher:

As many of you might know, Bob Gallagher has been with Ice Capades for about 34 years. He started out as a skater, did sound, and was Road Manager for East & West Companies for many years – a Jack of all trades.

I would really like to have Dad get some birthday cards this year... I know he has moved a lot his current address is' 7 Upper Church St apt 108, West Springfield, Ma 01089'. His birthday is July 21 and he is going to be 84!!

Getting cards from outside of the family would really make his day! You're all still referred to as his "kids". If you could my brothers and sisters, please get a card or a letter to dad, it would brighten his day!! Thanks.



Bob with Hans & Jewel at the 2015 Reunion

A Special Memory

Life is for the Birds...

Kim Walter, Pinky's daughter has shared one of Pinky's blogs. It tells of when Pinky & Bill took care of the pigeons who were appearing in the show. It's told as only Pinky would write it and hopefully Kim will share more of her wonderful stories.

*And just like that, a year and a half whooshes by. A month after my last post, I lost my mom to ALS. Several times I've attempted to *blog* about it but I didn't know where to start.*

Now, as I go through 72 years of memories, I'm finding jewels worth sharing...the nostalgic bits that fill in the blanks. No need to start at the beginning...let's start in the 70's, shall we?!



I found a little green notebook that appears to have been dipped in oil. The words are fading but I managed to transpose them.

It contained a long "memoir" of sorts that my mom (Pinky) wrote back in 1975 when she and dad were done skating with the Ice Capades (my fault!) but were still with the show in technical positions.

It will make more sense to those of you who knew Pat and Bill, or Ed Krieg, or how the birds functioned in the Ice Capades finale.



Time in a Bottle

"My Life is for the Birds"

1975 - Memoirs of Patricia "Pinky" Brenner (Forbes)

Traveling with a road show has its ups and downs. When most people find out that we travel eleven months out of the year they say things like; "What a rotten life that must be, no roots, someplace different each week, you have to find a new grocery store in each city, can't do your laundry at home, only see your relatives when you play your hometown, your children won't have playmates, can't go to school like the other kids, no excitement..."

And we say, it's great! WE love it. No neighbors to have petty arguments with over a tree that's planted on your side and the limbs are growing over the fence to their side. Who's going to cut them down, you or us? It's cheaper to do your laundry at the laundromat. The initial cost of a washer and dryer takes six months to pay off or longer, then there's repairs, water, electric, baskets to put your clothes in, repairs...and repairs...

Relatives love to visit and talk, you know? "My niece is in show biz, bright lights, famous!" they say. Mother (Leah) doesn't get all excited anymore because we've been here since ["22"] and my daddy was in show biz, the real show biz..."Vaudeville", for 20 years.

As far as my daughter goes, she loves it. You ask any child if they'd like to travel or better yet, come backstage, and see costumes up close, people put on make-up? And even better than that be able to ice skate – free of charge every day?! She has seen more of this good old mother earth in her two years than some folks see their entire life time. When you stop and think about it, how many city kids do you know that have seen a cow close up? Or can read a map, and know which way is north – she can! What better education can she get? She sees all the sights from Atlantic City to as far West as Hawaii, as far North as Toronto, Canada to as far South as Atlanta, Georgia and Texas.

As for school work, she's two and she already knows her alphabet and can count to twenty. And, there is always correspondence school. My sister took correspondence when we were on the road with daddy and she was a lot brighter in school than I was when we finally settled in Philadelphia. She had a very close teacher, my mother. Playmates are no problem. There are 3 families with our show with children and one family with one on the way. Living in a motorhome is the ideal way. And, as far as excitement goes, well, let me tell ya!

Things were getting a little routine for me after the birth of our baby girl, Kimberley Erna. But things always change, nothing stays the same. When we landed in L.A. From Hawaii, we went to the studio to say hello to everyone and show off our gorgeous tans, and Kimberley's fancy Hawaiian clothes. We were hit with some exciting news. Our Vice President said, "Bill and Pat, we have an extra job for you guys next year, and extra money. We'd like you to take care of 32 birds (pigeons)"

"Sure..." says Bill. But later, when we got home he says, "No way! You're taking care of the birds. I'm not going to even look at them!" But I don't know the first thing about pigeons. All I know is that they hang around statues and turn them white! I didn't want a single solitary thing to do with them and I made myself perfectly clear.

Summer vacation came and with our trip to Lake El Mirage to run our land sailer and ride our motorcycles, canoeing on the Colorado River, stopping at Carlsbad Caverns, White Sands National Park on our way back to Bill's home in Kansas...we completely forgot about the birds until summer vacation was over and we were in Atlantic City again with a new show, new props, new costumes, new faces and a new project. "The Birds".

After our first week there, we get on inner-office memo; "Re: pick up Mr. Ed Krieg at Philadelphia International Airport, United flight 426 at 5:17 pm."

So, off we go in a rented station wagon to Philly. We took advantage of a little small side trip to visit my mother in town. Did you ever have the opportunity to pick someone up at the airport that you hadn't a clue as to what they look like? It's an experience in itself. All the way to the airport we tried to visualize what he might look like. By the time we got to the airport, he was; very, very tall, skinny, lanky, with long, jet black, straggly hair, sunken cheeks, bearded, milk bottom glasses, wearing a black suit...and all hunched over like a vulture!

What a surprise it was when this nice looking, short blond hair, pleasing glowing smile, nicely dressed man sat down in the front seat, turned to me in the back seat, shot out his hand for a hearty hello and said, "Hi! I'm Ed Krieg, you must be..." Stunned, I said..."Pat Brenner...and this is Kimberley our side kick" Thinking to myself while all this was going on...was right about the glasses, not milk bottom, but glasses nonetheless! When his hand touched mine it was like instant friendship, such a warm, strong hand. Hands are the way through the years I've learned to judge people. The way they look, how they move and the way they feel when you shake to say hello project a lot about a person.

Now the ball was rolling. Ed and his pigeons were there. We talked all the way from the airport to Atlantic City about each other, different experiences, places we've been while all the time Kimberley was tantalizing the birds! (Ahem, I need to step in here and say I was not tantalizing the birds, but merely...showing them affection!) Needless to say, as soon as I met Ed and his 32 foster children, I fell in love and from that moment I knew...this job was MINE!

We got the birds all set up in their new home, Ed in his hotel and when we finally got home ourselves, I couldn't sleep a wink from the excitement. The next day, we flew the birds in a closed room so they couldn't fly away. They had to get used to the box they have to land on during the show. When they flew for the first time it was the most breathtaking sight. I fell in love again. Every day after that first flight they got better and better till we took them onto the ice. Each day, we moved farther and farther down ice till we were right smack up to the front dash.

Once we had a couple of birds fly away and we spent most of the day running up and down the steps of the auditorium trying to net them down. But suddenly, victory. Ed caught two in the net. That's a thrilling sight to see Ed catch a bird in flight with a net! And, I know from experience it's not an easy chore. The final result was...sore legs.

The birds are quick, and very clever. We got them all back thanks to Ed and I thought to myself, "I'll never be able to get them back if they get away when Ed's not here" After a week, I got a little discouraged and I wanted to give up. It seemed like so much to learn in such a short time. Ed was only staying three weeks. Three weeks

is a short time to teach someone all there is to know about birds. When I'm sure it took Ed years of trial and error and lots of experiences to gain his knowledge of raising and rearing birds.

Each bird is like a person. They all have different personalities and I've named them to match the personalities of people I felt they portrayed. One is feisty, one a complainer, one is quiet, a couple like to be the center of attraction, one is elegant, some are prouder than other others and some just blend in. But when it comes to their job, and they know what their job is now, they are all the same...beautiful! None more beautiful than the other.

I had so many questions to throw at Ed before he left for his home in Vegas. I'm sure it made his head spin - "What do I do if they don't eat? How do I know when they are sick? What about mites, lice? What if one lands on the ice and one of the kids skates over their foot?! What do I do when they lay eggs? What do I do when one flies away on the last show and we move out that night?" If his head didn't spin, mine made up for his!

Finally, the day came and Ed had to leave. He watched the show that night and it was all ours backstage. Up until that day, Ed was always there. We panicked, but with help from above, we did it. We got them in their flight boxes and backstage on time. The feed was put into the box they fly to, the lights on the box all worked, the nuts ready, the cover for the catch box...and the birds flew beautifully.

The day after Ed left was the worst. When I walked into the building and didn't see his face, a slight sadness came over me. Not only did I miss his knowledge about the birds, but I also missed the man. I never noticed while he was here, but when he was gone, I realized I had become quite attached to him. If I could save time in a bottle, I'd save those three short weeks in it, and put the bottle where everyone could see it.

Another thing we noticed after Ed left was how everyone was suddenly an expert on how to care for the birds! They'd say, "I had an Aunt who raised chickens..." or "We had a parakeet once and he....well, he...." or "We used to feed the pigeons in the park?!"

During one performance, one bird had no room on the catch box to land and he flew back out and circled around to make another try at it and when he got halfway there, the fireworks went off and that was all he needed. He split to the rafters. Not that I blame him. I'd split too if I thought my tail feathers would catch on fire. Such confusion you've never seen or heard.

My first thought was to call Ed, he'll tell me what to do! Then I thought, "Don't call Ed...the bird will come down, we'll leave the catch box out with the lights on and he'll come back when he sees it." Well, I didn't listen to myself and called Ed! He told me what to do – you go to a dentist when you have a toothache, you don't mess around with home remedies, home remedies pacify for a while, but you go to the expert to solve the problem.

That night, before the show, we pulled their home they live on during the day out onto the open ice with a light over it. Sure enough, just like Ed said, down he came first to the balcony to look around, then to the light nearby and finally, right on top of the cage. Bill netted him and he was in the show that night!

With all the traumas that happened, like birds laying eggs and everyone wanting me to let them hatch them out (but you can't because of traveling every week), cleaning cages, picking up feathers, washing out bird droppings, getting beat to death with flapping wings while trying to catch them to put them in their flight boxes....and making sure they are fed good, fresh water, washing down rocks for the bottom of their cages, making sure people don't feel them popcorn, getting them an hour or more of sun and fresh air every day, as if it's raining...a sun lamp. Making sure they are healthy and happy. It sure sounds like a lot of work.

At times when I'm up to my eyeballs in feathers and droppings, I feel like walking out and forgetting all about them. Someone walks by and says, "Gee Pat, these birds are beautiful, and when they fly, it's breathtaking." I melt inside and apologized to my friends in the cage, and make sure they're all bedded down for the night, say my good nights to them, and tell them I'm glad my life this year is for the birds.



Yes, that's Pinky petting her duck.

More Trips Down Memory Lane

Doug Martin gave us some untold stories from our time on the road. Here's one from Doug himself.

Doug Martin remembers Hans Leiter

Hans Leiter was another great skater I was fortunate to work with. Hans was one of the outstanding comic skaters on ice in those days and is still respected as one of the best of all time. He gained his athletic prowess and valuable sense of timing, necessary to ice comedy, as a track star in his native Vienna. I had the pleasure of working in different comedy numbers with Hans and always learned new ideas on how to get the audience to respond to even the smallest hint of humor. Hans was as loud in the dressing room as anyone I ever worked with. Thank God we had an orchestra that was also loud and drowned out a lot of the activity backstage. But he was always fun to be with. I remember a train trip the cast and crew made to Toronto, Ontario one year. Hans had a few extra drinks in him, and was louder than usual and speaking like a German staff officer. He was making us all laugh when suddenly a Canadian immigration officer appeared to check everyone's name and make sure we were all with the show. When he got to Hans, he asked for his name and ID. Hans jumped to his feet and answered, "My name is Hans vit a capital H". Most of us had to hide our smiles from the official, as they usually didn't take kindly to our brand of humor, whether were drunk or sober. He gave Hans a stern look and said, "I'm going to ask you the question again and if you continue to try to be funny, you will be held at a Canadian immigration station for an overnight stay." We all laughed once the official left the car, but I don't think Hans ever forgot that experience. No one let the management of the show know, as they wouldn't have found any humor in the situation either.

I recently saw Hans at the Ice Capades reunion in Las Vegas (2010), and was sadly shocked at his condition, for his health was in great decline. Still, I have many memories of the time we spent together in Ice Capades. It was also good to see that Maria Jelinek, his long-time friend, was looking after him and making sure he made it to the various events at the reunion.

Memorable Cast Picture



The cast and staff of the 25th Edition of Ice Capades. On the ice, L to R: John Brown, Ray Allen, Jack Kelly, Jack Forde, James Moser, Dick Lavdanski, Walter Finkowski, Mae Weinberg, Jack Balmer, Laurie Art, Leo Loeb, Rita Riederer, Brian McDonald, Shirley Costello, Dick Troxler, Bob Dench, Rosemarie Stewart, Ron Fletcher, Sid Smith, George Eby, Dick Palmer, Phil Wylly, Jim Peterson, Rita Palmer, Al Teany, Celine Faur, Harry Hasley, Bill Bain, Ted Wilkins, Bob Gallagher, Nick Sherlock, Bill Bauer, Jules Flacco, Hal Saunders, George Frey, Ray Abney, Don Bearson, Norm Currington. Kneeling on ice in center: Spanky and Dave Pitts. On stage, dancers and principals: Robert Mazzone, Emelina Escariz, Lonnie Davis, Bill Brenner, Glenda Brenner, Herman Rider, Hans Leiter, Brigitte, Peter Voss, Cathy Steele, Phil Romayne, Aja Zanova, Tommy Litz, Maria Jelinek, Otto Jelinek, Lynn Finnegan, Sashi Kuchiki, Mitsuko Funakoshi, Doug Austin, John LaBrecque, George Bussey, Tony Juliano, Anita Milan, Shawn Stuart. Corps de Ballet on left stairs: Carol Mathers, Joe Curran, Jenny Custer, Kinney Moore, Chris Wood, Dan Eastburn, Sharron Gallagher, Barry Lewis, Linda Reese, Pete Belew, Marilyn Carlson, Jim Corrigan, Terri Reuter, Jim Kaufman, Gloria Clements, Gille Vanesse, Joan Plimley, Ed McCormick, Linda Clarke, Ronald Pifer, Bente Anderson, Jerry Ruhl, Henni Hauser, Dave Hauser, Ron Seidel, David Colman, Bill Griffin. Corps de Ballet on right stairs: Cliff McArdle, Sheila McFarlane, Al Beal, Pat Forbes, Scott Hamilton, Doreen Lister, James Custer, Nancy Wallace, Leonard Perry, Janet Runn, Cliff MacGraham, Marie Leon, Bob Daily, Carol Kirsacko, Bob McDonald, Julie Canopa, Terry Salo, Marilyn Martell, John Rodgers, Sandie Gowans, John Nazareta, Brita Bersten, Donna Daugherty, Michele Monnier, Janice Hebert, Irmgard Cratzl.

Comments from June Blade

Great "Blade" as always!!! Loved the article about us opening HIC in Honolulu. That was a great building. I think it's still there and is called Blaisdell Arena or something like that. It was a big round, space ship like structure...of course the dressing rooms were not adequate; at least for the guys, but hey....we were in Honolulu!!!! Also interesting how profitable the show was there. No wonder we kept it going for years and years. We were on tank ice and told we kept a permanent tank stored there. I remember the Hawaiian audience would lean over the dash and actually touch the ice with their hands and then giggle....I am guessing they had never seen such a large slab of ice!!

Hard to explain, but those days in Honolulu were truly wonderful; we all remember them with great fondness. The show closed there after a LONG winter in Canada, we stayed over to enjoy Hawaii, and dinner parties in our apts. at the Ilikai, trips to sight see, what fun. - *Jim Hurst*

Thank you so much for continuing to publish this. - *Dianne Palmer Walker*

Thanks for keeping the newsletter going. It's always fun to go back to those days.- *Kris Koppang Penick*

Upcoming Events



Holiday on Ice

40th Anniversary of the Gold Division

'Alice-Flamenco' Production

Open to skaters from all shows

Las Vegas, NV – September 5-7, 2018

[Click here for registration form](#)

On **May 25th to May 28th, 2019**, onboard Royal Caribbean's Symphony of the Seas, we will be celebrating 40 years of Willy Bietak Productions. Come join us for this incredible reunion of friends, family, skaters and employees from around the world!!!

The poster is for a 40th anniversary reunion. It features a black background with a gold banner in the top left corner that says 'REUNION'. The Willy Bietak Productions logo is at the top center. Below it, the text 'Come share the memories!' is written in a white cursive font. This is followed by 'CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF Willy Bietak Productions, Inc.' in white and blue. Below that, it says 'ONBOARD ROYAL CARIBBEAN'S SYMPHONY OF THE SEAS MAY 25TH TO MAY 28TH, 2019' next to a white cruise ship. Further down, it says 'FEATURING OUR LATEST SHOWS "1977" & "ISKATE 2.0"'. There are two small images: one of a hot air balloon over a city and another of a skater. At the bottom, it says 'PLEASE SHARE THIS WITH AS MANY FORMER AND CURRENT BIETAK PRODUCTIONS' FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS AS POSSIBLE', followed by the website 'https://www.bietakproductions.com/bietak-celebration/', the email 'reunion@bietakproductions.com', and the phone number '310-576-2400' and 'bietakproductions.com'.

Visit <https://www.bietakproductions.com/bietak-celebration/>



<http://www.icetheatre.org/>

If you would like to be removed from receiving The Blade, please type 'unsubscribe' in the subject line and send it to me directly. gspoden@rogers.com