

Sad News

Jimmy Lawrence – April 23, 2017



Kathleen Everett - Kathleen: "Carl, my dad, Jim Lawrence passed away early this morning. If you could honor him, it would be really nice. Thank you in advance." ... READ, now, about Jimmy's book: About his book, Jim SAID, recently: "I urge all you skaters (especially "older" skaters) to record your Ice Show memories. It was an important part of American entertainment history and its slipping away."!! ... Jimmy Lawrence DID record his (as I have been trying to do) .. Jimmy Lawrence's excellent book, shown here, is available on Amazon, and is a very nice read, indeed!

READ ALL: "As the stage was set for World War II, in the late 1930s, elements were also falling into place for the birth of



one of the most unique and spectacular entertainment mediums of all time, the Great American Touring Ice Shows. In that pre-television age, elegant entertainment extravaganzas had never been so accessible to so many people. The shows brought superb skaters, breath-taking costumes, elaborate sets, live orchestras, and a wide variety of entertaining acts to cities across the nation. The shows came to your own hometown—or within driving distance—with an entertainment package for every member of the family. They enjoyed their heyday in the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s and served as a brief respite and valuable morale booster for a country totally immersed in global war. During his years as a star performer with Ice Capades, Ice Cycles and Holiday on Ice, author, James (Jimmy) Lawrence, was privileged to know most of the people associated with the birth of the major touring ice shows. The need to preserve long cherished memories of those phenomenal shows and to record their part in the history of popular entertainment in America inspired him to publish "Memories of The Great American Ice Shows". The book describes day-to-day activities on tour, provides a glimpse behind the curtain, and introduces a cast

of unique and colorful characters who created or participated in the success of the great shows. Memories of The Great American Ice Shows is a funny, touching one-of-a-kind memoir about an American phenomena that blossomed, flourished and then passed into history never to be seen again."

Our Alumni in the News

World Figure Skating Hall of Fame Class of 2017 announced



Sarah Kawahara

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) -- Olympic champions Alexei Yagudin and Trixi Schuba and longtime coach Alexei Mishin headlined the latest class to be elected to the Figure Skating Hall of Fame on Monday.

Yagudin won four world championships and gold for Russia at the 2002 Winter Games before his career, and his long rivalry with countryman Evgeni Plushenko, was cut short by a congenital hip disorder.

Schuba won gold at the 1972 Winter Games for Austria, while Mishin's proteges have combined to win three Olympic gold medals, five world titles and nearly two dozen Russian championships.

Also elected were Chinese Olympic pairs champions Shen Xue and Zhao Hongbo and **longtime choreographer Sarah Kawahara of Canada**, while posthumous inductees include Vivi-Ann Hulten of Sweden, Hans-Rudi Mauch of Switzerland, Werner Rittberger of Germany and Phyllis Wyatt Johnson and James Johnson of Britain.

DECC Athletic Hall of Fame to enshrine six in May

By [News Tribune](#) on Apr 1, 2017 at 8:59 p.m.

The 26th DECC Athletic Hall of Fame will induct a record number of entrants when the biennial ceremony is held May 24.



Former Minnesota Duluth men's hockey coach Mike Sertich, ex-UMD football great Ted McKnight, Cloquet standout girls basketball player Debbie Hunter, one-time University of Minnesota athletic director Joel Maturi and the pioneering Duluth brother-and-sister figure skating team of **Bob and Ruby Maxson** will join the ranks of inductees at the DECC's Harbor Side Convention Ballroom.

Sertich gained legendary status in the Northland for guiding the Bulldogs to three WCHA regular-season titles, two league playoff titles, the school's first four NCAA Division I tournaments and Frozen Fours in 1984 and 1985. He was named winner of the 1984 Spencer Penrose Award as national coach of the year.

The Virginia native eschewed a football scholarship at the University of North Dakota to play hockey at UMD, where the defenseman was voted Most Improved Player his senior year.

After coaching hockey and baseball at Grand Rapids High School, Sertich returned to UMD as an assistant coach in the mid-1970s. He became head coach in 1982 and stayed for 18 seasons before departing and coaching three more years at Michigan Tech.

The other inductees:

- McKnight, a Duluth Central alumnus, left UMD in 1976 with a then-school-record 2,957 yards rushing, earning Little All-American recognition. He led NCAA Division II in rushing as a senior (1,482 yards) and set the school's single-game mark of 235 yards, as well as records for touchdowns in a single season (22) and a single game (6). He was drafted by the NFL's Oakland Raiders in the second round in 1977 and played for the Kansas City Chiefs and Buffalo Bills from 1978-82, leading all NFL rushers with a 6-yards-per-carry average in 1978.
- Hunter led Cloquet to its first girls basketball state tournament in 1978 and was a two-time honorable mention All-American guard at the University of Minnesota from 1980-83, where she held 11 team records, including career marks for assists and steals. The university retired her number and inducted her into its hall of fame. Hunter later coached at Bethel University for 10 years, Colorado College for two years and Austin (Texas) College for 11 years before retiring.
- Maturi, who played basketball on Bob McDonald's first Chisholm team in 1961-62, graduated from Notre Dame and coached high school sports in Wisconsin, where he eventually was inducted into the state's basketball hall of fame. He later served as associate athletic director at Wisconsin and athletic director at Denver University and Miami, Ohio, before holding the same position at Minnesota for 10 years until 2012.
- **The Maxsons** were featured performers in the Shipstads and Johnson Ice Follies in 1937 and, starting in 1946, the Ice Capades. **Bob Maxson later was a choreographer for the Ice Capades with his wife, Helen.** He died in 1999 at age 79. After performing, Ruby taught skating in California and Colorado before dying at age 81 in 2003.

[Click here for information to attend the event](#)

Where Are They Now?

Gloria (Lor) Spoden



I was one of 5 skaters who were hired in Feb. 1966 to begin the rehearsals for 66-67 East Co. tour. Our first city was Washington DC and we were already a couple days late due to a snowstorm that almost shut the show down. (see Laurie Tepper Goldsmith's recollection below) Heard that they called 10 minute call from the bus. I was in the National/East Company from 66-71, 3 of them as Line Captain and got my professional debut in New York by being one of Soupy Sales 'birds' and unceremoniously got hit in the face with a pie every night.

Once I left the show, I wound up living in LA and was Skating School Director at the No. Hollywood IC Chalet for a short while. My career path continued by being the Office Manager for the Dupree Dance Academy. If anyone came to his studio to take dance classes in the 70's and saw a long haired person behind the desk that was me. I then spent some time at Paramount Pictures working in the TV Production office. I guess I missed the change in the seasons and eventually moved back to Toronto, working for the CBC. Short-lived time in Toronto and I was back to California, this time to Orange County where I spent time working for Doubletree Hotels for a few years. I finally decided that Toronto was my home so in 1996, returned for the last time and have been back ever since. I have one son who is getting married this year to his high school sweetheart of 18 years. Am so proud of his accomplishments and look forward to the next phase of their lives.

Why did you want to join Ice Capades and what is your fondest memory?

I wrote in my high school year book that my goal was to 'get out of town' so when the opportunity came and I auditioned for the show, this was certainly going to be more exciting than working as a teller at the local bank. It was my way out to go and to see the world. I remember telling myself that I wish my eyes were like cameras so I could show my mom what I was seeing and experiencing. The first time we rode into LA on the train, my head was leaning out the open door between the cars trying to see my first palm tree. My fondest memory was creating the friendships then that are still going 'today'. I am thrilled to have helped put the last 2 reunions together and having the alumni finding each other after being apart for so many years. We are family and will always have that special connection.



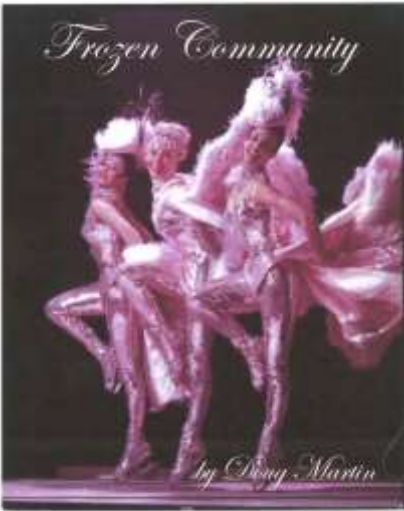
I guess we all have to 'retire' and that's where I'm at right now. To keep myself busy and out of trouble I decided to lace up the ole Knebli's again and have gotten back on the ice after being off for 12 years. [Click here](#) to see a little snippet of me still staying upright.

Have added a couple line dancing classes to my exercise program, and along with swimming during the summer, am starting to feel a lot better despite the ole bones complaining all the time. I'm grateful for the time to continue publishing 'The Blade' to keep everyone up to date on what's happening with our 'family'. I've kept the website up and hope you will continue to visit it from time to time as I will keep updating it with 'The Blade' information as well as rosters, reunion pictures, obits, etc. to reference.

Thank you for your support and am always happy to hear from you –

gspoden@rogers.com

More Trips Down Memory Lane



Doug Martin published a book called 'Frozen Community' that contained a collection of stories and memories while he was on tour with Ice Capades for 11 years. Here are a few more stories that we can giggle about today.

Linda Landin recollects a story that if it were to happen in today's world, it could have a much different ending. She writes -

My sister lived in Vegas, so when the show was nearby I would fly in to visit her for a few days. One day I was flying back from Vegas to rejoin the show in Salt Lake City, and ended up getting to the airport late, but I didn't realize how late. I waited at the boarding area, which had a sign that said Las Vegas to Salt Lake, so I knew I was at the right gate. As usual, I was polite and patient as I waited to board, but then I saw that the sign had been taken

down. I asked someone about the flight and they said, "Oh that flight has boarded and is on the runway".

In those days, Vegas airport was very small and you could actually step out onto the runway – so I did. I didn't know if the plane I saw was actually the one going to Salt Lake, but I did know it was coming right at me. It was a jet, kind of like a 737. It was taxiing, ready for take off. I stood on the runway and waved my arms at the pilot, yelling, "Stop! I want on your plane!". Believe it or not, he slowed, and then stopped. All I could think was, "Now Dolly won't kill me for missing the show." As I hurried up the stairs they wheeled out for my benefit, I heard Gisella and Terry Head saying, "It had to be you. Only you would have gone to such lengths to not miss a flight." I thought nothing of it. I just took my seat, and off we flew to Salt Lake. I don't think I ever told anyone about the day until many years later, when I realized the seriousness of what I had done. My sister had been a stewardess, and she got a good laugh over it. Linda added "Boy, I sure wouldn't try that today. You'd make a good target for every member of the Homeland Security team. By the way, Linda said that when she was on the runway, waving down the pilot, she could actually see the incredible look of surprise in his eyes!!

Laurie Goldsmith Tepper, who was with ice Capades from 1965 – 1968, recalls a memorable snowstorm in Washington, DC.

It was early 1966, and the day we came to town, Washington, DC had the worst blizzard they had experienced in years, and the city basically came to a standstill. But for some reason our show that night wasn't cancelled. We were still on the bus when 10 minute call was announced. We got out on the ice to perform, and there were more of us on the ice than there was in the audience. But suddenly, Jack Balmer went and sat in the front row as if he were a paying customer. He was oohing and aaahing for all he was worth, and clapping with great enthusiasm. What a guy! He literally single-handedly changed the tone of the whole performance.

There was the time that the union of stagehands went on strike in Champagne, Illinois. The cast and crew set up the entire show. It was actually fun to see principals Cathy, Phil and Ronnie, transporting costumes and setting up dressing rooms. I spent the day hooking up all the dashlights together. It was a great experience. Looking around at everything that was happening, all the show people working together for the good of the show and the audience. It was a great feeling of accomplishment, and a testament to the fact that, yes, indeed, the show must go on!

Memory of the Month



OLDEST PROFESSIONAL SKATERS SMOOTHER THAN EVER

At 71, Orrin Markhus guides his pretty young partner across the ice with the same control and the same smoothness that marked their debut with Ice Capades 20 years ago.

The pretty young partner, incidentally is Irma Thomas who is seven times a grandmother and among the loveliest in the cast at "well over 40".

Living proofs that it's earlier than you think, the Old Smoothies are one of the top starring acts in the all-new 22nd Edition of Ice Capades. The years have been blessed with good health, and the ease and poise that goes with a champion in action.

In over 7500 performances, they have never missed a single show. This is a tremendous record in view of the great physical exertion required by each performance. Each week of their tour entails an average of six nightly shows and five matinees each weekend—yet the Old Smoothies are always in the wings right on cue and each performance displays their characteristic verve and energy.

Orrin was an all around athlete in the midwest playing football, baseball, ice hockey, tennis and running on the track team. Last, but certainly not least, he was at one time a great golfer and came within an ace of concentrating on being a top pro as a member of the Professional Golfers' Association and acting as the pro at the Highland

Park Golf Club in St. Paul. He taught golf all summer and during the winters he toured Europe as a figure skating teacher. This was an ideal way to turn the two sports he loved best into something more substantial than mere participation.

One winter during World War II, when Orrin was in St. Paul, a lady came to the arena Club seeking skating instruction for her two daughters. Orrin saw real talent in the girls, trained them intensively and developed the now famous Thomas Twins, one of the top skating sister teams in the world.

He convinced their mother she should take lessons, too, so that she could be close to her daughters all having the same interest. His sales talk was so good that Irma not only took up skating but became his partner as well.

They had a great deal of fun skating together but bookings weren't what could be called plentiful. Then one day Ice Capades' Producer John H. Harris sent a message saying he'd like to talk to them. The talk ended up with an audition and the audition led to a contract that has continued for 20 years—and each year the Old Smoothies are a solid success than the year before. They are synonymous with both Ice Capades and Ice spectacles—and with the joy of skating which they personify.

Video Memories of the Month



Tim Wood performs at Celebration on Ice in Indianapolis 1984. This is what is so missed nowadays, edges and pure skating. [Click here](#) to view a memorable performance dedicated to his wife Taffy.

This is our very talented Trixie Larue on the ice.



[Click here to view the video.](#)

Trixie, going under the name Trixie Firschke, juggled with Fred Astaire in the audition scene from the 1940 movie "Broadway Melody of 1940".

[Click here to view this very cool video with Fred Astaire.](#)

Comments from April Blade

"While you outdid yourself with this month's news-packed issue, I still hated to see it come to an end. –
Richard Morse

*You do a great job. Truly enjoy all the great memories! Sincerely, **Gilles Vanasse***

*You're doing an outstanding job with the newsletter. You must be retired or have lots of time on your hands.
Lol. – **JP Romano***

*You, for certain, are the loyal, dedicated and loving tie that binds all of us ice gypsies
together! Thank you, thank you, thank you. – **Glenda Litz***

*OMG!!!! You just made my Year!! To open the Blade and see me on the front page!!!! Thank you as always
for all your hard work!! - **John Niles Merrill***

*Just wanted to add my thank you for all your work keeping our group together. The Blade is brilliant and keeps
precious memories alive for many generations of ice gypsies Can never thank you enough! **Pam (Parent) Dinet***

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

Website Update

The reunion website – 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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