

Sad News

Our world of Costume Designing has lost 2 of their brightest stars

Olympic silver medalist Frances Dafoe dies at 86

Competitor, judge, designer had lifelong passion for sport of figure skating

Posted 9/28/16 by Lois Elfman, special to icenetwork



When her illustrious competitive career was over, Frances Dafoe became an accomplished costume designer. -courtesy of Skate Canada Archives

Frances Dafoe, a two-time world pairs champion and Olympic silver medalist who went on to be a world and Olympic judge as well as a designer of some of the most iconic costumes in skating, died last Friday at the age of 86.

Dafoe's life in skating crossed decades and touched nearly every corner of the sport. For her contributions, she was inducted into the Skate

Canada Hall of Fame, Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame, Canada's Sports Hall of Fame and the World Figure Skating Hall of Fame.

"True pioneers in their sport, Dafoe and [Norris] Bowden (Dafoe's pairs partner) brought figure skating to a new level of sophistication with their imaginative lifts and jumps," said Mario Siciliano, president and CEO of Canada's Sports Hall of Fame.

Olympic pairs gold medalists Barbara Wagner and Bob Paul referred to Dafoe and Bowden as their mentors. Both teams trained with coach Sheldon Galbraith at the old Toronto Skating Club, and watching Dafoe and Bowden helped the younger pair mature.

[Click here](#) to read the rest of the article

Skating world mourns loss of 'visionary' Billings

Hamilton, Buttle among those who treasured time working with designer

Billings, seen here posing with one of his Emmy Award-winning designs, left an indelible mark on the world of figure skating. -Getty Images

Designer Jef Billings, who created costumes for skating stars for decades, died Tuesday at the age of 70.



Billings was widely regarded as one of the most important designers in figure skating, creating opulent pieces drawn from his experience creating fashion in Hollywood.

"His knack was to dive into the character that you were portraying on the ice and really bring out the flavor of that in the costume," said Kristi Yamaguchi, a frequent client of Billings. "Whether it was something comedic and fun, or elegant and glamorous, you put a Jeff Billings on and it made you feel special on the ice."

Scott Hamilton met Billings in 1984, when Billings showed him some sketches backstage at a tour stop. Hamilton liked his energy

and enthusiasm, and the two started working together, forming a partnership that lasted decades.

To read the rest of the article, [click here](#)

Our Alumni in the News

Olympic Skater Scott Hamilton Facing Third Brain Tumor Diagnosis: 'I Choose to Celebrate Life'

By [Jeff Nelson](#) • [@nelson_jeff](#)

People Magazine



Earlier this year, the Olympic figure skater received a brain tumor diagnosis for what will be the third time. The diagnosis — a benign pituitary tumor — comes after Hamilton, 58, overcame testicular cancer in 1997 and battled two previous brain tumors in 2004 and 2010.

"I have a unique hobby of collecting life-threatening illness," the Stars on Ice cofounder tells PEOPLE exclusively. "It's six years later, and it decided that it wanted an encore."

Hamilton learned of the tumor at a routine check-up and is currently exploring all his treatment options before symptoms begin presenting.

"I'll tell anybody that will listen: If you're ever facing anything, get as many diagnoses as you possibly can," he says. "The more you truly understand what you're up against, the better decision you're going to make."

Since being diagnosed, Hamilton has stayed strong for his wife Tracie, 46, and his four kids: biological sons Aidan, 12, and Maxx, 8; and Jean Paul, 15, and Evelynne, 13, [whom they adopted from Haiti](#) in 2014.

"When this one came back, six years ago, I told Tracie — she was devastated. This time, I go, 'Well, here we go again.' She's like, 'Really, it's back? ... Okay, we'll just deal with it.' And that was it," says Hamilton. "My 12-year-old son ... came to me, and he said, 'Is your brain tumor back?' And I go, 'Yeah, it is! And here we go again.' So I set the tone."

To view the accompanying video and the rest of the article, [click here](#)

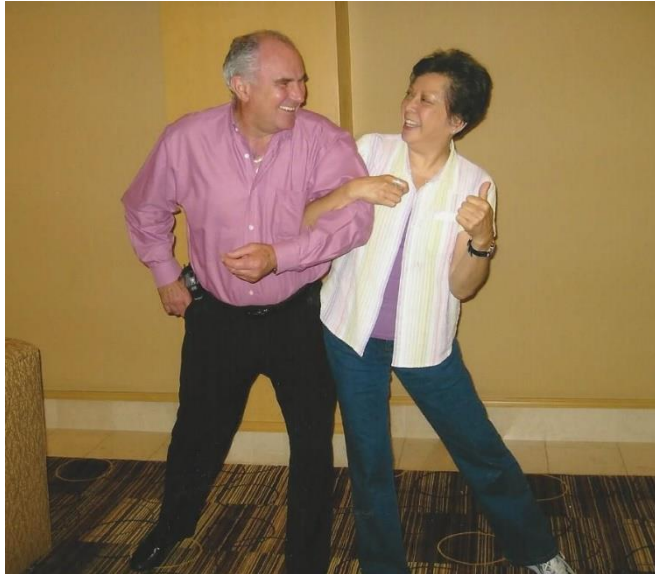
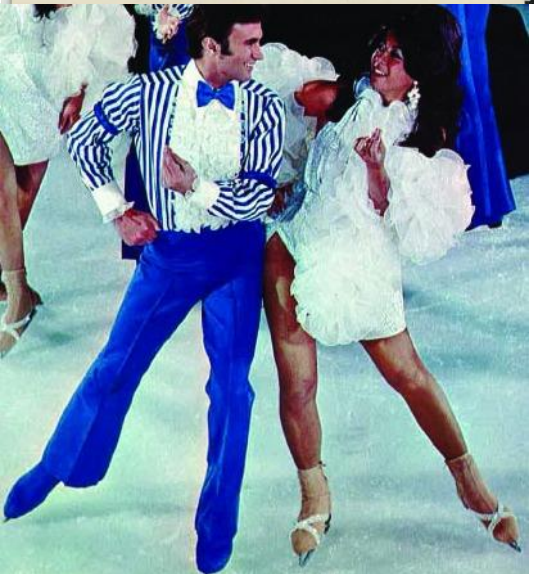
Pictures of the Month

(Then & Now)



1969 – 2008

Sandy (Norwall) Phillips & Tony Tauber



Tony Tauber & Gloria (Lor) Spoden



Michi Anzai Porter, Greg Bonin, Angelique Gandy Conte

Our Alumni Get Together



Mini reunion at Ice Dance International in San Jose.

Linda K Illsley, Karen Lawrence Viel, Jim Hurst, Debby Cutter Georges, Lisa Navarro and Dorothy Hamill.

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In case you missed it the first time!

70th Ice Capades Reunion

Audio Interviews

The
Manleywoman
Podcasting
figure skating
since 2007
SkateCast



Every month, host Allison Manley interviews famous and influential people in the sport of figure skating. There are so many interesting characters ... both famous and obscure ... who make this wonderful sport tick. But all have incredible influence on figure skating, and have great stories to tell.

There are many interesting characters, both famous and obscure, who make this wonderful sport tick, and their voices tell the story of skating best. I decided to combine my love of skating and technology to create this podcast series, and provide lengthy interviews of skating legends to the fans. I hope you enjoy listening to the results.

<http://www.manleywoman.com/episode-41-ice-capades-70th-reunion-part-1/>

<http://www.manleywoman.com/episode-41-ice-capades-70th-reunion-part-2/>

Life on the Road, Skating with the ICE CAPADES – Interview with Tim Estiloz

Entertainment reporter Tim Estiloz chats with WBZ's Jordan Rich about what it was like to be a performing skater in front of thousands with the world famous Ice Capades touring ice show - before returning to broadcasting. [Click here](#) to view the video.

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Where Are They Now?

How did we get from city to city?



Ever wonder how our shows got moved from city to city – all those costumes, our sets and even our trunks? You might not have seen him much but Bob Recker and his family business, Recker Transfer were an integral part of our Ice Capades family when they first made contact with John H. Harris, the original owner of Ice Capades from when it first opened in the 40's and had been transporting us until 1996. While we slept on a train, bus or airplane, Bob directed the transition from rail travel to over the road movement of ice show equipment. He coordinated schedules and directed personnel in productions in "Ice Capades" which also toured sixteen cities in Japan. His team were sometimes driving all night to get our show to the next city by morning as it would take all day to set up the show so we could open that night.

Recker Inc. didn't just move our shows. They have been an integral part of the Pittsburgh landscape for many years, and had transported theatrical and sporting equipment which included the Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and Pittsburgh Public Theater. They transported renowned productions such as 'The Sound of Music', "My Fair Lady", as well as sports equipment for the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Steelers Football team and Major League Baseball teams when they came to Pittsburgh for games.



Bob was born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA, received a degree in communication, business organization & computer. In 1965, he served his country in the US Army and was discharged honorably. He then became a sales representative for many years. He grew up around sports – starting out as the bat boy for the Pittsburgh Pirate Baseball Club.

Bob's current passion is researching and updating the history of professional ice shows and arena entertainment. He has met with and interviewed prominent artists, leading managerial personnel and behind the scenes contributors to the industry.

If you would like to say hi to Bob, his email address is recker@zoominternet.net

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Bonnie Atwood – Ice Capades National Company 1966 I was thrilled when The Blade asked me to write a little something for the “where are they now” feature in The Blade. Why? Because I am a writer! But first, let me tell you how I got from the show to where I am now.

I auditioned for the show in my hometown of Washington, D.C., in 1966 when I was 19. I was so happy to be hired! I had wanted this since my mother took me to see my first show when I was just 8. I was infatuated with the wonderful Donna Atwood—no relation to me. I had never even skated before, but I just “knew” it was going to happen.

I joined the National Company in Atlantic City. I was number 29, a “short girl” in the chorus line. Most of us were quickly given nicknames, and I, being a shy little Southern girl, was dubbed “Bonnie Belle.” I loved the adventure. I don’t think there was just one fondest memory, but I guess I’ll relate how thrilling it was to skate in Shea Stadium. It was an outdoor show, and I remember the temperature was comfortable. I felt a slight breeze, which was so strange because that was missing from our indoor shows. The ice was slightly soft, but, as show people, we shouldered on. The crowd was so big! I think it set a record for us.

I now live in Richmond, Virginia, just two hours south of D.C. I live with my wonderful son, Joe, who is the light of my life. I pursued a writing career pretty soon after I left my one year in the show. I finished college and went to work for a daily newspaper. What fun that was!

I’m now in business for myself: Tall Poppies Consulting LLC. I do writing and lobbying. Please check out my LinkedIn page.

When I was in the show, of course, we did not have email. I exchanged letters with some of my friends for a few years, but then we scattered and lost track of each other. Sometime in the 1990s, I thought I should try to reach some of the girls. I figured I could never find them, but I’d give it a try. One of my good friends had been Hillary Hutson. We used to call her “Huck.” I thought a while, and I remembered meeting her mother in Denver, and that her mother’s name was Doris. What the heck, I looked up Doris on the “superpages” site, and there was one Doris Hutson in Denver, with a phone number. It would not be her, I thought, but I dialed the number. Boom! Hillary answered ON THE FIRST RING! It was as though no time had passed. She was caring for her elderly mother, and I was caring for mine. It was wonderful being in touch with her again.

A few years later she called me and told me about the reunion coming up. I will never forget her words: WE HAVE TO GO. We did go, and it was great. And we went again last summer.



Hillary Hutson and I had another very special reunion just this fall. I went to a writers’ conference in Wichita, Kansas, because I was nominated for a big writing award. Hillary flew down and joined me there! I was runner up for the award, and Hillary and I shared that great award ceremony.

To read the press release on Bonnie’s prestigious award, [click here](#).

I miss you all. I love you all. We were the Greatest Show on Ice!

If you would like to get in touch with Bonnie - BonAtwood@verizon.net

Comments from October Blade

Many thanks for the wonderful Blade newsletters, so great to keep in touch. – Jim & Jennifer Custer

Thank you so much! The video of Peggy reminded me of my visits to Moscow with the Wiener Eisrevue in 1956 & 1957. You do a really fantastic job putting the Blade together! Leny Byron (Rochester).

Love reading "The Blade" & I mean every word. Several months ago I picked up on the Pro Historical Foundation video of Sonja Henie performing her hula for television circa 1953. I don't get it... She did absolutely nothing but skated in a circle to several selections of fantastic orchestrated Hawaiian popular songs. She smiled at the camera non-stop & what I don't get is that I think it's the most beautiful exhibition & stunning bit of showmanship I've ever seen on the ice!.. I mentioned this to Bob Turk thinking he would laugh his head off at me & then he said very seriously "She was the mother of us all". Whatever that lady did or couldn't do NO one has ever done it better.. But also you can dig deeper into the list of videos & find some real gems of gorgeous skating from another era. Lots of Ice Capades...Your newsletter is so entertaining... Thank you so much for keeping the most beautiful art & sport alive. Best, Mark G. Richard.

Upcoming Events

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 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.

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