



Sad News

July 31, 2017 – John Brown – former stagehand with Ice Capades



John Forrest Brown, passed away July 31, 2017. He was born April 12, 1944, in Fairmount, Va. John retired from the Excalibur Hotel for over 10 years. He enjoyed fishing, camping and quality time with his family. John leaves behind a loving family including his brothers, Jimmy and Virgil Brown Jr.; his half-brothers and sisters Michael, Michelle, Barbie and Pat; his four children, Iris, Joseph, John Jr. and Amy; eight grandchildren, Dawn and Andrew, Eric, Kylie and Kenadi, DJ, Caitlyn and Meghan; two great-grandsons, Talon and David Jr.; his companion, Dale Karlsen, whom he went on many adventures with, adored and loved her dearly. "John you will be forever missed, we all wish you eternal happiness and peace." Service will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 8, at Palm Mortuary, 7600 S. Eastern Ave.,

Las Vegas, NV 89123. Donations can be made to comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada, 3730 S. Eastern Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89109.

Alumni in the News

Olympics still carry special meaning for Machado

In 1956, figure skater became first Hispanic U.S. Winter Olympian

Posted 8/10/17 by Lois Elfman, special to icenetwork



U.S. Figure Skating Hall of Fame member Catherine Machado has nothing but fond memories when it comes to her time as a member of Team USA. -Courtesy of U.S. Figure Skating

These days, life moves at a quiet pace for former Olympic competitor Catherine Machado, a member of the U.S. Figure Skating Hall of Fame who is now retired.

With another Olympic Winter Games approaching, Machado, 81, is often asked to reflect on her experiences at the 1956

Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy. On a team with numerous skating stars -- including Tenley Albright and Carol Heiss -- Machado happily embraced the lack of pressure.

In 1956, the Olympic village didn't exist like it does today, so each country stayed at a hotel of their choosing. Although Machado was able to meet U.S. athletes from other sports, her only interactions with international athletes were the skaters she saw at the rink.

She vividly remembers the opening parade, which she described as something completely different from what most have grown accustomed to witnessing.

"Now they all come in dancing and taking pictures," Machado said. "We walked in like tin soldiers and didn't get out of line. Everybody was lined up by height. The girls were behind the boys. There were only a dozen or so girls because there was just the ski team and the figure skaters. I was behind somebody that was probably 6-7 and I'm 5-2, so you can't see me in the shots."

Machado grew up in Los Angeles and trained at the Polar Palace, a popular rink that burned down in the 1960s. Although she was not aware of it at the time, she is credited with being the first Hispanic athlete to represent the United States in the Winter Olympics. Machado was allowed to choose between having either her coach or her father accompany her to Cortina, and she chose her father.

"I didn't bother to take my coach because I knew I was never going to beat Tenley or Carol," she said. "I just went and had a good time. My father loved it."

In those days, the competition was outdoors. Machado had never even seen snow before the 1955 World Figure Skating Championships in Vienna, Austria, where it fell on her and on the ice during the ladies compulsory figures.

When Machado performed her Olympic free skate, the sun was shining and she basked in the moment. By the time Albright and Heiss -- who won the gold and silver medals -- skated, the clouds had moved in.

"It got much colder later in the day," recalled Machado, who finished eighth. "I think I was the third skater out. The sun was shining and I skated probably the best I ever skated."

After retiring from competition at the end of the 1956 season, Machado toured with *Ice Capades* for eight years, sharing the ice with fellow Olympian Ronnie Robertson and the legendary adagio team of Phil Romaine and Cathy Steele. Upon wrapping up her show commitments, she enjoyed performing with the Lido shows in both Las Vegas and Paris.

"We practiced every single day because there was so much pressure to skate well," Machado said. "Everybody was at the top of their game."

In 1969, Machado began her coaching career and said she'd probably still be teaching aspiring skaters had it not been for the Culver City Ice Arena closing its doors in 2014. The commute to other Los Angeles-area rinks required driving on the freeway, which she didn't want to do.

Machado -- who has one son, three grandchildren and one great grandchild -- plans to watch the skating events in PyeongChang with longtime friend Robert Paul, who won pairs gold with partner Barbara Wagner at the 1960 Olympic Winter Games in Squaw Valley, California.

In order to avoid distraction, the two plan to skip any Olympic parties so they can focus solely on the action.

Skating Death Lawsuit Settled

[Mikaela Porter](#) Contact Reporter

Aug. 3, 2017

The town council has unanimously approved a \$47,500 settlement in a four-year-old lawsuit in which the family of a former ice skating instructor claimed she died from injuries she sustained while working for the town.

Estelle N. Tratiak, of West Suffield, was 81 when she died in April 2012, according to her obituary. She was a professional ice skater and had performed with the **Ice Capades** and later worked as a private figure skating instructor for West Hartford's Recreation Department at the Veterans Memorial Skating Rink, the obituary says.

Tratiak was conducting a skating lesson on March 26, 2012, "when a minor female skater struck the decedent from behind, causing her to fall and sustain serious personal injuries," according to the lawsuit, filed by Michael F. Boutiette, the executor of Tratiak's estate.

The lawsuit was first filed in Superior Court in Hartford in October 2013 and then again in March 2014, when five skating instructors were named.

David Bush, an attorney representing Boutiette, declined to comment on the settlement Wednesday. The council approved it on Tuesday.

A claim filed with the town in September 2012 said the skater collided with Tratiak and caused "her to hit her back and head on the ice. As a result of the injuries sustained from this fall, she eventually died after being taken to a local hospital for medical care and treatment."

The lawsuit said Tratiak suffered "severe mental and emotional distress, mental anguish, fear, anxiety, pain, and death itself."

Tratiak's injuries were due to "the negligence and carelessness" of West Hartford employees, who failed to properly supervise the minor skater, to have sufficient skating staff working on the ice at the time, and to develop, implement, enforce and establish "necessary" rules, regulations and safety guidelines, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit also accused the staff of failing to control skaters' activity on the ice and failing to limit where skaters could do freestyle moves. The staff did not warn Tratiak "of the dangerous activities of the female minor skater," and failed to properly inspect the facility to make sure skaters were using it properly, the lawsuit said.

Attorneys representing the town said in June 2014 court filings that Tratiak's injuries "were directly and proximately caused by her own negligence" by failing to exercise reasonable caution or watch where she was going, placed herself in a position of danger and failed to properly supervise other students "which she was obligated to do."

West Hartford Corporation Counsel Pat Alair, in an email Wednesday said: "Ms. Tratiak was well-respected in West Hartford's figure skating community and her death was a tragic accident. Our thoughts and sympathies continue to go out to her family at this time."

Video Memories of the Month



Our Aja Zanova (Alena Vrzánová (TCH) – Her World Championship Paris 1949 - ISU Archives

[Click here to see her performance](#)

Bonus Video - Aja Zanova Steindler, 1949 World Ladies Champion ... Here's Aja's "Bolero" solo in Ice Capades of 1965, East Co., courtesy of Carl Moseley who filmed her, in Charlotte, NC. Thank you Carl for this wonderful memory.

<https://youtu.be/SXqNGFlb4VA>

Picture of the Month



Ice Capades Reunion 75th Anniversary 2015...

Pictured are some of the veterans here in Las Vegas from the Ice Capades tour of Japan in 1976 . A four months & sixteen cities tour... great memories..... — with Meteorologist Dan Henry, Lisa Illsley Navrro, Jean Pierre Romano, Sharlene Sharlock Hasha, Dick Shedlowski, Scot Baronet, Liz Taylor, Mary Pinelli Farley-Fagan, Christyn Shedlowski, Ken Shook, Ruthie Brandt Chinelli, Andrea Wood, Cheri Dekeyser and Holly M. Kirby.

Answer to who's driving the 1953 MG?



It's Don Watson while on tour from L.A. to Halifax NS and back to L.A. with many stops in between. He said that it never failed him and was pure fun! Yes, there was that headlight thing going on between you and fellow MG drivers on the road..... Still looking good Don!

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

Dave Hauser shares this Bob Bennett story

Bob Bennett was not only superlative when it came to inventing the refrigeration equipment or making ice, but he had a great sense of humor as well. Some of his practical jokes would take forever to develop or they would just be in plain sight.

Was there ever a performance that a performer would complain to Bob that the ice was too hard or too soft, I think not. Bob thought the answer was to let each individual adjust the ice temperature to their personal liking. Thus Bob placed an ice temperature control valve handle in the back corner of the ice for all to select their own personal temperature. It worked great, and it was connected to nothing, just frozen in the ice. Bob was one of a kind and we will miss him.

Terry Head played a classic prank on Jack Balmer, the manager of the show. - We were on a train traveling to the next city we would perform in, and a few of us guys got together to plan out what fun and devious things we could do on that leg of the trip. We usually weren't fortunate enough to have a dining car on the trains we traveled on, but on this particular trip we not only had a dining car, we also had train staff assigned to our Pullman cars. So one of the guys told the porter on our car that Jack was extremely ill and had to be woken up every four hours in order to take his medicine. So every four hours, all through the night, one of the staff would go by his bunk and do a quick wake up on him, then move on to their next duty. Needless to say, we had a very grumpy manager the next morning. We'd all sneak a peek at him when we knew we wouldn't be seen, doing our best to hold in the laughter. But every now and then we'd kept distance between ourselves and Jack, just so we could share a laugh with another cast member. Oh well, just another day in the big show.

One of the things I remember about those long train trips was that, on the last night of a journey, some of the cast would put their luggage at the front of the door we were scheduled to depart through, and go to bed thinking that as we pulled into the station the next morning, they'd be first in line to get their luggage, step off the train, and be on their way. Problem was, some of

us guys, myself included, would wait until they'd gone to bed, then we'd quietly move their luggage toward the back of the line, and put ours up front where theirs should have been. Next morning, by the time they realized that their hopes for a quick departure had been dashed, we had already snatched up our luggage, grabbed a taxi, and were the first ones to arrive and check in at the hotel. Of course, we wisely made ourselves scarce for the next couple of hours, but it was a brilliant plan, don't you think?

Comments from August Blade

Photo correction from last month - What a great job you continue to do for the remaining gypsies of the frozen stage, looking at the photo from the mini reunion held in Los Alamitos Fish company (I don't believe it's Seal Beach) that Ken Shook organized, somehow I was left out on the blade names, I'm the one in the bottom left hand corner Bob Young of "Course and Young" comedy team (gone but not forgotten) Mike is still around and kicking in Las Vegas. Cheers **Bob Young**

I'm loving your supreme efforts to keep us all informed of new of our friends way back when but the article Craig sent you in this last version of "The Blade" has me stymied. My sister and I were both in that number and neither of us remember anything like that happening. It makes a good story but I'm sure we would have remembered it if it were true. Anyway, keep up the good work, I'm sure I can speak for everyone else that we look forward every month for your contributions to arrive. With many fond memories, **Nancy (Anderson) King**

Thanks so very much for including my Budapest flyer in the newsletter too! I'd love it if some of the gang would consider coming! It's for adult recreational skaters of all ages and levels. We start the day with a ballet/stretching class, an hour of figures (really fun now that we're older!), 3 hours of edges, choreography and fun on the ice together. \$750 includes all this for 4 days, plus a welcome reception, hot lunch at the rink every day, transportation to rink every day, and a dinner cruise on the Danube...All perfect for a mini reunion!!! Budapest is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, and the flights, hotel and food are very affordable too! Hope some of you will come!!! **Jo Jo Starbuck**

THANKS, for the great updates! Thanks to YOU, we are all re-connected with our past as Ice Capades Alumni! – **Stephan Klován**

Thank you for all of your time & efforts in creating great reunions! Vegas seems to make the most sense, so whoever you have passed the job on to, my vote is easy Vegas. No one can do reunions like you! Vegas has always been a hit! - **Linda Crowley**

"The Blade" information makes each month special for me. Thank you.- **Sherry Cook**

A little late in sending my thanks for another great 'Blade'. You truly are a gift to all who skated and loved our life with Ice Capades, God Bless you for all your dedicated work in bringing the monthly newsletter to us. **Jim and Jennifer Custer**

Upcoming Events

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
www.jojostaruck.com/camps

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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