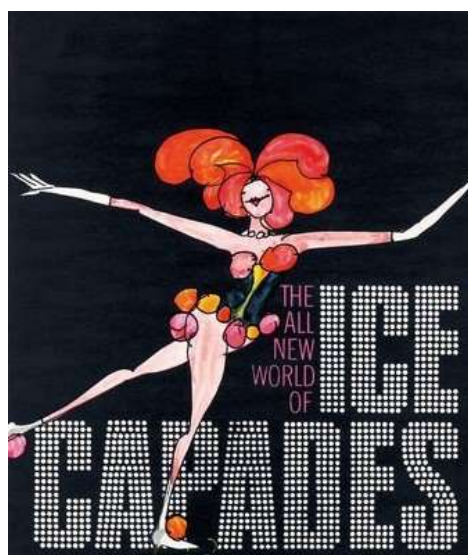


## Sad News



Tomi Ungerer, an award-winning artist and trilingual writer who leaped between genres and mediums, crafting works that included anti-Vietnam War posters, darkly comic children's books, a mischievous reworking of "The Joy of Sex" and a cat-shaped kindergarten building in Germany, died Feb. 8, 2019 at his daughter's home in Cork, Ireland. He was 87.

Tomi's connection with Ice Capades was that he created this poster for the 25<sup>th</sup> edition, the first year that Metromedia owned Ice Capades solely.

## Alumni in the News

### Picture from US Hall of Fame Inductees



Carol Fox, Richard Dalley, Julie Lynn Holmes, JoJo Starbuck, Tim Goebel

# JP Resident's New Company, Joy Skate Productions, Hosting Benefit for Veterans on Boston Common

By David Ertischek

Jamaica Plain News



Jamaica Plain resident **Elin Schran** skated with Dorothy Hamill, performed in the Ice Capades and recently launched Joy Skate Productions, which is hosting a benefit for the veteran and military communities on February 4 on the Boston Common.

**Q:** When and why did you create Joy Skate Productions?

**Schran:** I started Joy Skate Productions in June of 2018 to make the joy of skating accessible to more people. I love skating -- the sense of freedom you have when you're gliding on the ice, and the sense of community that comes when you enjoy the ice with others. I want to encourage those who have never skated to give it a try, and those who are elite skating competitors to remember the importance of playing. I also want to provide high quality skating entertainment inexpensively so that enjoying an ice show can be affordable to more people.

**Q:** What is your background in skating?

**Schran:** I started skating as soon as I could walk. My mother was an Olympic Champion in 1956, and when we were little she would bring me and my sisters to the rink. She introduced us to the incredible fun of skating, and that is what I would like to pass on to others. From the time I was about 8 years old, I competed and then performed in professional tours and shows. I work with child, teen, and adult competitors and non-competitors. Lately, I've been working with hockey players, too!

I always enjoyed competing, but once I experienced performing in shows as a professional, I found my true love of skating. I toured with the **Ice Capades**, performed in shows produced by Charles Schulz, started three different show companies of my own, and I do choreography work for competitors of all levels. At every stage and turn of my career as a performer, competitor, mentor, choreographer, or motivator it has always come back to one fundamental truth -- a love of skating is the most important fuel for creation and success on the ice.



Courtesy image

*Joy Skate Productions provides adaptive/therapeutic workshops that are geared to differently-abled skaters. Skaters can use supportive frames to help with balance, bring their wheelchair onto the ice, and of course lean on a coach's arm.*

**Q:** Among Joy Skate's offerings are adaptive/therapeutic skating clinics. Please tell us more about those clinics.

**Schran:** Skating is for everyone! We provide adaptive/therapeutic workshops that are geared to differently-abled skaters. Skaters can use supportive frames to help with balance, bring their wheelchair onto the ice, and of course lean on a coach's arm. We play games in our workshops that help with strengthening fine and gross motor skills, balance, and basic skating skills.

**Q:** You created IceFlow, a yoga-inspired skating class. Can you please describe that class? It probably doesn't involve mats, right?

**Schran:** Haha! That's right, no mats. But lots of breath work, visualization, and stretching. An IceFlow class is the time to be in the moment, to let go of what you may have been able to do yesterday, and what you may hope to do tomorrow. It is judgment-free and designed for every skill level. The group of skaters gathers at one end of the rink and I demonstrate a step. Then we move from one end of the rink to the other doing the step together. Before each pass, we inhale light and joy, and exhale stress, expectation, and anything we don't need to carry. The goal is not to get the step "right," but instead to connect with the breath as we move.

**Q:** You previously skated in **Ice Capades** shows. How many shows were you in and what was that like for you?

**Schran:** I was fortunate to be cast in the **Ice Capades show Cinderella, Frozen in Time**. We toured all across North America for eight months, performing two shows a day, five or six days a week. I met the most incredible people during that time, and was exposed to a quality of skating that I had only dreamed of.

Dorothy Hamill owned the company then, and she was wonderful to work for. She poured her heart and soul into the show and created a gorgeous ballet on ice. She had us do a very strict edge class every day that British Champion John Curry had created and the technical intensity opened my eyes to a totally different way of skating than I had known. I often say that even though I had been skating for over 25 years when I started **Ice Capades**, it was during my time as a company member that I really learned to skate. After **Ice Capades**, I worked for two seasons for Charles Shulz, creator of the Peanuts cartoon, in his holiday ice show in Santa Rosa, California. It was a beautiful show that played for three weeks over Christmas and I loved everything about it!

**Q:** And you worked at Dorothy Hamill's Fantasy Skating Camp. What was it like working with one of the most incredible figure skaters of all-time?

**Schran:** Dorothy Hamill is a wonderful person. I worked with her at her camp in Nantucket for four years and the one in Scottsdale, Arizona for two years. She loves skating and created her adult skating camp to celebrate the adult skating community that, for a time, had been overlooked. She worked hard to build an environment that was focused on the joy of skating that we all share. She has been a huge inspiration to me in so many ways, including in the creation of this company.

## Video of the Month



A trip down memory lane with beautiful Beattys

[Click here to go back to 1988, and enjoy.](#)

## **Guess Who?**

It's our very own Bobby Specht who was Junior Men's champion 1940 and Sr. Champion 1942



**REUNION**  
**UPDATES!**



80th Anniversary Reunion  
**ICE CAPADES**

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June 16, 17, 18, 2020  
Omni Rancho Las Palmas Resort & Spa  
Palm Springs, California

# SAVE THE DATE!

**Skaters, All-Performers, Production, and Administration personnel...**

You may have traveled around the world, but have you been to beautiful Palm Springs? We will be celebrating at one of the most stunning Palm Springs properties, the **OMNI Rancho Palmas Resort & Spa**, on **June 16, 17 & 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020!** This is a spacious property, with lots of different areas for us all to gather and catch-up with friends, both in the sun and the shade, and inside the hotel. You shouldn't have any problems locating your friends here!

Specific details about the hotel rate and our 'rate', along with cost for the event to follow soon. Please note that fun activities and things to do, are being planned for during the daytime. Watch for those updates, here, and on our Facebook Event Page, and Group page. If you are on Facebook, *please take it upon yourself to invite 'your' Ice Capades friends to the event, on The 80<sup>th</sup> Reunion Event Page.* All 'Professional Ice Show' skaters, production, and administration staff from other shows, are also invited.

**EVENT and HOTEL registration information to be posted soon! Till then, Please Mark Your Calendar - and Hold That Date!**

[Click here for full details and updates](#)

## For your Reading Pleasure

### Down memory lane – 4th in a series of short stories

by Michael Garren

MAY 9, 2008

#### THAT'S ALL FOLKS

Knowing skaters as I do, I'm sure we can all remember that one day or event that we consider to be our 'big break' into show business. For many it was the day we auditioned and were accepted into Ice Capades, most of us elated by the prospect of becoming a part of the world's greatest corps de ballet. So it was for me, or so "I thought at the time".

I was 18, had just graduated from high school, had been skating for almost 3 years, and had past my USFSA 5th test. Fortunately for me I had what everyone was calling 'natural talent' for the sport. I didn't have that much confidence in my skating ability at the time however, and I was at the point of having to make the decision of going to college or following my dream of skating professionally. It was an easy decision for me

but I was going against the will of my parents who wanted me to go to college. They had never supported me in my skating at all and did everything they could to discourage me from it. I paid for every cent ever spent on my skating, and let's just say that my will was stronger than theirs. I decided that I would try to get into Ice Capades and if I failed this time that I would just get a job and somehow keep skating until I was good enough to be accepted.

Because I was still living at home my trip to St. Paul to audition was kept secret from my parents. I was supposed to be spending the weekend with a friend but in reality I was immediately on an all night bus trip to St. Paul. It was the middle of winter and when I arrived in St. Paul I walked to the arena from the bus station, darting in and out of stores and restaurants to keep from freezing my tail off in the -40 degree record low temperature. I finally made it to the building, contacted Dolly Pierce before the first show and made arrangements to audition for her after watching it. I hadn't slept all night and was in somewhat of a trance watching that show. Before I knew it I was on the ice with the curtains up and the set's structure visible, props I'd just seen in the show stacked together backstage, and some kids from the show in the seats in their robes; altogether very intimidating. I can't remember the audition specifically, but I do remember that I didn't fall and that was my biggest concern as I thought a fall would surely disqualify me from employment. Before I knew it I was sitting in the seats beside Dolly, my knees shaking, dry mouthed and out of breath, listening to her say that they didn't have an opening in the show at the time (TOTAL DISAPPOINTMENT), but that they would contact me and send me a contract as soon as they could use me, (TOTAL ELATION)! On my way home on the bus I couldn't help feeling that I had just gotten my big break, or so "I thought at the time".

Since this is getting SOOOOO long which I had not intended I will fast forward to the end of my first full year after being transferred to National Company (East Co.). I wasn't content continuing to forever be in the corps de ballet however. With the help of many of the principals in both shows I had worked my butt off for a year and a half since I joined because I still wanted to be out in those spotlights alone. At the end of that year I was told that the next year I was going to understudy Tommy Litz. Finally, after so much work I was going to get my big break when we came back to Atlantic City, or so "I thought at the time".

The next year was the 27th edition, 66'-67', the first year that the LIVING SCREEN was used and I began working on both of Tommy's numbers as his understudy, one being in the number using the living screen, the other being a cold spot to "Foggy Day in London Town". I hadn't been skating quite 5 years yet and I was going to be the understudy for Tommy Litz, the World Champion, and I must add my idol at the time. The first number was ok, I was doing it every night in the chorus anyway, just that it was the lead to play which wasn't much real skating like I wanted to do but more acting. "Foggy Day" on the other hand was a realization of my dream since I'd been 12 years old. I might have the chance to be out there in those spots all by myself. Would I ever get to do it, really? The answer was YES HOPEFULLY, and I couldn't help feeling that I had FINALLY gotten my big break, or so "I thought at the time".

The night I got to skate in those spots all by myself for the first time was magical. On my way to the dressing room before the show several people were looking at me with smiles on their faces, a couple of people patted me on my back, What's going on? I still didn't know. By chance, that night all of the big brass from 6121 were in; George Eby, Rita and Dick Palmer, Bob Turk, and George Foster. The first thing you were supposed to do when you got to the building was check in and read the 'board'. I had gone directly to the dressing room and did not know yet what everyone else seemed to know; that Tommy was sick and I was IN! When I found that out I just about had a heart attack. I had to do my chorus numbers and both of Tommy's. Stressful? ahhh YEAH, OVERWHELMING! I had never won any competition or any title but before I knew it I was backstage in HIS costume warming up. It was surreal. I was just about to skate a solo in Ice Capades; my dream, my big break, or so "I thought at the time". Damn, this big break was a long time coming eh?

If you've never skated a solo to a full live orchestra then you've really missed out on something very exhilarating and exceptionally special. It's not like skating to a record which I had practiced to so many times. I wasn't technically a fabulous jumper but I was a spinner, and in retrospect was one of the fastest, thanks to my many 'principal ice time' hours and after show practices with Tommy. He was so awesome and kind to me and taught me to spin like a top as he did. He gave me a stencil of the special radius on his blades which allowed us to spin seemingly forever to the dismay of the orchestra leader and first trumpet player. It was SO fun to hook into that last spin and hold it so long that the orchestra was gasping for air just to keep that last note going. And that's exactly what I did. Unfortunately and perhaps because there was too much "FOG from FOGGY DAY" on my brain, before I hooked into that last spin I had a Russian-split butterfly which when completed propelled me backwards, butt first over the stage left dash into the aisle and doing a full somersault landing sprawled at the feet of all the top brass from 6121 sitting there in the front row. When I finally came to a stop I was looking up into the face of none other than Bob Turk. I knew they were there, and as I caught my blade on the dash before I went over backwards I envisioned taking them all out. I was so embarrassed, knees shaking and winded from doing the number I could barely get up. The music was still going, and I still had a spin to do to finish the number, so before I did a waltz jump over the dash I looked Bob in the face and uttered under my breath in my best Porky Pig dialect, "abade, abade, abadeaaaaaa, THAT'S ALL FOLKS". That sent Turk into hysterics, the rest of them I never looked at. I dare say that was the longest final note the orchestra had ever played by the time I finished that spin. When the lights went out and I skated back toward the set, I couldn't believe I had skated so good up until the point of 'the disaster', and then had with only one mishap destroyed my big break, or so "I thought at the time".

As it turns out in spite of my 'disaster', that performance standing in for Tommy Litz was to get me my own spotlights the next year in West Company. With my ever lasting thanks and appreciation to Bob Turk, that performance was in reality what I've always considered to finally have been MY BIG BREAK into show business. All other things considered, my big break hadn't taken that long after all.

## Comments from February Blade

Thank you for continuing to update us skating gypsies via The Blade. Always appreciated! – **Sally Pansing**

Thanks again for keeping us up to speed with the great newsletters. - **Kristen Penick**

### Frozen Memories from Craig Carr.

Our wonderful Stage Manager Ric Banville, prior to starting the Canadian part of the tour always grew a moustache and goatee to keep his face from freezing on the very cold below zero move ins and move outs.

We got a mid-season replacement assistant stage manager who was obviously not well verse in the perils of below zero temps for which that part of the tour was infamous for.

He saw Ric had a frozen ice shelf on his upper lip from his breath exhaling, and offered to "brush that off"... and before Ric could say DO NOT!... he brushed the upper left side of his lip and the entire half of his moustache broke off... followed by "loud colorful phraseology" that rhymes with "you lousy bunuva sitch!".

Well the following night we noticed checking that Ric's moustache and beard were no more, as his face thawed out and he had a nice "sunburn" fresh frozen look to his skin. Without a word you could hear his inner voice saying "OWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW!"

....Well you know what they say about "so you sow.. so shall you reap",

...and on another below zero move out.... a lot of snow crystals covered the ass't stage manager's yellow and brown knit cap.... and Ric returned the favor saying... "oh look.. you have snow on your cap.. let me brush that off for you!"... and with one strong "pat" of his palm.... he patted the knit cap down and all the long surfer blond locks underneath the cap were shattered into a forest of 1 inch spikes.... and looked like a log clearing company had clear cut a forest clearing.

## Upcoming Events



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!!!

REMINDER to make sure you book your

**Bietak Celebration Cruise** today!

We also need your help. If you have a cast photo from any Bietak Production show you were part of, please email a copy to [reunion@bietakproductions.com](mailto:reunion@bietakproductions.com). Make sure to include in the email the show name, year, and location.

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

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