



## REUNION NEWS

### Sad News

John Harris Sheridan – September 27, 2018



He was the son of Attorney Andrew Sheridan and Mary Harris Sheridan. John was the first born of five children. Following John were Tom, Harry, Eleanor and Dennis. John's Grandfather, Senator John P. Harris was the founder of the Nickelodeon, the first talking motion picture theater. Eventually the Harris Amusement Company was founded. Theaters were opened in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia. The Harris Amusement Company also owned the Pittsburgh Hornets hockey team. During the intermissions between periods

John Harris President of the Harris Amusement Company was looking for ways to entertain the audience. He hit on the idea of hiring a figure skater to entertain the crowd. He hired Sonja Henie. Her performances were met with such enthusiasm that John Harris immediately began thinking about the popularity of figure skating. Shortly thereafter, he founded Ice Capades.

John Harris Sheridan graduated from high school in 1955. While spending the summer in Palm Springs, California he was called to join Ice Capades. He did so and remained with the show during the 1955 and 1956 seasons. In 1957 John settled in Phoenix, Arizona with the Sheridan family. John attended Arizona State University. He eventually went to work at a local television station and for the remainder of his life he was involved in television. He last worked in El Paso, Texas a state and city he loved.

Approximately three years ago John learned that he had Multiple Myeloma, a virulent blood cancer. He moved to Los Angeles to avail himself to treatment at the USC - Norris Cancer Center. He was doing well in the fight against cancer but he, due to long hours in bed contracted pneumonia. He was never able to prevent the pneumonia from reoccurring. Eventually he developed a very deep lung infection. His body was not strong enough to fight off the infection and he was taken from us on September 27, 2018.

Thank you to Richard Dwyer who was at John's side throughout John's ordeal. John loved the Ice Capades family. He spoke often of many members, too many to mention.

## Video of the Month



It never gets old watching Richard Dwyer skate again and again.

Richard Dwyer exhibition at the World Figure & Fancy Skating Championships & Festival at Vail, CO Sept. 30, 2018

Skating with Barbara Wagner (Olympian 1960), Dorothy Hamill, Mary Lu Shipstad and [Nancy Blackwell-Grieder](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/AboutFigureSkating/videos/10156104172002683/?t=0>

## Halloween Pictures



## Halloween West 73-74



## Halloween Fine Party – East Co. 1967

**\*Halloween cover picture: It's our very own Bobby Specht**

## **For your Reading Pleasure**

### **Down memory lane - 1<sup>st</sup> in a series of short stories**

**by Michael Garren**

MAY 29, 2008

#### **KING OF CANADA**

It may be hard for some to imagine, but by the time I left home for Ice Capades at the age of 19 I had never been exposed to the arts whatsoever, by any manner I can remember, other than in a library, in movies, or an occasional television show. I had never been to a museum. I had never seen a live performance of a ballet, a musical, or an opera, and other than a couple of National Parks and Disneyland once, I had never done sightseeing of any memorable consequence. Classical music, opera and ballet were constant subjects for ridicule by my family, due obviously I now realize to their lack of education on the subjects. However, as a result of my parent's lack of appreciation for the arts, I was to enter the world of skating with nothing other than an inner desire to satisfy feelings I had been forced to secretly keep to myself regarding the arts. I was to discover however what I already knew; that skating was my ticket to the world.

Now imagine how it was for yourself; being instantly transposed into the world of travel, new cities, sightseeing, hotels and restaurants, architecture and museums, exposure to classical music and dance, crossing paths with touring Broadway companies, parties, shopping, performing and new responsibilities, and of course new found friends. Can you remember being lost in the intense joy and wonder of being on your own, finally? Obviously I can. I was like a new sponge soaking up as much and everything as fast as I could, and I became Ice Capades' number one tourist immediately upon joining the show. It was all there; all you had to do was take the time to experience it. Those who didn't take full advantage of the opportunities that were presented by being on tour with Ice Capades, I feel, missed out on an immeasurable wealth of experiences. There were so many times I would say to myself, "This is very special; take it all in, you don't ever want to forget this moment. It's something that you're going to remember the rest of your life".

While playing Ottawa in 1967 my friend Jim Peterson, who had become my trusty sightseeing companion, and I decided that we would go see the Parliament Buildings. When we arrived I was immediately mesmerized by the incredible ornate architectural beauty of the buildings. The architecture is regal in its design, totally different from OUR capital building, and looking much more like a castle from somewhere in Europe. In the interest of having enough time to thoroughly enjoy the site, we chose to see only the center building, called Centre Block, with its very tall pointed clock tower. It LOOKED like the main building, and as it turned out it was. There was little security then and you could wander the building by yourself if you wanted to but you had to be with a guided tour to see the interior of the chambers; that's what we wanted, so that's what we did. Jim and I were in a group of about 15 people for the tour which was lead by a surprisingly knowledgeable and very young lady. However, after about 30 minutes of the tour we were wishing that she would do less talking and more showing, but that wasn't to be the case.

The foyer in Centre Block just outside the Senate Chamber was made of a grey stone with enormous gothic pointed arches, creating the feeling that we were in a very old church, or as I said, a European castle. When the group finally did enter the Senate Chamber, to use the word awesome at what we saw would be an understatement. It was an incredibly beautiful very long rectangular room with enormous chandeliers held up by a ceiling that seemed to soar at least 100 feet above our heads. Ornately carved stone windows lined the entire length of the gallery near the ceiling and flooded the chamber with an abundance of natural light. The center isle which leads to the end of the room was flanked by rows of school like desks, and the walls were hung with huge tapestries.

When we stepped thru those doors to the Chamber the beauty and scale of the room was almost breathtaking. I heard more than my own gasp at the vision before us. It was an amazing sight, and I could almost feel a sense of the governing

power the room represented. In spite of all the beautiful architectural features in the Chamber, the focal point as we entered was immediately directed to the raised thrones at the end of the gallery. There was a chair for the Speaker of the Senate in front of the two ornately carved cherry wood color thrones, one larger than the other, and both covered with red velvet. As the group moved thru the Chamber toward the thrones I lost track of what the young guide was saying as though I was being hypnotically drawn toward those thrones behind a golden rope.

Jim and I were following the group toward the thrones and as each person gazed upon them and had their fill, so to speak, they would turn and pass us on their way back to the doors of the Chamber. As the guide was leading the group out of the Chamber, Jim and I were standing at the golden rope which had an exceptionally low swag in front of the thrones. I mentioned how beautiful I thought they were and contemplated how comfortable the seats would feel.

NOW, I was never REALLY one who was satisfied to tag along with a guided tour. I much preferred to take my own sweet time seeing something, and THIS sight needed more time to see than we were given. When I glanced back at the group I was struck by the fact that Jim and I were soon to be the ONLY ones in the Chamber; no guide, no group, and no security guard. I'm sure there must be many foolish chances that we can all remember having taken in our youth, and at that very moment I was about to take one of my own. As I stepped over the golden rope I was saying to Jim, "I just want to sit on the throne, the big one, the King's throne". Jim just about lost it and as he reached for me, without a thought I was over the rope, climbed up to the throne, turned and sat down.

It would NEVER have happened these days, but that was a different time and there I was, sitting in the Monarch's Chair, pretender to the crown with my Parliament guide rolled up and held vertically in my right hand, for all of about 20 seconds. As I looked out at the empty Chamber from the Monarch's Chair I remember telling myself that "This is totally crazy, but VERY special if I don't get caught, so take it all in and enjoy the moment, don't ever forget what it feels like, and then get the HELL out of this chair". And that's just what I did. I was up and back over the golden rope in a flash. Jim grabbed me by my arm and pulled me up the aisle like a little child, scolding me under his breath "You're going to get us BOTH arrested". I was laughing so hard I almost couldn't walk; more at his reaction than the fact that I had just gotten away with something for which I might otherwise have been sitting in jail during that evening's performance.

There are many exceptional memories I can recall from my skating career that particular sights, events or people made me feel like I was king of one thing or another, but on THAT day with my friend Jim at my side on Parliament Hill, I remember being the KING OF CANADA. Yes, yes I know, Canada doesn't have a king, but I didn't know that then.

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**Launched a new Website (NOT the Facebook page)**

[www.Icecapadestheblade.com](http://www.Icecapadestheblade.com)

It will have **REUNION AND EVENT UPDATES** when they are received so

**bookmark the link** and check back often.

**PLEASE SHARE THE LINK WITH YOUR FRIENDS WHO ARE NOT ON FACEBOOK**

It's still a work in progress and will be adding items as I receive them but

please feel free to let me know if you see something missing or would like to add to this site  
If you know if someone who would like to receive The Blade, please send me their email address.

Email me directly at [gspoden@rogers.com](mailto:gspoden@rogers.com)

## Comments from October Blade

Thanks for the tremendous job you do in keeping us all updated and in contact with one another!! - *Shelly McCladdie*

Honestly, how do you do it? Get so excited when I see the Blade on my computer, such fun. You are a real 'gem'. – *Jennifer Custer*

You are still doing an amazing job with the Blade, I enjoy it every month. – *Donna (Marsden) Good*

## 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/>



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

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