

ROLLING *along*

By Chester Fried



Long-time roller skating enthusiast Chester Fried is the vice president and a founder of the The National Museum of Roller Skating. We count on him at the Rinksider to help keep readers current.

New York Historical Society display to highlight roller skating

I recently received a call from Mari Reaven of the New York Historical Society located in New York City by Central Park. They wanted to display items showing the history of Roller Skating over the years. Especially the famed Empire Rollerdrome in Brooklyn, New York.

Well they called the right person. I skated at Empire for a few years. Unfortunately, it closed four years ago. I'm going to send her a list and pictures of rinks from years ago. She also wanted an old pair of skates. I will be donating a 1940's Chicago ladies skate with wood wheels, white Hyde boots with Pom Poms. I'm proud that our sport is receiving acknowledgement from this prestigious Historical Society.

Roller comedy from 1883

Here's a newspaper clipping from the "Hood's Item" of that day, which gives some indication of the universal popularity of roller skating back in the 1880s.

Peter Brown left Brockton, Mass., about three years ago, and last week he returned. Just as he was strolling down the street of his native town, he met a farmer by the name of Smith, who was not prosperous when Brown left, and lived just outside of town. Brown was surprised to see the granger attired in a dress suit, with a silk hat, and a big diamond pin blazing on his shirt front, and he inquired:

"Been to a funeral today?"

"Why bless you, no."

"No? I see you have on your best clothes. Are you farming yet?"

"Farming? Well, I should say not. I am running a roller skating rink down here."

"Where is your son Jim?"

"Oh, he's running a rink in Hartford."

"And your daughter Liz?"

"She's skating under the management of Tim Jones in a Boston rink."

"And your wife?"

"She skipped out with Professor Meechin, an instructor that I hired when I opened the rink."

"Is Reverend Longersman preaching here still?"

"No, he resigned from the ministry and is now a rink instructor."

"Who's preaching in his place?"

"Nobody."

"Nobody? What's the matter?"

"Church turned into a skating rink."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, true as preachin'."

"Where's Bill Beck, the grocery man?"

"He went out of the business a year ago. He's got the ice cream stand at my rink."

"Pshaw! Where's Aunt Sally, Bacon and Deacon Schultzer?"

"Why dang it all, they're travelling around visiting rinks doing the old man and old woman act on skates. I tell you they're good."

"Is anybody left in the town who does not skate?"

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

"Up in the cemetery on the hill."

Annual Extravaganza coming soon

If you love organ/keyboards music, the annual Skate Reflections EXTRAVAGANZA is just for you and your family. This year's event takes place February 12-15. Larry Cole, who owned the Kissimmee, Fla. rink for many years, started the Extravaganza.

His love of the sound of organ music, and the loyal skaters who also love the music they grew up with, has made this event a must go to. Nick Viscuso is the house organist, but for this event he is joined by four to six additional organists who have attended over the years.

The event features three days at Reflections, and one morning session at Ed and daughter Deborah Moyers Semoran Skateway in nearby Casselberry, Fla. A dinner dance with ballroom dancing on Monday night is another item at this special event.

Last year, Larry sold the rink to Loretta and Tom Curren, and their daughter Kelly, all former skaters out of New Jersey. But the "show will go on," as they say.

So if you are near central Florida in mid-February, try to attend this special event. Skate Reflections is in Kissim-

mee, right near Orlando's attractions.

Have a bout and a Coke

Roller Derby continues to increase in number of skaters, teams and venues that present it. It's the "now" part of our sport. The Jersey Shore Roller Girls rent out the Jackson, New Jersey rink on Tuesday and Wednesday from 9 p.m. until midnight. It's a late night rental because most of the skaters work or go to school. But who else would rent a rink during the week so late? It's a good money maker for your rink. Plus they all purchase skates and related safety equipment.

Once a month they skate against other teams at the famous Asbury Park Convention Center. They sell over 2000 tickets at \$25 each. The floor is t-razzo, which is made up of small chips of marble set in cement and polished. Many diners and office buildings have



Amy Rea and Ron Stalica "flutter" across the floor on roller skates during United Skates of America's 2011 Halloween Party.

this type of long-wearing floor as do some rinks.

Sometimes the floor is slippery. So what do they do? Not what you would expect. No plaster of Paris powder. They take an empty gallon jug, fill it with half hot water and half Coca-Cola. They then sprinkle it around the corners of the floor. It's sticky and it works!

DJ Jamborees pack the house

DJs: They are the heart of your

skating sessions. Kids idolize them. They really control the pace of your sessions. Plus, it's another set of eyes on what's going on with the crowd. It's like having another floor guard.

A very popular event is to invite DJs from other rinks for a jamboree. Each DJ has their own loyal group of skaters who will always follow them to these special events.

At Roller Jam recently, we had five top DJs from four different rinks. The event packed the skaters in to skate to their home DJ. Roller Jam's DJ Tito welcomed DJ Big Bob. He was the DJ for many years at the famed Empire Rollerdrome in Brooklyn, New York. Plus there were DJ RC Larock, DJ Arson and DeeJay Que. Each had their own style and included the latest pop music, faster music for all-skate, slower for couples.

You will always have the kids skating. But the adult skaters are a large part of your late night sessions. They are very loyal to their rink. Many wear t-shirts or jackets with their rinks name or roller club names.

Halloween fairies on skates

Halloween is the first big party event of the skating season. At Roller Jam U.S.A. in Staten Island, New York, Amy Rea and her partner Ron Stalica were all decked out in their fairy outfits. Over 400 skaters attended Roller Jam's annual Halloween party. Many had just attended the outdoor New York City Halloween parade in their costumes. It's the world's largest.

Roller Jam is the only roller rink left in the New York City area. There is some good news, however. An outdoor ice and roller rink is going to be built in the famous Prospect Park in Brooklyn, New York. Plans are to cover the rinks, but the structure will be open on the sides for now. It is scheduled to open next fall.

Fun fact

Did you know that one hour of roller skating can burn more than 600 calories?

The Arenas at Woodbridge, New Jersey has a special Matinee Fitness Skate Session. So many non-skaters go to gyms or fitness centers to work out, but roller skating during one regular session gives you a full body workout. And it's fun!