

60th Anniversary Special Feature: Rinksider founder Irwin Rosee's contributions to roller skating, *The RINKSIDER* remembered

By Suzy Weinland

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Say the name "Irwin Rosee" to just about anybody in the business of roller skating, and you are likely to receive a warm smile and many kind words about a man who has left an indelible mark on the industry.

Irwin N. Rosee [who passed away February 7, 2003 at age 93] spent his working years as an industrial public relations consultant in many areas of the sports world, including boxing, baseball, football, weightlifting, tennis, bridge and, of course, roller skating.

As former UPI Sports writer and Rinksider staff writer Fred Down wrote in a 1979 Rinksider tribute to Rosee's induction into the RSROA Hall of Fame, "It is difficult to sum up in a few words the career of the little man with the pipe and the faraway gaze, but those who supported him would say, 'his mind never stopped working and he had the heart of a lion,' while those who opposed him would say 'we never could quite figure out what was going on in

that brain and he was the most stubborn cuss we ever knew.'"

Down went on to say, "Rosee had a belief during the darkest days of the 1950s and '60s – a belief shared by few – that roller skating deserved equal popularity with the 'glamour sports' of that time. He has lived to see that belief vindicated and is entitled to tell the world 'I told you so.'"

Rosee recalls he was lured into roller skating by Vic Brown, one of the RSROA founders, in 1946 to handle the U.S. championship at Gay Blades in New York. Roller skating received more publicity for the event than any other event anyone could recall.

In the 1950s, Rosee began feeling that while roller skating was a sport, it was one that needed to be publicized as entertainment. With the help of Joe Shevelson of Chicago Roller Skate Company, Rosee began publicizing *The Rinksider*. It grew from a one-page mimeographed sheet to become the "Voice of the Industry."

"Being an independent paper, I could be above the politics," Rosee said in a June, 1999 New York Friars Epistle article by Allan Kreda, celebrating Rosee's 90th birthday. "I told it like

it was and that wasn't always the most popular opinion. But, I always felt roller skating was a good sport which needed to be publicized more as entertainment. So, in 1962 I negotiated with ABC's Wide World of Sports for coverage of



Irwin Rosee, Rinksider founder

the championship in Germany. It really worked!"

In talking about the success of *The Rinksider* to longtime Rinksider columnist Chester Fried, Rosee remarked one reason for its success was that he had real newspaper writers on staff.

"I had stringers from the great papers. They knew the business and could make contact with the mom and pop rinks as well as the biggies in Michigan or wherever. They got ideas to share with rink operators to help them make their business more successful. The articles came from research and reported the facts. And I really felt 'the cause' for roller skating.

"Another goal of *The Rinksider*," said Rosee, "was to identify and share trends in the business. By sharing, we could introduce variety and keep the skaters happy."

And 60 years later, these original goals and strategies continue to be the driving force behind the publication's ongoing success. Rosee sold *The Rinksider* to current publisher Linda Katz in 1989 in order to semi-retire. He stated in a 1991 issue, "The newspaper business is my first love. That's why I kept *The Rinksider* all these years – through the bad times as well as the good. I like the grabbing phases of the business, like the controversial headlines. I can tell you one thing: roller skating people are hard working and devoted people."

And so was Irwin Rosee.

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