

Rolling Thru Time
Newsletter

The National Museum of Roller Skating



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Museum Founders Award Presented to Bert Anselmi

By Annelle Anderson and Peggy Young



Albert "Bert" Anselmi, of Pontiac, Michigan, was posthumously awarded the George Pickard Founders Award by the Museum's Board of Trustees at their Annual Meeting on April 28, 2019

Bert, as he was known in the skating world, was a gentleman whose life was completely given to the betterment of roller skating. He was a leader of the pack in all things that the industry and sport were involved in. He was a driving force in the creation of the National Museum of Roller Skating, having the foresight

through encouragement and knowledge to lead to the realization of this very fine museum which holds our history. As one of the founders, Bert became the first President of the Museum, serving from its inception in 1980 to 2004.

In 2016 Trustees of the Museum voted to create the "Founders Award." This award is in honor of the life and legacy of George Pickard, another one of the Founders of the Museum. The following criteria was established and written by current Trustees, Charlene Conway, Linda Miner and Nellie Anderson Lillie.

"The George Pickard Founders Award will be given to an individual, group or organization that has made significant and lasting contributions that fulfill the vision and mission of the National Museum of Roller Skating. Recipients will

represent the ideals and values that were characteristic of the founders of the National Museum of Roller Skating."



This museum display was seen at USA Roller Sports Nationals this past summer in Spokane, Washington. It was set up between the skating floor and the vendors' area.

Eric Steele, USA Roller Sports executive director and museum trustee, packed it and set it up. The three panels came from Elmhurst History museum's exhibit on Chicago skating in the 1940s that the NMRS acquired when the exhibit closed.

Membership Renewal Simplified

New Website Offers Recurrent Membership

Can't remember if you have renewed your museum membership for the next year?

Perhaps you received a renewal notice, but you are not sure, and besides, you have been very busy lately and just don't have time to deal with it.

The answer: go to the National Museum of Roller Skating's new website:

<https://www.rollerskatingmuseum.org/plans-pricing>

Choose the level you feel comfortable with, but look for the box option that has the word "Recur." By choosing this membership option, you never have to worry about renewing again.

Each year the museum will automatically renew your membership at the same level, unless you notify the museum that you want to discontinue your membership, or want to be a member at a different level. Hopefully, this will reduce the loss of museum

membership due to oversight.

The platform used is wix.com, said Frank Jourtras, technology and website coordinator for USA Roller Sports, who designed the web page. Jourtras added: "Members should know that if they feel they are already a paid member, but have not yet received their sign in credentials, they should contact me at webmaster@usarollersport.org.

While renewing your membership, check out the comprehensive views of the museum that are now on the website. It's the next best thing after actually visiting the museum.

Board Meeting Highlights

The annual meeting of the Board of Trustee for NMRS was held on April 28, 2019, at the Tropicana Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada. The following are some highlights:

- The museum office has been turned into a Gift Shop. The Museum now has a Square account and an ipad, so charges made in the Gift Shop or for membership renewals, etc., will go directly into the Museum's bank account. In the past credit cards were run through USA Roller Sports (USARS) and the resulting fund transferred to the Museum by check.
- Eric Steele, executive director of USA Roller Sports, talked about the need to refine the acquisition policy because of the limited amount of storage space. After discussion, a motion was passed unanimously: "Anyone who donates \$35 or more to Give to Lincoln Day will automatically become a member of the NMRS."
- Eric Steele noted the USOC is building an Olympic and Paralympic Museum in Colorado, and suggested the museum may wish to loan them something to display.
- Newly elected Museum Trustees: Peggy Young, Eric Steele, Andy Starr, and the new RSA representative, Cort Wahlig.

Other Museum News

- Channel 10-11 KLON in Lincoln (Pure Nebraska), did a feature on the National Museum of Roller Skating. To view, [CLICK HERE](#)
- A writer came in to the NMRS looking for information on a book she is writing on small museums in Nebraska.
- Dominic Cangelosi, museum Trustee and owner of the historic Moonlight Rollerway in Glendale, California, is featured in a story titled "Stayin' Alive at D23's Mickey Mouse Roller Disco Party." The story begins by identifying the historic rink as a famous filming location in Los Angeles. To view, [CLICK HERE](#)
- One of the newest music videos filmed there is "BE NICE" by the famous group Black Eyed Peas. To view [CLICK HERE](#)
- Shirley Indelicato, (1925-2019) passed on April 3, 2019. She was a

member of the Skating Vanities. Her obituary mentions that "she became featured in an act in which she skated on a 24" ball." For more information on her life, [CLICK HERE](#)

Albert "Bert" Anselmi's Oral History

The following are highlights of a 19-page transcript of an oral interview with Albert Anselmi recorded on Jan. 26, 2001, by the Indiana University Oral History Research Center, conducted by Robin Henry. The original tape and final transcript are kept on file in the university's archives. These highlights are not necessarily presented in the order in which the information appeared in the interview

— Alan Bacon



Far left is Bert Anselmi. Also pictured is Judy Parker of Auckland, New Zealand with Bob Bollinger, museum trustee, of Oaks Park at the raffle drum

Anselmi began his oral history in great detail about how his father got into the roller skating business during World War II. Anselmi was around 12 years old, and helped his father measure out the dimensions of the new building, 82' by 82', on their property. His dad changed his mind from opening a hot dog stand to a spaghetti restaurant to a repair garage. After one Sunday driving into Detroit and seeing a rink with much business, Anselmi's dad announced the family was going into the roller skating business. Anselmi said, after they bought out the contents of a closing rink, "So we still don't really know anything about the skating business."

On opening night in 1942, Anselmi said they didn't know they needed special music for roller skating. One patron took off to another rink and brought back skating records to play on the turntable. Anselmi, with an uncle, was on skate boxes helping patrons put on their clamp-on skates. After the packed opening

night, Anselmi quoted his mother: "What did you get us into."

In 1950 his father built a new and bigger rink, the Rolladium. "I would tell people that two-and-a-half men built the Rolladium, done everything except the plumbing work and the electrical work. I am the half because I would be down in the morning up until about one o'clock and then I would go home and change clothes so that I could work the grocery store that we had next door." His father told him, "I built this rink almost by myself and I am tired. You are going to run it."

He and his sister Laurene traveled to Detroit after the war when gas rationing ended, to take lessons from Rose Martin. (He later mentioned Fred Martin along with Joe Nazzaro Sr. as two of the most influential people in developing roller skating.) Anselmi's skating partner and future wife, Lynn, had been an ice skater. They competed successfully from 1946-49 before becoming pros.

They had a very successful teaching career. He coached his first national champion in 1950. Anselmi said "I never realized I could make the kind of money I was seeing teaching skating." He said his last student was his son, Kurt. Kurt and his other students that excelled in skating, said Anselmi, were extremely dedicated, spending five or six days a week at the rink: ". . . school, rink, till seven-eight o'clock and then home, that's it."

He later added: "I think the memories that I cherish most have to be the responsibilities I had, and that I was successful at creating a champion. I don't think there's any greater feeling than to have taught somebody." Later in the interview he added something his father told him: "We're not going to be able to run a successful business if you're not good enough to teach anybody that wants to come here."

His involvement with the RSROA began as a teacher, then serving on the dance committee. Later he became director of the Great Lakes region championships. Then he was asked to serve on the board of directors for the RSROA. (He doesn't mention that he was RSROA president for three one-year terms from 1972-1974.)

He was asked what his two most important contributions were. He said one was bringing the two rival organizations together, the RSROA and URO.

"I was very instrumental in getting our board to be the aggressor, to try to merge the two skating associations. With my teaching reputation, people from the other organization knew me and who I was." He added: "The merge, one thing I didn't say, is important because you will never receive Olympic recognition if we have two governing bodies. . . . Otherwise they will not pay attention to us. They are not going to get into our disagreements."

The other accomplishment he briefly mentioned was his involvement in the separation of the RSROA into two organizations, a trade organization, and an amateur competitive skating organization. He said the board had to deal with a complaint to the Justice Department about rink operators controlling competitive skating.

Anselmi was asked about the changes in skating over his career. He discussed the changes in music from the organ to disco eras. He said organ music used

a metronome for good reason. "If you play it too fast, you get the crowd going too fast and then you have a potentially dangerous situation. A lot of people fall." He said he flew out to Denver to observe an operator, including his use of popular music. Though he said he didn't listen to popular music much, he realized its importance. "You start talking about organ music in a skating rink today and the kids are ready to cut you up; they don't want any part of it."

Another change he emphasized was the upgrade in skating facilities that had taken place. He recounted a road trip with another operator. When they entered a town and saw some old, large building, they wondered if it was a roller rink. "Suddenly it occurred to us that we find an old beat up building that is big, and we call it a roller skating rink. There's something wrong here."

Earlier in the interview he recounted a story of going to a skating championship and the rink was "absolutely filthy." Later he added: "The down times only happen when management gets lazy and they stop noticing that his place needs paint . . . a little thing here, a little thing there gets deteriorated. It can get to the point where somebody says, 'Hey, I don't think they really care about how they treat us here anymore.'"

He also mentioned the change in wheels from fiber and wood to urethane. He said it helped spark outdoor skating and inline skating. But the biggest change was the elimination of pumice that was used to improve floor grip. He lamented that dust used to get into everything, but praised the rinks that are clean and quiet because they eliminated the power and added urethane wheels.

When asked about the greatest failures and successes of the public image of roller skating, he said: "Well, the bad public image develops because of bad management and bad maintenance." He lamented management that doesn't enforce sensible rules of behavior.

"I always used to get a kick out of correcting couples that were over amorous. I would skate up to them, and I would just stand there and watch them. They would say, 'What's the matter?' I would say, 'I was just watching. You're really good at that. I wanted to see how you did it. In the meantime, I said, 'Make that your last kiss for the day.'"

He later added: "The rules of good taste have to prevail and if they do, the rink becomes a desirable place and it will have the backing of the parents which is a key factor."

He said, "There is very little people can do that matches roller skating. This is a fantastic program, roller skating. I think the future is as bright as any individual person wants to make it."

"As a finale to this interview," said Anselmi, "I would like to talk about our outstanding Roller Skating museum. The museum boasts the finest, most complete collection of skating artifacts in the world. The collection is displayed in a very professional manner. The museum strives to consistently improve and to better serve the Roller Skating community."

*Bert Anselmi,
second from left,
with the other*



*founding trustees
of the NMRS in
1982*

To read further about Bert Anselmi, see George Pickard's book, *Titans and Heroes of American Roller Skating* that can be purchased from the museum. Anselmi is listed as a Titan. Pickard added some details that Anselmi left out of his oral interview. He was instrumental in creating the Girl Scouts roller skating badge.

"In 1974, RSROA President, Bert Anselmi was made a National Vice-President of the Muscular Dystrophy Association in recognition of the large contributions that the roller skating industry was make annually to MDA fund raising." He was operator of the year in 1972, and became a life member of the RSROA in 1976. Pickard added: . . . "Anselmi was widely recognized as one of the roller skating industry's most effective leaders."

STAY CONNECTED

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The National Museum of Roller Skating is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization located in Lincoln, Nebraska. It is the only dedicated roller skating museum in the world. We are committed to the preservation of the history of roller skating. With over 50 displays cases, the museum educates the public on all aspects of roller skating, which dates back to the first patented skate from 1819.

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