



# NEWSLETTER

Fall 2009

## A Word From Our President



It seems a bit ironical when a person is given an award for an activity that has already provided the individual with great satisfaction. Such was the case when the World Acrobatics Society presented me with a service award during the 2009

WAS conference in Las Vegas.

In reality the success our Society enjoys is a result of all the hard work others have done during the years. There are too many people to mention in this short memo but this service award needs to be shared with all of you who have helped to recognize some of the amazing Acrobats of our World.

Not only do we acknowledge greatness but for me the opportunity to meet the best in the World is exciting. All too often Legendary Personalities are only known from Media coverage or hearsay stories of excellence. However, when you can shake hands and look into the eyes of these amazing Acrobatic Legends and share stories of commonalities, of success or defeat, a special bonding occurs that is difficult to explain.

And the face to face is only one of the many aspects of the Society's activities.

The World Acrobatics Society is a truly unique organization, and as you read the following newsletter it will become obvious that the people associated with the World Acrobatics Society are enriched both socially and emotionally from our many connections to the past and present.

**John Deininger, WAS President**

World Acrobatics Society

## WAS Congress 2009... We Learned, Laughed, and Celebrated



This year the 2009 World Acrobatics Society's annual congress landed in Las Vegas and called the Circus Circus Resort and Casino its home from September 22 - 24, 2009. There wasn't much time to gamble during this event as each day was packed with meetings, presentations and of course the 2009 Induction of Legends.

The congress opened up in the evening of Tuesday, September 22 with a Board of Directors meeting. The meeting took place in the comfortable hospitality room and minutes from the meeting can be found on the World Acrobatics Society web site at [www.WorldAcro.com](http://www.WorldAcro.com).

On Wednesday the "Annual Congress" began. The emcee for the day's events was Bruce Davis. These events included a panel (Don Leas, Abie Grossfeld, George Hery) discussing aspects of judging in three of the acrobatic sports, and guest speakers, Jill Hollebeak, Tim Schlosser, Ron Munn, Dagmar Munn, and George Nissen. The daytime events concluded at the Bellagio where members were allowed to watch a Cirque Du Soleil training session.

On Thursday morning the Annual Membership meeting took place and new officers were nominated and elected, along with other organization reports and amendments. By noon the Annual Congress was finished and that evening the Annual Awards Dinner took place with the formal induction of 10 new Legends.



## we learned...

This year's congress led off with a group of presentations filled with information. Looking at the itinerary I had to wonder, "What's up?!" Just kidding on the slang, but all the presentation names had me intrigued on what I was really going to learn.

The presentations began with a panel comprised of Abie Grossfeld, Don Leas and George Hery talking about the rules of judging in their sports. The men were very knowledgeable on how an athlete went from actually competing in the sport to the actual score they received. As a past competitor in all three of the sports highlighted, gymnastics, diving, and trampoline, I found it interesting how the world has changed in those sports and how what I did as a competitor wouldn't make it any more!

Next up were Jill Hollembeak and Tim Schlosser in a presentation titled, "Cart-wheels Turn into Car-wheels, but the Lessons Remain the Same." I was very intrigued by the title and clueless to how my cartwheels could turn into car wheels. I definitely do better at cartwheels than I drive a car. The presenters were high spirited and exciting as both speakers and motivators, as they talked about life lessons and self-motivation.

After the lunch break I was going to find out the truth, did George Nissen and Ron Munn really get that trampoline on top of the pyramid...or was it all a Photoshop trick? Wait, they didn't have Photoshop back then.!

George and Ron's presentation began with Ron doing a show for us. Did you know Ron Munn is a Yo-Yo expert. I think everyone at the Congress knew but me. He needs to work on the "Yo-Yo into the pocket" trick before he hurts himself with it. Anyway, all I am going to say is yes, they did get a trampoline on top, and yes, they bounced on it. If you really want to find out how it all happened, you need to get Ron to tell you the story. I don't want to give away any of Ron's secrets to it!

Next was Dagmar Munn's presentation called "Bounce for Life with Health Bounce Light." As we sat through presentations, there was this object covered with tablecloths and I think the sign on it said, "Do not look under the tablecloth," which made you want to look under the tablecloth. Now was the time for the unveiling, as Dagmar talked about George Nissen's newest invention, the Health Bounce Light. I did know George was working on this along with his new backyard Spaceball invention which combines basketball with a backyard tramp. The Health Bounce Light was a hit at the show, and many gave it a try. I am looking to buy one as I am getting to the age where I can count the joints that don't hurt easier than the joints that do. For more info on the Health Bounce Light, go to [www.rebound4all.com](http://www.rebound4all.com).

Along with the presentations, our days at the Congress were also filled with fun group activities where we traveled to see trainings that were both professional and amateur.



Top, Abie Grossfeld, Don Leas, and George Hery inform us of the judging rules involved in gymnastics, diving and trampoline respectively. Right, Tim Schlosser and Jill Hollembeak talk about going from cartwheels to car wheels.



Ron Munn shows us he is proficient in Yo Yo while he also explains how they got that "darn" trampoline to the top of the pyramid so the above picture could be taken



Dagmar Munn and George Nissen demonstrate George's new invention, the "HealthBounce Light."



# we laughed...

I find it hard to decide which part of the Congress I liked best, and as all the events race through my mind I have to remember all the fun we had traveling to visit a Cirque Du Soleil training and then to watch the Trampoline and Tumbling elites train for the last USA Gymnastics qualifier for the USA team.

To get to Cirque we first had to hop into busses to make the trip. I am not much of a bus rider, but the trip was quite fun, with everyone conversing and networking it seemed to only take minutes and we were there.

Once in the Bellagio we were instructed to wait in theatre lobby outside the arena. It gave us all a chance to drool over the exquisite sculptures created by artist Richard McDonald of different Cirque acts. As the art was amazing, so was the price tag! If you ever go to the "O" show I would suggest visiting this gallery.

Finally our friendly Cirque coach, Emmanuel Durand (2008 Legend in trampoline), greeted us and showed us into the theatre. A practice had begun on the Russian swings where divers execute amazing dives after being catapulted into the air, sometimes more than 10-meters, and then entering into the water. The training was both educational and entertaining. A few of us are still wondering if the one performer was throwing a 5 1/2 somersault as we kept counting each time he attempted it. I am still trying to figure out how I get on one of those swings to try it once?

The next day after the general membership meeting many of us embarked on a new road trip across town to the Cashman Center to watch the training of the USA Trampoline/Tumbling/Double-Mini final selection competition to decide their National Elite team for the upcoming World Championships in St, Petersburg, Russia.

I was supposed to meet some people in the Circus Circus lobby for a ride but was delayed. Ready to take a cab, I ran into Bruce Davis and his wife Rita and hitched a ride.

The training was open and Ann Simms of USAG was kind enough to let us all down on the floor. It's fun to be right down on the floor next to the trampolines while watching the "elites" bouncing above you.

George Nissen was a big hit and all the competitors flocked around him to meet and take pictures with him. The training did not disappoint us as we got to see some of the top notch athletes in trampoline and tumbling fine-tune their routines. As I watched the comraderie of all the athletes, I could only reminisce about the old days and all my good friends in the sport!

The event was also a great networking tool for the World Acrobatics Society as we got to get up close and personal with many possible new members or rejoining members. By the time I was finished talking I know I had talked several people into joining us at one of the largest ever attended Hall of Legends induction ceremony put on by the World Acrobatics Society.

Right, Manu Durand and George Hery enjoy the USAG trampoline and tumbling training, below, George Nissen takes a photo op with USA's finest trampolinists.



Above, John Beck and Paul Swafford get together before the Legends are inducted, right, one of the many sculptures by Richard MacDonald that the attendees admired before attending the Cirque Du Soleil "O" training at the Bellagio.



# Charlie Pond Memorial Award



Congratulations to Paula Boelsems the 2009 recipient of the Charlie Pond Memorial Award, for outstanding service and dedication to the World Acrobatics Society. This award is named after Charlie Pond, a 2002 legend known as a tumbling coach from Texas, University of Illinois. Gymnastics coach and inventor of the Pond twisting belt and other notable achievements.

Paula has been active with WAS since it's birth in 1997. As a 2003 Legend in Acrobatic Gymnastics, Paula has been dedicated to the development of World Acrobatics Society; it's structure and growth. She continues to be a marker in what makes this organization successful today as an individual who believes in what WAS stands for and where it is headed!

Thanks for all your hard work Paula!

## we celebrated...

Although we did not have a red carpet, the 2009 induction ceremony began deserving of just that. If I have any control in the matter, next year there will be a red carpet! Our own version of the red carpet event started well before the event did. As award recipients, families, friends and members of WAS gathered in the lobby for this grand event.

I just had to capture all the ambience happening out in the lobby and as people entered into the hall. I grabbed John Deininger's camera and before I knew it, I was every bit as bad as the Hollywood paparazzi. As I looked around I noticed that others had the same itch as I, as flashes were appearing from everywhere and photo moments were being created by many wanting the memories of what happened on that special night.

It may not have been an event that would be featured on any of the entertainment television stations or in magazines, but it was our event and for our world, it was something very special.

After the dust settled and everyone was seated the formalities began. Dick Albershadt was the Master of Ceremonies. For all who attended it was a night of tears, laughs and remembering individuals who made that special mark, or gave the extra time or work into making a difference in the acrobat world and the sports and professions surrounding it. For this was the night to shine for each of these following individuals and shine they did. For they were now Legends according to the World Acrobatics Society.



Induction 2009  
Red Carpet Event



WAS President John Deininger receives 5 year service award. With John from L to R are Bruce Davis, Don Leas, and George Hery.



# 2009 WAS Hall of Legends...



Top from left to right, Danny Castle, David Jacobs, Jon Beck, Glen Vaughan, Lou Vitucci  
Bottom from left to right, Karen Castle, Jill Hollembeak, Joe Kotys, Yvgeney Marchenko



### **Jill Hollembeak - Tumbling**

Jill started her tumbling career in Rockford, Illinois, where she was taught ballet by Donna Bollinger and soon thereafter was in Trampoline Town, which was headed up by Bob Bollinger. She had her first international exposure at the tender age of eight when most kids are busy playing hop-

scotch. The early start paid off as Jill became one of the most decorated international and national tumblers from the USA and the second most internationally decorated tumbler. She has been the Illinois State University Athlete of the Year, Two-time Academic All American, Six-time National Tumbling Champion and Three time World Tumbling Champion.

It's a lead-pipe cinch that grass will not grow under her feet.

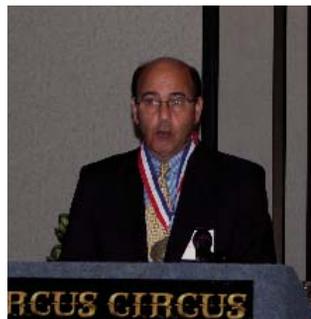
Jill was a Mad City Marathon finisher, is ACEP Certified and is on the Illinois State University Athletic Council. She has a master of Science degree from Illinois State University, in Applied Science Technology, and a Bachelor of Science Degree, Cum Laude, Department of Kinesiology and Recreation. Jill has had numerous speaking engagements, has been a YMCA Director, coach, teacher, dance teacher and has been on the National Coaching Staff and has worked with the National Coordinator on closing ceremony arrangements for the 1996 Olympic Games and the Coca Cola Venue in Olympic City.

Jill is now Assistant Director of Athletic Academic Advising at DePaul University where she is continuing her juggling act as she

World Acrobatics Society

administers daily operations, assists in the athletic recruiting process, advises student athletes, and manages Academic Services for Women's Basketball as well as Men's and Women's Track and Field and Cross Country. In her leisure time, Jill has had her research published, and has been the recipient of the Jorndt Research and Scholarship Award.

Jill was presented her 2009 WAS Legend Award by 2003 Legend in Gymnastics, Don Leas.



### **Lou Vitucci - Diving**

Here's a springboard diver that had a pretty good start in sports, he was a State Champion in Florida, A Junior National 3 meter Champion and a four-time All-American in high school.

Lou really got serious in college and was a three-time Big Ten Champion, a five-time NCAA Champion, two-time National AAU

Champion, three-times All American on both 1 meter and 3 meter springboard, winner of a Mexican 3 meter National Championship, winner of a Japanese National Championship, member of the 1963 & 1964 United States Diving Team, and if you haven't yet figured out where he went to school, he is a member of the Ohio State University Athletic Hall of Fame and cited as one of the top four Ohio State divers of the 20th Century.

Lou toured the Far East with the USO in 1960. He was the diving coach at the University of Pennsylvania for two years,

Brandeis University for two years, and at the University of Louisville for three years.

Lou has been employed for 43 years with the Lincoln Electric Company and has served as; Technical Sales Representative, District Sales Manager, and was cited for meritorious achievement in the Kentucky Vocational-Technical school system.

Lou was presented his 2009 WAS Legend Award by 2000 Legend in Diving, Tom Gompf.



### **Glen Vaughan - Contributor**

Glen began his diving career at age 6 when his diving coach in Colorado started a gymnastic program. He competed in trampoline, floor, vault and parallel bars for Northern Colorado University, where many gymnasts came from, and eventually went on to

become national champions and coaches. Glen began coaching professionally when he started a boys' gymnastics team at Greeley High School during his senior year at NCU.

Glen took a position at the YMCA as aquatics and gymnastics coach and has coached boys, girls, high school and club gymnastics as well as soccer, swimming, diving, track and wrestling. In 1971 he started a girls competitive program at the YMCA where through the years they have claimed the YMCA National title four times and have come in second seven times.

He has always been involved with gymnastics clinics and camps through the years; he help organize the first USGF Congress which was held in Colorado. Glen has judged men's gymnastics for over 10 years and has judged USGF, USAG, and YMCA competitors for several decades.

Mission Valley YMCA, where Glen currently coaches, is one of the largest gymnastics programs in San Diego County with 800 participants. Over the years he has coached thousands of athletes, and several state and regional champions, many of whom went on to receive scholarships, and some, like their mentor, have even entered the coaching ranks. Glen prides himself in developing good people through gymnastics, from novice to champions, one-year-olds, to adults, and tries to teach persistence to always work hard but to always have fun.

Glen Vaughan has forgotten more about gymnastics than most will ever know. He has taught at every level, making him a popular and sought-after speaker on regional and national congress events and earning him the right to sit on an elite panel; The Board of Directors for International Gymnastics Hall of Fame.

Glen is a USA Safety-Risk Management Instructor and was the training and site supervisor for Mary Lou Retton's "Perfect 10" at the 1984 Olympic Games and again for Paul Hamm's "Déjà vu" men's all-around gold at the 2003 World Championships. But it his devotion to young athletes in the sport-either by volunteering at USGF, USAG and YMCA competitions or putting San Diego on the gymnastics map through the local YMCA that sets him apart as an instructor dedicated to the sport.

Glen was presented his 2009 WAS Legend Award by Pamela Pond.



### **David Jacobs - Trampoline**

Dave hails from Amarillo, Texas has recently retired from a successful career with the Hartford Company as Director of Corporate Development. During his youth, Dave found his way into Nard Cazzell's Maverick Boys & Girls Club and under Nard's inspirational coaching Dave soon won

several local championships and received a full scholarship to the University of Michigan. In addition to being the University of Michigan Cheerleading captain, and a member of coach Newt Loken's gymnastic team, Dave won four Big Ten titles in Floor Exercise and Trampoline, and in 1969 was the NCAA Trampoline Champion. He competed internationally for the United States 13 different times and won each and every event. He was the 1967 and 1968 World Trampoline Champion, and was the first male to ever successfully defend his title.

Dave and his wife Jacque now live in Big Canoe, Georgia and is a devoted humanitarian volunteer assisting Jacque with her personal foundation Collaborations and continues as a Board member of the local Boys & Girls club.

David was presented his 2009 WAS Legend Award by 2008 Legend in Trampoline, Dimitri Poliaroush.



### **Jon Beck - Tumbling**

Jon was another champion athlete out of Amarillo, Texas -- Joining the ranks of David Jacobs and Ronnie Munn. At the age of seven, Jon was a gymnast and soon found his talent in power tumbling. He has been National Power Tumbling Champion,

Platform Tumbling Champion and Double Mini-Trampoline Champion several times over.

He was a member of the 1988 World Double Mini Team Champions, in 1989 He won the World Games Tumbling Championship in Germany; in 1992 he won the World Championships in tumbling, and came back in 1993 to repeat as the World Games Tumbling Champion. He was also a member of the World Championship tumbling team champions in 1992 and 1994. He was a two-time U.S. Olympic Committee Athlete of the Year in both Power Tumbling and Platform Tumbling.

Jon went on to coach in the sport of tumbling and his accomplishments include: back to back champions, women' World Cup finalists, multiple World Championship finalist and medalists, Multiple World Age-Group champions and medalists, multiple men's and women's Senior National champions and medalists. He was the World Champion tumbling coach in 1999, 2001 and 2005, and the World Age-Group Championship tumbling coach in 1994 and 1996.

He was awarded the USAG Coach of the Year, and has produced National Tumbling champions, Elite tumbling teams, Senior and Junior World teams, and World Championship finalists.

Jon was presented his 2009 WAS Legend Award by 2008 Legend in Tumbling, Jim Bertz.



### **Joe Kotys - Gymnastics**

Joe Kotys graduated from Kent State University. During the 1950 NCAA Championships, Joe and teammate Norm Eldar represented Kent State as a team, however, while Eldar did not score any points toward the team title, Joe Kotys, alone, accumulated enough

points to place third as a team. After graduation he taught and coached at Cuyahoga High School, near Cleveland, for over 30 years. Outside of Kent State, Joe's home gym was the Swiss Turnverein in Cleveland.

Prior to Kent State, Joe competed as part of the U.S. Team at the 1948 Olympics Games. Joe, along with Ed Scrobe and Bill Roetzheim traveled to Japan in 1950 and competed against the Japanese in a series of competitions, this was the first international dual meet competition for the U.S. National team members on foreign soil.

Joe also competed in the 1955 Pan American Games in Mexico City where he won vaulting, and placed second in all-around, pommel horse and tumbling. Joe won National AAU championships in the parallel bars in 1948, 1949 and 1951, vaulting in 1948, and pommel horse in 1956 for a total of 5 National AAU titles. He won NCAA All-Around Championships in 1949 and 1950, pommel horse in 1951, parallel bars in 1949 and 1950, and high bar in 1950 for a total of 6 NCAA titles.

Joe was presented his 2009 WAS Legend Award by 2001 Legend in Gymnastics, Abie Grossfeld.



### **Valeri Liukin - Gymnastics**

Valeri Liukin was a member of the USSR National team from 1985 - 1992. At the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, Liukin won the gold medal in the team competition, and was the co-champion on the horizontal bar with fellow Soviet gymnast Vladimir Artemov. Liukin won the silver medal in the all-around and on the parallel bars. In 1990 at the Goodwill games Valeri won 5 gold medals. At the 1991 World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Indianapolis, he again was a member of the champion Soviet team in the Team competition. He won the bronze medal in the All-Around. Valeri was the first person to perform a triple back somersault on the floor.

After competing Valeri switched to coaching where he has over 15 years of coaching experience. He has coached many USA National team members including his daughter, Nastia, who was the 208 Beijing Olympic All-Around Champion, 2005 World Champion and 2-time US National Champion. From 1998-2007 he was the US National Team Coach and also the 2007 US Team head coach for the Pan Am Games. In 2006 he was named USA Gymnastics Coach of the Year, and in 2002 and 2004 he was named International Coach of the Year.

In 2005 Valeri was inducted into the International Gymnastics Hall of Fame. Accepting the award for Valeri is his lifelong friend Yevgeny Marchenko, and presenting the award is 2004 Legend in Trampoline, George Hery.

In 2005 Valeri was inducted into the International Gymnastics Hall of Fame.

Accepting the award for Valeri is his lifelong friend Yevgeny Marchenko, and presenting the award is 2004 Legend in Trampoline, George Hery.

World Acrobatics Society



### **Bob Brown - Professional Acrobatics**

Bob Brown was born October 6, 1958 in the Bay Area of Northern California and first showed interest in acrobatics at the age of six. Bob entered J & J Dance Studio in Fremont, CA where he learned tumbling and unicycle. This led to Bob performing in local parades and fairs for several years following.

Bob finally outgrew J & J and entered the Santa Clara Gymnastics Center under the guidance of Nils Bankston, a world-class gymnastics coach. Bob spent the next 4-5 years learning the six men's gymnastics events and then heard of a new gymnastic trampoline gym that was opening and headed by three-time World Trampoline Champion, Homer Sardinia. Bob's life took a serious turn when he had the good fortune to be directly trained by Homer who taught Bob the language of aerial kinesthetic awareness.

George Hery, Mike Dennison and Mark Davis were peers to Homer, all pioneers of multiple twist and flip tricks on the trampoline. It was these athletes who paved the road for Bob Brown to take trampoline tricks to another level. Bob became a Junior Olympic Trampoline Champion and a National and World Age Group Champion.

Eyeballing a career as a Hollywood stuntman, Bob relocated to Southern California and joined the U. S. High Diving Team and began performing in Magic Mountain's live shows before audiences. That was the start of high diving competitions, and over the next six years, Bob earned five World titles. In his spare time, Bob used the facilities at Magic Mountain to experiment with, and perfect, his trampoline prowess while combining it with his high diving skills from atop a 100-foot platform in order to transition into high falls for movies. The payoff: a career that most boys dream of. Bob has been employed as one of Hollywood's top stuntmen and high fall artists. Today, he has moved on to Stunt Coordinating and Second Unit Directing for film, and resides in Ventura County, California, with his wife and three children.

Due to an unfortunate incident, Bob was inducted but will receive his award at a later Congress.



### **Danny and Karen Castle - Professional Acrobatics**

Not only do they perform with their troupe, the American acrobats continue to perform professionally on a regular basis, and have done so for 19 years. Before their troupe was formed, Danny and Karen Castle were circus and stunt performers, and

personally trained many performers. In fact, many of the individuals they have trained went on to work for Cirque Du Soliel as well as others who have also had successful careers.

Danny has trained the annual "Circus of the Stars" for 7-years, is the only person to catch both Faye Alexander and Armando Farfan on the flying trapeze, has two World Records for handstand push-ups (500 in 41 minutes on the USC diving tower, and 1000 in 58 minutes in Redlands, CA), he has performed teeterboard, hand bal-

# NEWSLETTER FALL 2009

ancing, trampoline, unicycle, juggling, Chinese poles, and acro- pyramids. In addition, Danny is one of the few flyers to perform a triple with a half-twist to a cut-away stick.

Karen is trainer and choreographer for her own performance troupe, is an accomplished aerialist, performs on the flying trapeze, single and double trapeze, Spanish web, and does hand balancing, Chinese poles, cradle and teeterboard. Karen has also been Jane Fonda's stunt double. She is the first woman to perform a stunt on the top of the Golden Gate Bridge, 746 feet high on a cable. On the television show, Magnum P.I., she performed a 9-foot fall into a net from a trapeze that was attached to a helicopter. This is usually done using an airbag, using a net is a higher risk and this stunt has become a famous stunt in stunt history.

National Coach for Latvia. He has coached many USA National Team Members, including 2003 World Champion Hollie Vise and 2004 Olympic All-Around Champion, Carly Patterson. He was an U.S. Olympic Women's Team Coach in 2004 and U, S, National team coach from 1999 – 2007.

In addition, Yevgeny has been a member of the U.S. Women's International Elite Technical Committee from 2000 – 2004. He has also earned honors as International Coach of the Year in 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004, and USOC Coach of the Year finalist in 2004. He was awarded the highest Soviet honor, Master of Sport.



### **Yevgeny Marchenko - Acrobatic Gymnastics**

Yevgeny Marchenko has been an icon in International Sports Acrobatics. He was a five-time World Champion, four-time European and USSR National Champion in Mixed Pairs.

After many successes in Sports Acrobatics Yevgeny began a career in coaching and became most successful in coaching Artistic Gymnastics. He has 22-years experience in coaching and was the



World Acrobatics Inc  
5949 S. Birchwood Dr.  
Ludington, MI 49431-9760  
Phone: (231) 845-6492  
Email: [dserley@yahoo.com](mailto:dserley@yahoo.com)  
Web: <http://www.worldacro.com>

**Written by:** Jim Bertz

**Edited by:** Dagmar Munn, Bruce Davis

**Photo credits:** David Jacobs, Dagmar Munn, Bruce Davis, Jim Bertz

This newsletter is a production of the World Acrobatics Society,  
Copyright © 11/15/2009



World Acrobatics Society  
5949 S. Birchwood Dr.  
Ludington, MI 49431-9760

