



### WORLD ACROBATICS SOCIETY WINTER NEWSLETTER 2009

The World Acrobatics Society Congress was held at the Hampton Inn Tropicana Las Vegas September 17<sup>th</sup> 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of 2008. The WAS Board of Directors opened the WAS Congress with their Tuesday afternoon meeting. On Wednesday, the WAS Program featured strong presentations by renowned Legends from various acrobatic fields. First, **Vitaly Sherbo**, the 1992 Men's Olympic All-around Champion and 2008 Legend, gave a stirring presentation of how it was to train in the Soviet Union. **George Hery**, 2004 Legend, made a strong presentation on trampoline progressions and supported it with some amazing video presentations that ranged from hilarious to highly technical. **Jim Bertz**, 2008 Legend, shared the history of the development of spring floors in tumbling with the WAS membership. **Nancy Thurston**, 2007 Legend, was unable to attend; however, she provided some exciting and dynamic video of her work as a Hollywood stunt woman. The last session was called Legends in their Nineties. **Jack Lalanne** (age 93) and **George Nissen** (age 93) were featured in this session along with **Abie Grossfeld** who ably represented **Vincent D'Autorio** who passed away just one week before he was to be inducted as a WAS Legend. Grossfeld, Lalanne and Nissen shared some of their knowledge and stories with the WAS membership. The highlight of the WAS Congress was the induction of ten Legends into the Gallery of Legends during the Wednesday evening banquet. Thursday morning the WAS membership met for their annual membership meeting. President **John Deininger** adjourned what had worked out to be a very enjoyable and successful 2008 WAS Congress.



### WAS Banquet and the Induction of Legends into the Gallery of Legends



**Dick Albershardt**, 2004 Legend, again ably served as the Master of Ceremonies for the induction of the 2008 Legends. Dick always comes up with some timely humor and makes the induction process meaningful and fun. He provided the following biographical information for this year's Legends.

## The LEGENDS of 2008

**Helen Crlenkovich** was the first woman diver to perform a full twisting one and a half. She dove for Coach Phil Patterson completing a "mans list of dives" including a 2 ½ tuck, a back 1 ½ layout, an inward 1 ½ pike and a reverse 1 ½ tuck. World War II prevented Crlenkovich from making an Olympic team in 1940 or 1944 during her prime when she was dominating competition in the US. Affectionately known as "Klinky", Helen married and was also known as Helen Morgan. Helen was the National Outdoor Springboard Champion in 1939, 1941 and 1945. She was Platform Champion in 1941 and 1945. She was Indoor Springboard Champion from 1939 thru 1942. Crlenkovich has been named to the International Swimming Hall of Fame, the Helms Diving Hall of Fame and the San Francisco Prep Hall of Fame. She consistently won by great margins and was considered to be closer to the men's standard of excellence than any woman diver in history. Helen turned professional to dive in the Minneapolis Aquatennial with Buster Crabbe's well-traveled Aqua Parade from 1945-1950. She performed in several Hollywood films doubling for Ester Williams including Neptune's Daughter, Million Dollar Mermaid and Easy to Love during which she executed a fifty-five foot dive from a helicopter into a V-formation of water skiers. She dove in the film Jungle Jim and doubled for Jane Russell as an underwater swimmer. Helen was only in her mid-thirties when she passed away in 1955. Bari Morgan Miller, Helen's daughter, accepted her mother's WAS medallion in LV.

**Dmitri Poliaroush** from Berenzniki, Russia began trampolining at age seven because he liked the feeling of flying. He made his international competition debut in Haslev, Denmark at age fifteen. In 1991 Dmitri performed a quadruple –twisting double somersault in competition. He made the individual finals at all Olympics, World Championships and European Youth Championships from 1986 to 2003.

Poliaroush won fourteen international titles and twenty-five international senior medals in individual, team and synchronized trampoline competition. He was a “double winner” three times at World Cup competitions in individual and synchronized trampoline. He was the winner of a record nineteen World Cup competitions. Dmitri retired after a twenty year career of trampoline competition dominance. He serves the sport of trampoline as the National Team Coordinator for USA Gymnastics and as a category 2 international judge. He is the Vice President of the FIG Athletes Commission. Dmitri was not able to attend the WAS Legend banquet and George Hery accepted his medallion on his behalf.



**Bernie Wrightson** was a gymnast at East High School in Denver, Colorado where he won a State Championship on the horizontal bar. His interest soon changed to the sport of diving. From 1963 thru 1968 Bernie won seven National AAU titles in one meter, three meter and ten meter diving. In 1966 Wrightson won the three meter National Collegiate Championship along with the indoor, outdoor National Championships making him the last diver to win the prestigious Lawrence J. Johnson “Swimming” Award. Bernie culminated his career by winning the three meter springboard in the 1967 Pan American Games in Winnipeg, Canada and the Olympic Games three meter springboard event in the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, Mexico. He coached Swedish divers for a short time before pursuing a business career as a stockbroker. Wrightson makes his home in Valley Center, California with Cathy, his wife of thirty-nine years. They have two grown daughters and four energetic grandsons.



**Jim Bertz** was born in Toledo, Ohio and participated in football, dance classes, swimming and diving as a youngster. Besides swimming and diving, Jim began competing in gymnastics, tumbling and trampoline by age fourteen. After meeting George Nissen, Jim decided that trampoline was the sport he wanted to excel in. In 1974, Bertz qualified for his first NAAU and he realized that he may have a chance to compete in future international competitions. Jim won a gold medal in tumbling at the World Age-Group competition. In 1975, Bertz won gold medals in trampoline, double mini-trampoline and tumbling at the USTA Nationals. In 1976, Jim began to specialize in tumbling creating combinations of bouncing tricks that other tumblers could not do and earned top birth on the 1976 USA World Team. He went on to win the FIT World Championship Tumbling Title. In 1978, Bertz won the World Age-Group competition in Hawaii and a second FIT World Championship Tumbling Title in New Castle, Australia. Jim retired from tumbling and trampoline competition in 1979 to attend the University of Toledo. He competed in diving and track and field. After nearly a ten year teaching and coaching career in the Toledo area, Jim moved to San Diego. In 1996 Bertz began writing articles for the international acrobatic website...AcrobaticSports.com. Currently, Jim lives in Omaha and serves as director of tumbling and trampoline for Premier Gymnastics. His two year coaching career in Omaha has already produced nine gold medalists in the USTA National age-group Championships.

**Lisa Hoyle** started gymnastics at age five and then began training in a youth circus program in her home town of Redlands, California. She was performing with a professional acrobatic troupe as a high fall and trapeze art by age 18. In 1992, Lisa was hired to perform a stunt for an up and coming young actress by the name of Angelina Jolie in the film *Cyborg II*. This experience confirmed Hoyle's determination to become a Hollywood stuntwoman. Over the last fifteen years she has appeared in films to perform stunts for over one hundred actresses. Highlights of her career include doubling for



*Cameron Diaz in Charlies Angels performing a ninety-three foot plunge from a downtown Los Angeles high-rise and for Keira Knightly in Pirates of the Caribbean I, II and III in the swashbuckling scenes. As one of only twenty-five members of the Stuntwomen's Association of Motion Pictures, Lisa recently wrapped up the sequel to National Treasure 2 doubling for Diane Kruger for the second time and completing Her sixth Bruckheimer action film for Disney. Other film credits included doubling for Julianne Moore in Next, and again for Keira Knightly in Domino and for*

Jane Fonda in Monster-in-law. Television credits include: *CSI*, "24", *Cold Case* and a fantastic fire/stunt explosion escape on *NCIS*. Television commercials include: a fifty-five foot fall for Mountain Dew in Thank Heaven for Little Girls, a daring jogger who spans the drawbridge in the clever superhuman Powerade spot and the Kate Walsh Cadillac CTS ads where Lisa is Kate's driving double. Lisa and along with others pirates won the coveted 2007 Taurus World Stunt Award for "best fight" Pirates of the Caribbean II sword fight scene. This was Lisa's third nomination for the Taurus Award.

**Micki King** is a native of Pontiac, Michigan and a graduate of the University of Michigan in 1966 where she was coached by Dick Kimball, WAS Legend and US Olympic team coach. King is a former US Air Force Colonel; and most recently, she retired as the University of Kentucky Assistant Athletic Director. One of the great moments in Olympic sports belongs to King. While leading the three meter springboard competition in the 1968 Olympic Games of Mexico City, King hit the board, broke her arm,



and dropped out of medal contention. In Munich in 1972, King won the three meter gold medal and performed the same dive that she had previously missed breaking her arm. As a coach King has the distinction of being the only woman to coach a male athlete to an NCAA Championship title. She did so while coaching at the US Air Force Academy in 1974. King was named NCAA coach of the year three times while her male and female divers earned All-American status on eleven occasions. In all Micki won ten US National diving titles, competed in two Olympic Games, two Pan

American Games, and won fifteen international diving titles hosted in foreign countries. She has been engaged in diving activities over the last eight Olympiads including being a member of the US diving staff for the 1988 Seoul Games and the 1996 Atlanta Games. King has been inducted into seven different Hall of Fames including the US Olympic Hall of Fame. She resides in Lexington, Kentucky and has two grown children, Michelle and Kevin.

**Emannual Durand**, a native Parisian, began his training at seven in a small club outside Paris and began his climb all the way to the French National Team. His training ultimately culminated in a

Perfect score of ten in a competition, a competitor in over fifty international competitions and a World Games silver medal. Manu, as he is fondly called, has during his career earned six World Championship medals, four World Cup Final medals, six European Championship medals, twenty World Cup Event medals, ten international titles and seven National Championship medals. Durand has participated in over two hundred and fifty gala events including the Olympics in Atlanta and Sydney. His efforts helped trampoline become an Olympic Sport. Durand has helped train junior elite; senior elite; and Olympic trampoline athletes from nearly twenty different countries. He has served in various capacities in the French International Federations for trampoline and gymnastics and has done the same with the FIT and FIG. Durand is an FIG level IV and French National level V Judge. He was on the Jury of Appeals for the Sydney Olympic Games. Currently, Manu is the troupe coach for the Cirque du Soleil "O" show at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas. Manu, his wife and son reside in Las Vegas.



**Vincent D’Autorio** was the oldest of ten children from an Italian family in Newark, New Jersey. He was at his gymnastics peak for the 1940 Olympic Games which were canceled due to World War II. Vinnie joined the Navy and served as a “Sea Bees,” in the South Pacific Islands. He stayed in shape by working out on a trampoline that he fashioned out of tire inner-tubes and parallel bars made out of pipes. His Olympic team became a reality when he made the 1948 London Olympic team and the 1952 Helsinki Olympic team. At age 36, D’Autorio became the oldest American gymnast to make a US Olympic team. The National Collegiate Gymnastics Alumni Association honored Vinnie by naming him as an Honorary Member of the 1944 Olympic team. D’Autorio’s most significant training came at the Swiss Turnverein in New Jersey where Vinnie was a close friend and teammate to Olympian Frank Cumiskey. Skilled as a jeweler by family financial necessity, D’Autorio could not afford to attend college. After a competition career that spanned the forties, Vinnie began teaching in White Plains, NY for Bonnie Prudden and then developed his own gymnastics school in Westchester. He helped develop gymnastics programs in twelve high schools in the County along with a gymnastics championship program. He was in charge of the instruction program for the National Gymnastic Clinic in Sarasota in the early fifties which led to him becoming a Florida resident. Born on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1915, D’Autorio’s health suddenly deteriorated just prior to the WAS Congress 2008. He passed away one week prior to the Legend induction. His brother Joseph and his sister Nancy accepted his Legend medallion in Las Vegas.



**Vitaly Scherbo** was born January 13<sup>th</sup> 1972 in Minsk. His mother enrolled him in training at age seven in an attempt to channel his energy but the attempt was futile. His demeanor followed him throughout his competition career. Even after he competed on the USSR 1990 World Championship team, earned a silver medal in the all-around at the 1991 World Championships, scored a Perfect ten at the European Championships and starred at the Goodwill Games in Seattle; the Unified Team considered him unreliable compared to some of the other more experienced Russian gymnasts.

During the 1992 Barcelona Games Scherbo made Olympic history by winning four gold medals in a single day followed by two more to complete the Olympic Games with six gold medals. Scherbo married his



wife, Irina and they had a daughter Kristina. Sudden athletic fame also brought Scherbo new problems. His family was victimized in Belarus on several occasions including his apartment being burglarized for money, valuables and memorabilia. Thank goodness his mother had kept his six gold medals for him. When he learned of a potential plot to kidnap his daughter, he packed the family up and came to the US finally arriving in State Park, Pennsylvania. More misfortune occurred when Irina was seriously injured in a horrific auto accident. After her miraculous recovery, Vitaly

returned to gymnastics training and won four bronze medals in the 1996 Atlanta Games. Overcoming a motorcycle accident, Scherbo was able to successfully market himself in the US. He secured several endorsement deals, sponsorships and gala appearances. He and his family now operate a multiple location gymnastics school business in Las Vegas.

**Jack LaLanne** was born September 26<sup>th</sup> 1914 in San Francisco. He admits being addicted to sugar and junk food as a child. He listened to a lecture by Paul Bragg on health and nutrition and began paying attention to own health and fitness. After graduation from Berkeley HS, LaLanne enrolled at the Oakland Francisco Chiropractic College before leaving to open his own health spa and gym in Oakland. He

designed the first leg extension machine, machine and a weight selector system. encouraged people with disabilities to 200 gym locations. Bally company later locations. LaLanne had the longest lasted thirty-four years. LaLanne vitamins and two juice machines. He



health and appeared in several films. From age forty until age seventy LaLanne engaged in performing physical feats that will probably never be matched. The feats include: 1) Swam the entire length of the Golden Gate Bridge underwater with 140 pounds of equipment and two air tanks; 2) Swam from

Alcatraz to Fisherman's Wharf handcuffed; 3) Performed 1033 push-ups in twenty-three minutes; 4) Swam the Golden Gate Channel covering 2,500 pound cabin cruiser; 5) nine and a half hours over thirty miles Francisco shore; 6) Performed one chin-ups in eighty-two minutes; 7) Swam shackled and towing a one thousand the Golden Gate Bridge again towing a



“Spirit of 76” swimming one mile in Long Beach Harbor towing thirteen boats containing 76 people handcuffed; 10) Towed sixty-five boats full of 6,500 pounds of wood pulp shackled and handcuffed on Lake Ashinoko in Japan; 11) Towed ten boats over one mile in less than an hour carrying seventy-seven people in North Miami; and 12) Towed seventy boats containing seventy people one and a half miles in

pulley weight systems, the Smith He encouraged women to lift weights. He exercise. He soon had his name on over bought all the licensed Lalanne gym running fitness program on television. It marketed nutritional products including published several books on nutrition and

a distance of six and a half miles towing a Maneuvered a paddleboat non-stop for from the Farallon Islands to the San thousand star jumps and one thousand from Alcatraz to Fisherman's Wharf pound boat; 8) Swam the entire length of 1000 pound boat; 9) Performed the

heavy winds and currents from Queen's Way Bridge in Long Beach Harbor to the Queen Mary. LaLanne is married to Elaine Doyle LaLanne. She serves as his manager as well as his mate.



### **World Acrobatic Society News**

- The WAS Board of Directors will meet at the Fort Lauderdale Hall of Fame May 6-9<sup>th</sup>.
- The 2009 WAS Congress will be September 22<sup>nd</sup> (Tues) thru September 24<sup>th</sup> (Thurs).
- The 2009 WAS Gallery of Legends banquet is Thursday evening September 24<sup>th</sup> at Circus Circus.
- The 2009 WAS Congress will be held at the Circus Circus Las Vegas Hotel and Casino.
- The USA Tumbling and Trampoline Association's Stars and Stripes Trials will be held at the Cashman Field Convention Center in North Las Vegas September 25<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>.
- All WAS members are asked to contribute \$100.00 to the WAS Treasury to be included with their annual membership payment to the membership chairman. Members will still be saving money because of the excellent hotel and banquet package negotiated by the WAS President.

### **Legends at Large**

- It was a pleasure having George Nissen return to the WAS Congress. After all, it was his birthday party that got WAS started.
- Isn't it good to see Ronnie Munn pay his debts? He presented a hundred dollar bill imbedded in Lucite to Loren Janes. Loren had staked Ron the hundred to go to Pan Am trampoline trials fifty years ago.
- Isn't Jack LaLanne an inspiration? He is even trying to get Dick Gutting to workout or use a computer.
- George Hery's trampoline skit where he goes through the ceiling is hilarious. George continues to be an inspiration to all who know him. Is there anything he hasn't done?



