

Barbara Jean Bock
A Brief Biography



HAL CAUGHREAN '51

Barbara on the ice, age 17

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Barbara was born May 15, 1934, in Oakland, California, to Francis and Maxine Ziem. She lived the early part of her life in the Bay Area.

It Takes A Village To Produce A Champion!

Barbara learned with clamp-on sidewalk roller skates and taught herself tricks. At a public session at the roller rink, Paul Gilbert spotted her and saw her potential. Paul approached Barbara's parents and offered his services free of charge. He was "collecting" skaters as he developed his own coaching career, so he was able to enlist more experienced skaters who became Barbara's role models.

Paul was self-taught. He was a former boxer, now making a new career for himself as well as those of the young skaters he took under his wing. He read about skating and studied good skaters. His real gift was for promotion and motivation.



Paul Gilbert with his new star skater (Martinez CA 1944)

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Hazel Barker was Paul's good friend and later wife. Hazel owned the skating rink in Barbara's home town of Martinez, California, and Paul was the "pro" on staff. Hazel's mother DuJordain ("Mama Du") was also in the picture.

Grammy (Barbara's paternal grandmother, Cora Ziem) worked in a laundry to help defray expenses, and Barbara's mother Maxine Ziem made amazing costumes from donated scraps of fabric; some were redesigned formal gowns. One of the most impressive was made from a bed sheet, cut into pieces and dyed various colors. As a teen, Barbara learned to make her own costumes using advanced tailoring techniques she learned at Oakland Tech.

They all supported Barbara through her roller skating days and into the ice skating days, financially as well as morally and of course Paul was a wonderful coach and promoter. Later they sponsored her ice skating career. Each of her three coaches—Paul for roller skating, Hans Johnson and Bob Swenning on ice—was lacking sight in one eye. They joked that there were always "three eyes on Barbara."



U.S. Juvenile Pairs Champions, 1946

Barbara (Ziem) and Joe Hottinger. Joe was Boys Single Champion the same year.



1951

Her early training in dance and skating led to travel and competition as a singles and pairs skating (roller and ice), with multiple regional and national championships *plus* choreography and teaching.

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Student and Teacher

In 1953 Barbara moved south to attend Fresno State College, majoring in art. Backstage at a student variety revue, she met a music and anthropology student named Philip Bock. He took her to Stan's Drive-In one afternoon, climbed into the back seat of his car, and won her heart with a romantic serenade—played on the tuba. (Phil remembers her as “pretty cute, and tall with her skates on!”) Then they went their separate ways for a few years.

Barbara worked her way through college as a skating teacher, and later taught art in the Fresno public schools—as “Mrs. Lassig.” At McLane High School she built the art department from a one-teacher program to a seven-teacher department in eight years. She then transferred to Edison High School, where nearly all the students were African American and where she *really* learned the art of teaching. Here, too, she built up the teaching staff and gained state-wide recognition for the work of her students.

Continuing her own artistic development, she joined the contemporary art coöperative Fig Tree Gallery for group and solo shows. Her drawing and paintings also won recognition and awards in local and regional exhibitions.

In 1976 she married Philip Bock and moved to his home in Albuquerque, New Mexico. At first she taught as a substitute in local schools but soon, with several local contemporary artists, originated the Meridian Gallery in downtown Albuquerque, a coöperative similar to the Fig Tree. There followed a series of group and solo shows in which she developed distinctive styles of drawing and of large-scale paper sculpture. Her work was shown in a wide variety of venues in New Mexico.

In 1984 she was offered a one-person show at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, where fourteen of her large-scale paper sculptures were displayed. A show followed at the Albuquerque Art Museum. On other occasions, her works occupied huge spaces in the UNM Fine Arts lobby, the basketball arena, and the Albuquerque Convention Center.

See these and more of Barbara's art work elsewhere on this web site.

During the next decades, Barbara and Phil also became active in the New Mexico theater scene, acting and directing at the Vortex and Adobe Theaters, with Barbara soon in demand as a set and costume designer. Her major roles as an actress include Ethel in “Barefoot in the Park,” the title role in Shaw's “Mrs. Warren's Profession,” and Charlotte in “Beyond Therapy.” She enjoyed directing Yasmina Reza's “Art” as well as some of Phil's original works (“Cat on a Streetcar Named Iguana,” “So Who Is This Anne Frank?” and “Yellow Cab”). Her use of space and color on large and small scales were appreciated in her set designs for many productions, especially “Agnes of God” and Noel Coward's “A Song at Twilight.” They also served on numerous boards and committees.

See production photos elsewhere on this web site.

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Starting in the early 1980s, Barbara and Phil were able to travel in Europe, Central and South America, and parts of Asia, enjoying fine art and great music as well as many kinds of theater.



Photo by Jan Folsom

They are now Happily Retired—but they continue to travel and contribute to the theater scene. ❤️

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