

WAS - Tumbling Legends

Vera & Nancy Tzipowitz - The Tzipowitz Sisters

2003 Honorees



The Tumbling Tippys from 10th St.

The first nine female tumbling champions in the United States came from Herrmann's Physical Training Institute, located at south 10th Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. William J. Herrmann Sr. was a self-taught boxer, fencer, hand balancer and physical advocate in the mode of Bernarr Macfadden. Rather than pursuing a career in the performing arts as a professional, Herrmann preferred teaching and coaching. He was fascinated with circus tumblers and sought to develop tumbling as a national sport for girls and women.

Two of his most prominent tumblers were identical twins, Vera and Nancy Tzipowitz. They were inspired by "Professor" Herrmann's Helen Matkowski who was the first ever national Amateur Athletic Union (NAAU) women's tumbling champion in 1938 and a WAS honoree.

The Tzipowitz twins known as the "Tumbling Tippys" dominated NAAU tumbling during 1939 until 1942. Vera was the champion for four consecutive years while Nancy was the runner-up. Some other Herrmann protégés include four time NAAU men's tumbling champion George Szypula. George had an outstanding coaching career at Michigan State University and founded of USA Gymnastics Hall of Fame. Herrman's son, Billy, won three national titles and a bronze medal in the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Vera continued to compete nationally up until 1952 placing fifth in the NAAU tumbling championships. The 1952 NAAU tumbling champion was Barabara Galleher (Tonry), who went on to win eight more NAAU tumbling titles. Tonry was honored by WAS in 2001.

During World War II and at USO shows, the Tzipowitz sisters performed professionally with "The Three Modernettes." Besides tumbling professionally, Nancy was also a hand balancer and a coach. Vera coached for ten years following her retirement from tumbling and practiced judo attaining fourth degree black belt status in the sport certified by the United States Judo Association. She taught novice judo students for a time.

In their later years, the sisters have become dedicated fans of international gymnastics traveling to Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Greece, Japan and Panama for the sole purpose of observing and cheering sports acrobats and international gymnastics. Both of the Tzipowitz sisters are deceased.