



NEWSLETTER

Winter/Spring 2010

A Word From Our President



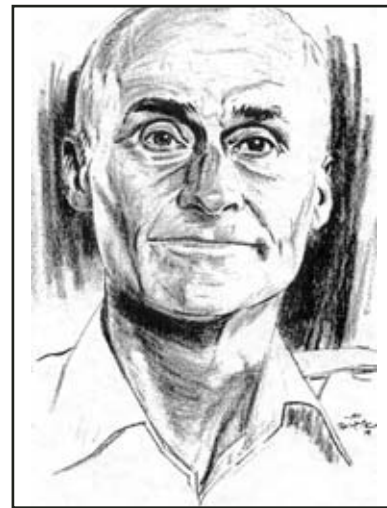
Last week I was at a complex about 10 minutes from my home near Seattle which housed recreational trampolines. 20 trampoline beds at floor level lined the right side of the facility with attached angle beds against the wall. A line of beds down the middle and another twenty beds along

the opposite wall with angled mats. In another part of the facility were rows of trampolines attached to each other wall to wall with screaming opposite lines of dodge ball players flying around. Another section contained beds solely for the purpose of launching children into a giant hole filled with cubes of foam rubber. Another section was for the very youngest babies and so on....! At least two hundred young bodies flying around with Giggles, screams, laughter and yelling with the ever present watchful adult life-guards.....As I watched and reminisced about my own youthful bouncing and the joy and hours and hours I spent challenging gravity, my thoughts turned to the... what would have happened to this kid from downtown Cincinnati if I had not fallen in love with the trampoline..? I decided it would have been something lacking the fun of flying!

Of course there is the historical equation....
Trampoline = George Nissen

This newsletter edited by Jim Bertz talks of George Nissen and how his dedication and hard work has given the world so much enjoyment.

The Loss of a Great Man, George Nissen; Acrobat, Inventor, Entrepreneur, and Friend



The acrobatic world received a terrible loss on April 7, 2010 as George Nissen, the inventor of the "Modern Trampoline," passed away. George was an avid member of the World Acrobatics Society and was inducted as a "Legend" in 2001. George was 96 years young and was very active even making a presentation at the last WAS annual conference in Las Vegas in 2009.

Through his life he was a passionate man always involved in the acrobatic world, whether it was as an acrobat, an inventor, or a developer of acrobatic sports.

Born in Blirstown, Iowa, George was eventually introduced to tumbling, hand balancing, and diving through a junior high school teacher and the local YMCA. He enjoyed it so much that he continued it at the University of Iowa. He liked tumbling the best and used to go see vaudeville acts featuring acrobats and tumblers. He also enjoyed hand balancing. It would be this passion for the acrobatic sports that would lead George to invent many rebound devices, the most popular being the modern trampoline.

While watching a Ringling Brothers circus in his hometown of Cedar Rapids Iowa, George was fascinated by the trapeze performers could fall or dismount to the net and then use the spring to continue doing acrobatic tricks one after another. This gave him the interest to try to invent an apparatus that allowed continuous rebounding. While still in college at the



University of Iowa George worked together with Larry Griswold and Mike Howard to build a rebound device that he would later name trampoline from the Spanish word “Trampolin” for springboard. He just added an “e” at the end.

Developing and Marketing the Trampoline

After George developed a prototype of his trampoline the question was, “who would need it?” One of the first places he took it was a YMCA camp in Central City, Iowa. A college buddy of his was a leader there and the trampoline was an immediate hit with the kids who would skip their swimming time in order to get on the trampoline. Even though he realized that kids loved it, the trampoline would take much work and travel before it would become a household name.

George hit the road throughout the Midwest taking his trampoline with him and displaying it at shows that he did. He had a company in Indiana make about four of them, and one by one he would sell them at these shows. At the same time he continued to improve on his invention making it more user-friendly. He worked on its size and made it able to fold for ease in moving and storing. Finally he had a model that was easy to travel with and was at a size that was safe to complete acrobatic skills.

At that time George's dad said “well you sold these, now you have pretty much saturated the market, so when are you going to get a real job!?” But George did not give up easily on his rebound invention. He continued to market his trampoline to the YMCA, schools, and anyone else who would allow him to demonstrate it. It slowly grew by word of mouth from one place to another until it was becoming a viable name.

In 1941 George and Larry Griswold started the Griswold-Nissen Trampoline and Tumbling Company in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

WWII and Trampoline in the Navy

At the beginning of WWII, George was still promoting his trampoline at school shows. Many of the teachers who saw the demonstrations were going into the service and spread news of the trampoline possibilities for training. George himself joined the

Navy. Following his military service, George was on the road first at Randolph field in Texas and then at a navy base in Pensacola, Florida demonstrating and having the cadets learn simple skills on the trampoline. Because of this, the trampoline became part of training for Navy Pilots. George decided to go after his dreams of growing the fledgling business and planting seeds for starting trampoline competitions just like those of gymnastics and diving...and hopefully to make the trampoline an Olympic event.

Trampoline Grows Around the World

It was a dream of George's to eventually have trampoline competitions as they did in gymnastics and diving, and hopefully make it an Olympic event. In order to do so, he first took his trampoline to Universities to try and

make it an event in gymnastics. Many of the college coaches knew George and of his trampoline and were very receptive to idea. George also approached the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) in hopes of starting competitions through their sanction.

In 1947 the AAU held its first national trampoline competition for men, and added women's competition in 1961. In 1948 the NCAA also began trampoline competitions including it as part of the NCAA gymnastics program.

George loved performing and during the early 1950's continued to travel the U.S., Canada and Europe as part of an entertaining trampoline act. Joined by George's wife Annie, a former high-wire artist from Holland, their young daughter Dagmar and family friend Frank LaDue, the team performed in front of audiences at sporting good

shows and state fairs.

George's next dream was to develop international competitions. In order to do this he had to take his trampoline show on the road to do many more demonstrations in other countries.

Kurt Baechler of Switzerland joined Frank LaDue, George, Annie and Dagmar to help promote the sport of trampoline throughout Europe. In order to get trampoline accepted in Europe, George had to first set up manufacturing as it was too expensive for European countries to buy a trampoline from the USA. He found Ted Blake, a physical education teacher in Brentwood, England that had shown a lot of interest, and had once tried to buy a trampoline from





him months before. Ted turned out to be a very capable person and with his business and physical education background was an ideal candidate for the development of the manufacturing facility in Brentwood, England. As director of this facility he oversaw both the manufacturing and marketing of trampolines throughout Europe, and made numerous contacts with other individuals thereby helping to develop the sport in other parts of the world. In 1964 the International Trampoline Federation (FIT) was formed and the first Trampoline World Championships were held in the Royal Albert Hall in London England.

Back in the USA, George was interested in a better youth program to get the young children involved in the sport. In 1971 under George's direction, the United States Trampoline and Tumbling Association (USTA) was started. The organization incorporated the older and still popular sport of tumbling with the now popular sport of trampoline allowing for sanctioned age-group competitions and clinics for athletes and coaches. Later, the double mini trampoline would be invented and included in USTA competitions. In 1976 all three events were included in the FIT's World Championships.

George once said about the sport of trampoline, "Getting in the World Championships wasn't so hard. Getting it in the Olympics was really hard." Prior to the 1980 Olympics in the Soviet Union, George lobbied to get all three sports included by merging with Sports Acrobatics. The Soviets were for it, but due to politics within the organizations and the eventual boycott by the USA it did not happen. At the same time 12 trampolines were used in the opening ceremonies, thereby drawing greater attention to the IOC. It wouldn't be until 1999 when the FIT would merge with the Federation of International Gymnastics (FIG) that trampoline would be considered as an Olympic event. As part of an agreement with the FIT and FIG the sport of trampoline was first competed in the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Sidney, Australia. Trampoline is still competed at the Olympics and internationally through the FIG.

Other Inventions and Works

George Nissen held over 40 patents on a variety of fitness related products. His company expanded to include gymnastics equipment, fitness and weight training equipment, and all school gymnastics equipment. World Acrobatics Society

He created innovations for gymnastics equipment including free-standing equipment, new matting systems, including the "roll-fold" free exercise mat and the first synthetic surfaces used for Pommel Horse, Vault and Balance Beam. Two of his favorite inventions were: Spaceball - a game played on a trampoline with a ball, and Health-Bounce®Light - a personal fitness jogger targeted at the aging baby boomer.



Husband and Father

In all his busy time promoting his inventions and sport George also found time to be a family man. At a Shrine Circus in Kansas City George met the love of his life and future wife Annie from the Netherlands. They were married in 1951, and had two daughters; the eldest Dagmar and the youngest Dian. Annie and Dagmar supported George's dream by performing in the family trampoline act for 10-years. Dian was able to take advantage of the opportunity for women to compete on trampoline, and went on to become the USA Women's National Trampoline Champion and an All-American in the sport by the time she was 16. George is also survived by grandson, Jake Ramirez.



Friend to Many

As the "Father of Trampoline," an acrobat, inventor and entrepreneur, George Nissen was a friend and a role model for many in their lives. He touched the hearts of athletes, coaches, teachers, politicians, and even a rented kangaroo in New York! He reached out to all continents and most countries. His inventions crossed over as training tools for all acrobatic sports, joining many of them together thus allowing athletes to enjoy numerous acrobatic activities. It was at his 80th birthday party where the World Acrobatics Society was born as his friends from the many different acrobatic sports convened to celebrate with him. As long as there is a trampoline, a piece of gymnastics equipment, a Spaceball unit, or a Health-Bounce®Light, the memory of George Nissen will be remembered in the hearts and minds of many throughout the world. No question, he WAS the man.





WAS will always remember George Nissen for his outstanding contributions to the organization and to the world of acrobatics.

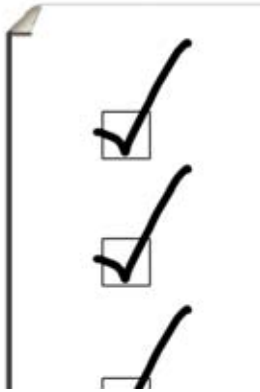
The Loss of Another Great Friend



Joyce Boedeker Gompf, 69, of Plant City, Florida, departed this life on Friday, January 22, 2010. She was a member of Plant City's First Baptist Church, Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority, Eata Theta sorority, Christian Women's Club of Plant City, Plant City Tennis Association, and Walden Lake and Lone Palm Country Clubs. She was preceded in death by her grandson Philip Thomas. She is survived by her husband of 48 years Thomas Gompf; children Dr. Timothy Gompf (Dr. Sandra Gompf) of Plant City, Tracey Gompf Russell (Mark) of Lakeland; grandchildren Chase, Juliana, Holt, Trey, William, and Faith Joyce; brother Dr. John E. Boedeker (Judy); nieces Kelly Johnson, Lynelle Vaughan, and Marianne McMillin; and many other loving family and friends.



The World Acrobatics Society Gallery of Legends 2010 Committee Report



Since the year 2000, the WAS annually inducts Legends in seven acrobatics categories for its Gallery of Legends (GOL) during the WAS Congress held annually in Las Vegas in September. The induction process begins when a WAS member nominates a worthy acrobat including the nominee's career support information by mailing the acrobats name and supporting career information to the GOL committee chairman. Dick Gutting has ably served as the GOL

committee chair during the last seven years.

All nominations are mailed to the GOL committee chairman during the three months of November, December and January. During the month of February the GOL committee chairman prepares a voting ballot containing the names and balanced support information on each of the legend nominees and mails the ballot and information to all of the current 27 GOL committee members who have a combined expertise of the seven WAS acrobatic categories. The GOL committee members may caucus and communicate among themselves in support or non-support of various acrobatic nominations. GOL committee members vote and must return their ballot by mail to the GOL committee chairman by the sixteenth of April.

The seven WAS acrobatic categories are: acrobatics gymnastics, artistic gymnastics, contributors, diving, extreme sports, professional performers and trampoline/tumbling. The WAS nominator nominates an acrobat in a specific WAS category. Some acrobatic nominees can qualify in more than one WAS category. As a guideline, only two awards are made in each WAS category. The WAS GOL chairman may facilitate a nomination by moving a qualified acrobat to another category in which nominations have been deficient. By moving a qualified nominee to a vacant category, a maximum number of acrobatic nominees may be elected as Legends in a given year.

The GOL committee chairman submits a list of selected nominees to the WAS Board of Directors (BOD) for approval at its spring meeting. The BOD discusses and then votes to approve the final Legend list. The GOL committee chairman sees that each nominee is notified of his or her final status.

The list of 2010 GOL honorees was approved by the BOD at its May meeting. The inductees are: Artur Akopyan (Artistic), Alexis Brothers (Pro Acrobatics), Tatiana Kokaleva (T&T), Nancy Theis Marshall (Artistic), Steve McFarland (Diving), Luci Romberg (Extreme), "Corky" Sebbo (T&T), Kermit Weeks (Extreme), Glenn Wilson (Contributor), 1966 Women's Gymnastics Team (Contributor)

Turning 90 Can Be a Big Surprise

On December 13, 2009 Joe Shabacker, World Acrobatics Society's Board Member and 2002 "Legend," thought he was going out with family to mark a milestone in his life, his 90th birthday. Little did he know when he walked into his daughter's house in Phoenix, Arizona the he was going to get a big "SURPRISE!" I am not sure that it was the best thing for his heart, but when I talked to Dr. Joe he seemed ecstatic about the event! Was it truly a surprise for him? Yes! He had no clue about the event ahead of time. Many WAS members attended the event, and from their reports it was the WAS event of the year!

Joe was one of the founding members of WAS, and continues on the board. He started tumbling and hand balancing at a young age and went on to be a member of the Temple University Gymnastics team that were inter-collegiate champions in 1941. Joe continued to do acrobatic shows and adagio through to 1952.

Joe served in the Marine Corps Reserve as a Colonel and launched his professional career after WWII. He continued his career and studies at UCLA where he went on to receive his Masters and Doctorate.

Joe is also a published author on the topic of Business Administration and has worked at many Universities. He was a gymnastics judge, and the president of the United States Sports Acrobatics Federation for 15 years.

WAS wish you much congratulations on being 90 years young and many more years in the future!





WAS Now On Facebook



The World Acrobatics Society is now on Facebook. Keeping up with the times and technology the organization has their own Facebook page with currently over 130 members who have joined the page. The page is hosted and administrated by WAS members Manu Durand

(GOL08) and Karl Schier.

The way in which Facebook works is that any member of Facebook who has interest in becoming a member of the WAS Facebook page can submit a request to become a member. That request is sent to the administrator and the administrator of the page can decide whether to accept or not.

With the popularity of Facebook the page is very instrumental in spreading the news about WAS and helps in increasing memberships for the organization. The page allows members to: seek out other members, post information, add pictures, start or get involved in discussions, and to make new friends who are also interested in WAS. Also there are events listed or new information posted on the page. Information posted on the WAS page can be set up to appear on your Facebook page when you enter Facebook each time. According to Bruce Davis, WAS 2nd Vice President, "The World Acrobatics Society has continued to recognize and induct outstanding and deserving legends in eight acrobatics categories over the last decade. The Facebook page is an opportunity for our membership to here more about and comment on the 140 WAS legends in the GOL."

So if you are an Internet user check out Facebook and the WAS page:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=41430277717>.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

Remembering Miller Anderson

By Bob Clotworthy



I have sent newspaper clippings and magazine articles about Miller Anderson to Frank Gorman and am sure that he can use some of that material to tell the story of this great man. My contribution to Miller's story is simply about my personal experiences regarding our relationship and information I have gathered from diving friends. My first memory of Miller was in 1948 when I was a junior at Westfield High School in New Jersey and Bruce Harlan, Miller and Sammy Lee swept the medals in the springboard event at the London Olympics. Both Miller and Bruce were Ohio State divers and, at that time, Ohio State was the premier diving school in the United States. For me, choosing Ohio State to continue my diving career and was an easy decision.

So - I went to Ohio State and loved the school from day one! I was literally in diver's heaven. Whereas in high school I only practiced three hours a week in a small YMCA pool, at Ohio State I could practice three hours a day. But there was a problem - I was a walk-on and the number 10 diver on the team. Bruce Harlan, Hobie Billingsley, Joe Marino, Jack Calhoun and other varsity divers were ahead of me, as were freshman classmates Al Coffey and Fletch Gilders. Miller had graduated but was still practicing and aiming for the Helsinki Olympics in 1952.

Miller and I were eight years apart in age, but light years away in life experience. He had won a national

diving championship when I was eleven years old and in my second year of YMCA diving. He was a world class diver and a highly decorated combat veteran of World War II when I was just starting high school. But Miller was one my diving heroes and I finally got to meet him when I entered OSU in the fall of 1949. We became friends. We practiced together and I occasionally had dinner at his home in Columbus.

Although I had known him since 1949, the most time I





ever spent with Miller was in July and August of 1952 when we were both members of the American Olympic diving team and roommates at Helsinki. I had always held Miller in awe and to room with him at the Olympics was one of the highlights of my diving career. Did this arrangement affect my performance in the Games? I don't think so although we did reverse our positions from the Olympic Trials.

Miller was a fierce competitor and one of the mentally toughest people I have ever met, but a sportsman who accepted the results of a contest. He was a really nice guy. He was good looking, he had a charming smile and he did like the ladies. As for his diving, I remember his grace, his extraordinarily fast twisting, and his clean entries.

Jimmy Patterson, Ohio State's first national diving champion in 1937 told me that Miller was the first diver he had ever seen that perfected the diving entry without any arch at all. "He could spear the water without any splash. When he did a swan dive, he would be straight, but it didn't look like we used to do them. We used to arch and have a swan dive look."

Miller created a dramatic change in the style of the required layout dives. Since before and after the turn of the 20th century layout dives were done in a deep arch, a style that lasted into the 1930s and 1940s. Miller's layouts were closer to flat and they changed the style that had existed for decades.

After his service in World War II, Miller returned to Ohio State on crutches and told Coach Mike Peppe that he wanted to dive again. Mike thought that with his war injuries Miller's diving career was over. But Miller prevailed. Mike told me when Miller could walk without crutches he would get up on the board, walk to the end, push up and down on his toes and just rock- trying to develop the rhythm he had before the war. Eventually, he could spring and finally dive, but Mike said that Miller – a national champion before he joined the Army Air Force - would compete in dual meets and get low scores, 4s, 5s, and 6s, unlike the scores he received before the war. But Miller persisted and ended up winning multiple Big Ten, NCAA and National AAU titles in addition to his two silver medals in Olympic competition.

Before the war Miller pushed into his hurdle off of his left foot using his left as his power leg, but because of his war wounds it became weaker than the right leg, so Peppe had him change his hurdle. Thus, he learned to push into the hurdle with his right leg lifting the left leg, the opposite of his previous style. This is an extremely difficult change but in time, Miller, with his unmatched determination, was able to make the adjustment and go on to win many championships. He was a wonderful diver and I have often wondered how much more he might have accomplished if his career had not been interrupted by four years of war that included his wounds from combat.

And, of course, I remember that ugly scar on his left leg. I saw it every day at practice and in our room in Helsinki. And as much time as I spent with him, we never once talked

about his scar or his experiences as a fighter pilot in World War II.

Although Miller and I never talked about his war experiences, Hobie Billingsley told me the story of Miller's being shot down and bailing out of his P-47 in WW II. He said, "I was so surprised that they never did a book or movie on him because he was a real war hero. He was such a nice guy. He talked about it once over a beer about when he got shot down. He said he bailed out of the plane and 'the tail of the plane hit me in the leg, tore half my leg off and knocked me out, but I had already pulled the rip-cord.' He woke up and a German officer had just cocked a gun at this face. 'No, don't, don't.' "In those days they were not taking prisoners. This was in Italy. He was a good looking guy, he looked like (movie star) Alan Ladd. The German kept looking at him as Miller kept pleading with him. The German finally put his gun down. Miller only told me this after a few beers because he never wanted to talk about any of that war stuff. He was very modest about what he had done."

Miller was in the second class of athletes inducted into the Ohio State University Sports Hall of Fame and was the first Ohio State diver inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame. These honors are a tribute to his extraordinary talent and accomplishments as a diver. But Miller Anderson was far more than a diver. He was a true war hero, a dedicated citizen of our country, a husband, a father and one of the finest men I have ever known. I was honored to be his friend.

If anyone wishes to send an article of anyone who is a past acrobatic "Blast from the Past," please send to Jim Bertz at jbertz@mac.com



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

Produced by: Jim Bertz

Edited by: Dagmar Munn, Bruce Davis,
Duncan Erley

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



World Acrobatics Society - Board of Directors elected 9/24/09

Officers: (2012)

John Deininger	President
Dr. William Marcus	1st VP
Bruce Davis	2nd VP
George Hery	Treasurer

Board member (2012):

Don Leas

Board members (2010):

Scott Barclay
Paula Boelséms
Duncan Erley
Frank Gorman
Loren Janes
Joseph Schabacker

Board members (2011):

Dick Albershardt	
A. Bruce Frederick	Archivist
Dick Gutting	GOL Chair
Jim Bertz	
Bruno Klaus	
Pamela Pond	

International Representatives:

Tito Gaona
Eldon Godfrey

Website: worldacro.com

Webmaster: Emmanuel Durand

Newsletter Editor: Jim Bertz

Membership info: Duncan Erley

Get a head start on your
membership renewal!

Checks are now being accepted!

Membership dues:

\$35/Annual

\$150/Life

\$15/sustaining Life

An additional (tax deductible) contribution is always welcome! \$

**Mail a check payable to the World Acrobatics Society to:
Duncan S. Erley (dserley@yahoo.com)
5949 S. Birchwood Dr., Ludington, MI 49431-9760**