



WORLD ACROBATICS SOCIETY WINTER 2008 NEWSLETTER

The World Acrobatics Society (WAS) is an organization whose goal is to preserve the history of various acrobatic sports, and to honor the people who contributed to that history. Its activities include inducting a class of World Acrobatic Legends and honoring them annually at the WAS Congress in Las Vegas beginning in the year 2000. Over 120 women and men have been inducted in the WAS categories of acrobatic gymnastics, diving, artistic gymnastics, extreme sports, professional performers, stunt-people, trampoline, and tumbling.

REBUILDING THE (WAS) WEBSITE

At the 2007 WAS Congress, the WAS board made plans to rebuild its website www.worldacro.com. Manu Durand, former world trampoline champion and current troupe coach for the Cirque du Soleil top rated "O" show at the beautiful and spectacular Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas, has taken on the monumental task of redesigning the website. Plans have been made to post biographies and, in some cases, post accompanying articles about World Acrobatics Legends.

The *Gallery of Honor* book compiled by Bob Bollinger, the former founder and deceased President of WAS, contains biographical information and articles for the WAS induction classes of 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003. Only a very limited number of copies of the *Gallery of Honor* book were produced. Some of the biographies or articles written about various World Acrobatics Legends are quite complete and creditable. Some need revision. In selected cases the work may need to be recreated. Another problem is that various authors and writers of various biographies and articles are not credited in the text. WAS may not be able to identify the original author or writer of various biographies or articles included in the *Gallery of Honor* book.

All the material posted on the original WAS website was lost due to a number of unpredictable circumstances. Fortunately, John Deininger, WAS President was able to locate the pdf files of the *Gallery of Honor* book. Manu will use the files to post biographies and articles on the website.

Any changes or corrections provided by WAS members to materials already posted on the www.worldacro.com will be appreciated. Some WAS members have already helped in this regard. The best and easiest way to communicate corrections is to website errors will be to forward the correct information by e-mail to Bruce Davis, brucedavis56@verizon.net with a copy to Manu Durand, emmanuel.durand@cirquedusoleil.com. Please communicate new information and news in the same manner so it may be posted on the website and printed in one of the four annual newsletters to WAS members who are not using the internet. In accordance with Section 7.07 of the WAS constitution, Mason Kauffman, the 2nd Vice President of WAS is responsible for the area of Publications. All work by Davis and Durand must be approved by Kauffman. If you have not done it, please take the opportunity to visit www.worldacro.com and review the volume of information posted on the site.

WAS will continue to mail four annual newsletters to members who do not use the internet. The fall 2007 newsletter covered the work sessions at the 2007 WAS congress and biographical information pertaining to each inducted World Acrobatics legend of the class of 2007.

Who are the people who are responsible for keeping the World Acrobatics Society going? After all it is volunteer work, but it is work that needs to be undertaken to keep WAS going. I spoke with one such volunteer. His story is next.

DUNCAN ERLEY-WORLD ACROBATICS SOCIETY SECRETARY

Originally, Duncan Erley came to his first WAS Congress in 2001 to honor Newt Loken, his former collegiate coach, and Bud Beyer, his already deceased University of Chicago coach. He soon found himself recruited to be the WAS membership chairman by Edsel Buchanan and then elected to two, three year terms as WAS Secretary. His second term ends this year! A three time NCAA All-American in tumbling and trampoline at the Universities of Chicago and Michigan, Erley has become the “glue” that hold WAS together. He takes care of the minutes of the meetings. He makes certain that dues are paid and that many WAS business affairs are in order.

Duncan was introduced to gymnastics at the University of Chicago under Coach E. F. “Bud” Beyer. Upon entering the University of Chicago after his sophomore year in high school in 1946, he finished fourth in tumbling in the 1950 NCAA in West Point, NY. He then transferred to the University of Michigan, thereby losing a year’s eligibility, but in 1952, winning every meet in tumbling except in those in which he finished second to Bob Sullivan of Illinois. After tying with Sullivan for first place in the 1952 NCAA tumbling prelims, he changed his routine for the finals but ended up tied for fifth with Dick Gutting as a final result. When it became apparent that Erley would go to the 1952 NCAA meet to tumble, Newt Loken asked Duncan to throw together a trampoline routine in attempt to gain more team points. Erley had been curtailed in performing on trampoline due to a previous back injury. The final result was a third place finish on trampoline behind champion Dick Gutting and the second place finisher Frank Ladue. Not bad for just throwing a routine together! Erley also earned his second bachelor’s degree, this time in engineering. Duncan stayed another year to earn a master’s degree in physics.

Duncan's first career was as an analytical infrared spectroscopic at Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Michigan. (Does anyone know what that is?) During his twenty years at Dow in Midland, Michigan; Duncan and his wife Kathryn raised six children: Steve, Thomas, Gwen, Christopher, Gordon, and Kathryn. Duncan also supervised a trampoline program at the Midland Community Center. As part of his work at Dow, Duncan wrote one of the first computer programs to identify organic compounds by their infrared spectroscopic "fingerprints." The computer work lead to a second twenty year career as a systems analyst for an opinion research firm in Detroit.

Duncan is an avid bicycle enthusiast. He participates in a cyclist club and stays in shape riding a stationary bicycle while it snows outside. He is also a strong University of Michigan Wolverine alumna, and a charter member of the Michigan Alumni Cheerleading Association. You can usually find him at all the football games and other Michigan activities supporting the athletes.

WAS will be hard pressed to find another secretary to perform the duties of office with the same diligence that Duncan has when his term of office is over. Please take the opportunity to thank Duncan for his complete service to the World Acrobatics Society.

THREE LEGENDS ARE LOST IN LATE 2007

VERA TZIPOWITZ

Twin sisters Vera and Nancy Tzipowitz were inducted in the *Gallery of Honor* in 2003. Nancy died a few years ago and Vera passed away in June of 2007. Vera is a four time NAAU tumbling champion (1939-42) and a product of Herrmann's Physical Training Institute of Philadelphia. Known as "the tumbling tippys", Vera and Nancy dominated tumbling competitions. During World War II, the Tzipowitz sisters performed professionally as "The Three Modernettes." Vera performed and coached hand balancing. She also was a fourth degree black belt in judo. Dick Gutting had received a hand written note from Vera just prior to her death. She commented on what a great group of people are in the World Acrobatic Society. Vera had just previously returned from watching the World Gymnastics Championships in Aarhus, Denmark. More biographical details will be posted on www.worldacro.com.

HELEN SCHIFANO SJURSEN

Helen Schifano Sjursen passed away November 9th 2007 at age 83. Helen became a World Acrobatic Legend with the class of 2006. Helen is remembered as a long time resident of New Jersey and a member of the 1948 women's gymnastics Olympic team to London. She was the highest all-around finisher on the US team and a bronze medal winner in team competition. Helen was instrumental in the development of gymnastics in the State of New Jersey for both girls and boys. She founded the New Jersey Gymnastics Association, served as President of the New Jersey Women's Gymnastics Judging

Association and served as Chairperson of the New Jersey AAU Gymnastics Association. For more details concerning Helen, please go to www.worldacro.com and read A.B. Frederick's biographical sketch found in the class of 2006.

GEORGE PAUL

George Paul died in December of 2007. George was inducted into the *Gallery of Honor* in 2002. A professional trampolinist and performer, Paul is believed to be the first to perform a triple twisting back on the trampoline. Paul's father built what is to be believed as the first foldable trampoline in 1934 so George could use it in his nightclub act. Over the years Paul created several different professional trampoline acts. In 1954, Paul was paralyzed in a freak water accident while body surfing in Hawaii. He eventually overcame the paralysis but ended his performances on trampoline shows although he continued to be involved in show business into his eighties. More biographical details will be posted on www.worldacro.com.

NEWS ITEMS

- The 2008 WAS Congress is scheduled for September 16-18 in Las Vegas
- Discussions continue on whether it is the "Gallery of Honor" or the "Gallery of Legends."
- Voting is complete for the WAS class of 2008.

WORLD ACROBATIC SOCIETY CLASS OF 2008

- **Jim Bertz – Tumbling**
- **Helen Crlenkovich – Diving**
- **Vincent D'Autorio – Artistic Gymnastics**
- **Emmanuel Durand – Trampoline**
- **Lisa Hoyle – Professional Acrobatics**
- **Jack LaLanne – Contributor**
- **Kelly McCormick – Diving**
- **Dmitri Poliaroush – Trampoline**
- **Vitaly Scherbo – Artistic Gymnastics**
- **Bernard Wrightson – Diving**



