

THE WORLD ACROBATICS SOCIETY



Winter 2002

Bil Copp



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

So, What?...

So, what's so special about the World Acrobatics Society? What relevance is there in a bunch of retired athletes and performers getting together to talk about how great they used to be? In the first months of our existence it was amusing to see reactions to the acronym W.A.S.. The slogan "The older I get, the better I WAS" seemed to be most appropriate. This may be true to some extent but in the larger sense, few of those attending the WAS reunions have to prove anything to anyone. The AVERAGE diver, gymnast or professional acrobat has achieved things that 99% of the rest of the world can only dream of.

Some cynics ask "What's the big deal about reliving these past glories when there's so much more important things going on in the world today?"

My answer is that it's precisely because of the problems in the world today that WAS is important. True, few of us have had the time or inclination to feed the hungry, stop wars or solve the problems of poverty, pollution, crime or disease epidemics but we DO make a contribution. That contribution is called "Quality of Life". Music had Mozart, painting had Picasso, sculpting had Rodin and dance had Nijinski. Acrobatics has had Gaona, DiBiasi, Wills and Unis. The magnificent contributions of the great performers of the acrobatic disciplines can certainly be legitimately compared with those of other past masters of other artforms in the bringing of wonder and joy to the beholder.

The acrobatic disciplines, whether for sport or show, are artforms every bit as valid as music or painting in their enhancement of the quality of life. The preservation of exceptional performances of great divers, gymnasts and other acrobats is as important as the preservation of other great art.

I recently read an article about the grand reopening of the Great Library of Alexandria in Egypt. In ancient times, the original library burned down and with it thousands of scrolls were lost including many unique copies of the works of ancient writers and thinkers. I thought of the great loss to mankind this was and it brought to mind the loss of our own records of acrobatic achievements. Years later, another fire took all the films of the great acrobatic actor Joe E Brown. Nothing survives today of his remarkable trampoline and tumbling exploits.

In the performing arts it doesn't take a catastrophe to have a loss occur. Sometimes the lack of proper recording may be the cause. Just as we can only guess at the musicianship of a Paganini or Liszt we can only guess what it would be like to be witness Lilian Leitzel or John Worley doing triples in the 1800's. Imagine if the superlative performances of Pat McCormick, Vasili Skakun, The Yong Brothers or Rowland Wolfe were lost to the world.

Fortunately, in this modern age, it's possible to record, in a non-deteriorating format, these great performances. We no longer have to rely on aging photos, film or even video tape to do so. By transferring the former to a hard disk and thence to DVD the history and visual record of this priceless material will be available for many generations to come.

One of the most important functions of the WAS is the gathering of this unique material. In essence, the WAS collection can become the repository of the history and of significant acrobatic performances in the world.

To this end, I propose the establishment of an official WAS Archive, properly cataloged and available to members (for a reasonable fee) in a convenient format such as DVD or VHS. Such an archive would be managed by a select committee under the authority of the Board of Directors. It would include films, video and still photos along with biographies and histories of all the acrobatic disciplines. To start with, we'd use existing material from the WAS Gallery of Honor and add donated material from members and other sources.

It's a long-range project that will take an investment of time and money. Video and film must be edited and converted to digital format along with pictures and text. Sources must be checked for accuracy and a significant amount of chaff must be separated from the wheat to maintain a manageable collection but I believe it's a task worth undertaking.

Let me hear your views. My e-mail is TRIFFIS@aol.com.

I want to congratulate the WAS board on its foresight in establishing our website (www.worldacro.com) this past year. We've had numerous comments and e-mails from around the world concerning our organization and what it stands for. There's still much to do, especially in the completion of bios in our Gallery of Honor. In addition, we need contributions in the form of stories and reports sent by e-mail. If you have a contribution you'd like to see on our website just send it to our editor Glenn Sundby at GMSGYM@aol.com.

As we finish off an eventful year and look forward to another in 2003, I want to wish everyone a most joyous holiday season and prosperous New Year. Our reunion in April promises to be better than ever with more activities and a truly impressive lineup of Gallery of Honor inductees.

Bil Copp, President
World Acrobatics Society



Terry Spencer at the W.A.S. 202 gathering at the Hampton-Inn Tropicana

W.A.S.

Flip-Bits



An Interesting card we received from Ron Jones, of Bakersfield, California.

Temple Gymnastics Reunion

Philadelphia, PA: Schabacker, Gallagheer, Szypula, Marcus & Lotvin



Gallery Selection Committee- Rockford, IL: Copp, Ehrlay, Bollinger, Schabacker, Gutting & Deinenger



Pat McCormick



EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

(dedicated to helping under-served children and teens reach their full potential)



Charlie, & Pam with Jenilyn at the Schabackers in Chandler, AZ

Highlights of Dr. Lawrence Bestmann's International Gymnastics Development

1. Started a gymnastics program at the University of Puerto Rico. Organized, conducted and won the first gymnastics meet in Puerto Rico. 1959
2. The Kingdom of Bahrain, Arabian Gulf. Started and directed the first National Gymnastics Program for boys and girls. As a result, gymnastics continues to be taught in the elementary, secondary schools, and at the University of Bahrain. 1977, '78
3. Jakarta, Indonesia. Taught undergraduate classes for prospective high school teachers of gymnastics. Institute Kenguran dan Ilmu Pendidikan, 1981
4. Sabah, Malaysia. Introduced original, innovative techniques in teaching young children gymnastics.
5. King Faisal School, Saudi Arabia. As director of athletics for this primary school, introduced trampolining and tumbling. As far as I know, this was the first gymnastics program for a school in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
6. Called back to the Kingdom of Bahrain as visiting professor, University of Bahrain, taught two graduate level courses and an undergraduate, gymnastics course.



HOLLYWOOD

On his 88th birthday Jack Lalanne, a "Muscle Beach" Alumni joined the Hollywood "Walk of the Stars"...Jack with Star (Wife Elaine in back ground). Right.. Hollywood Mayor, Jane Russel who is also a MBAA alumni. Among the many friends attending the event were, Mousie Cowen, Paula Boelsems, Dolores Foster & Dottie Morgan...not pictured, Reina McRae, Ann Drinkward, Mickey Harigaty, Pat McCormic, GMS, Armond Tanny, Lou Ferigano (the hulk) and many more old friends.



Scenes from the W.A.S. Annual Meeting at the Hampton Inn Tropicana, in Las Vegas in April, 2002

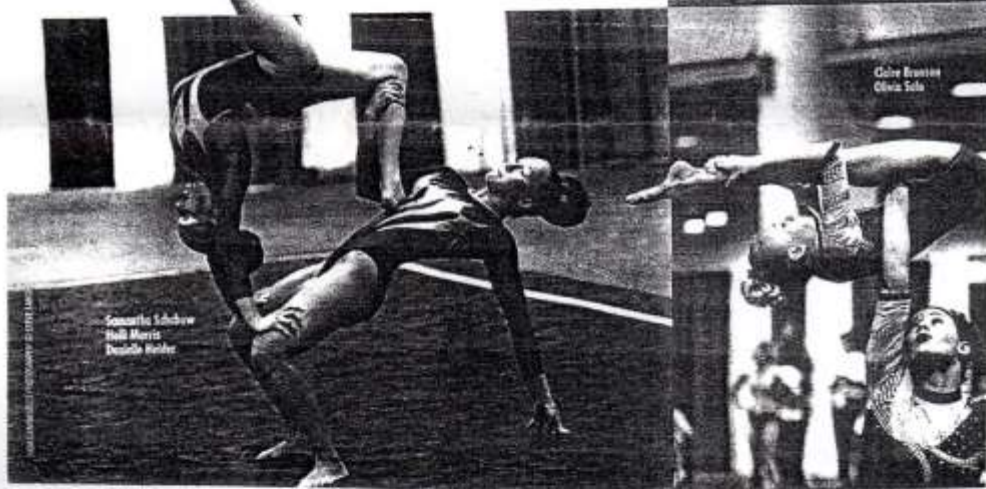
ATTENTION

Plan now to attend the 2003 meeting in April at the Hampton Inn Tropicana

PERFECT BALANCE

U.S. PAIR WINS GOLD at World Championships

Arthur Davis
Shenea Booth



Claire Brunson
Olivia Solo

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

For the first time ever, USA won a gold medal at the Sports Acrobatics World Championships, held in Germany. U.S. athletes Arthur Davis and Shenea Booth tied with the Russian mixed pair for the gold medal. Davis and Booth are from Empire AcroGymnastics Sports in Riverside, CA.

The USA Women's Pair of Jessica Gardner and Nicolette Bohnert (Empire) finished in 5th place overall.

The USA Women's Trio of Heather Downs, Tami Anonson, and Sabina Knight-Yuponce (CATS) finished 12th place overall.

WORLD AGE GROUP GAMES

The Sports Acro World Age Group Games were held in conjunction with the World Championships. Twenty-three athletes from the USA competed in women's pair, women's trio and mixed pair in two age groups against 25 other countries. In the 12-18 Women's Pair, Claire Brunson & Olivia Solo (Empire) won a silver medal. The USA Women's Trio of Danielle Heider, Holli Morris & Samantha Schabow (Empire) also won a silver medal.

Note: Copy and photos are excerpts from the Nov/Dec edition of "USA GYMNASTICS"



Nicolette Bohnert
Jessica Gardner



Gene Perkins

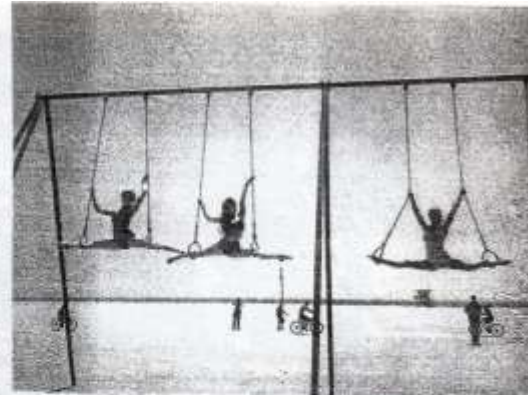
Gene Perkins may not be walking around on his hands or lifting 300-pound weights anymore, but at 74 the former weightlifting champion still carries a full load, teaching at the University of Mobile and making wooden toys.

A physical training instructor in the Navy, Perkins continued weight lifting and at 129 pounds could lift 302 lbs over his head. He was twice named the Southern AAU weightlifting champion. This led into gymnastics... Inspired by the Great UNIS of the Ringling Circus he developed a one-finger stand on a wood block he made. As a teacher he was known to walk up or down stairs to his classes.

His friend Hopper said he is just as energetic as he was 32 years ago when they began teaching together.

(Condensed from the Mobile Register)





SANTA MONICA "MUSCLE BEACH" TV HISTORY

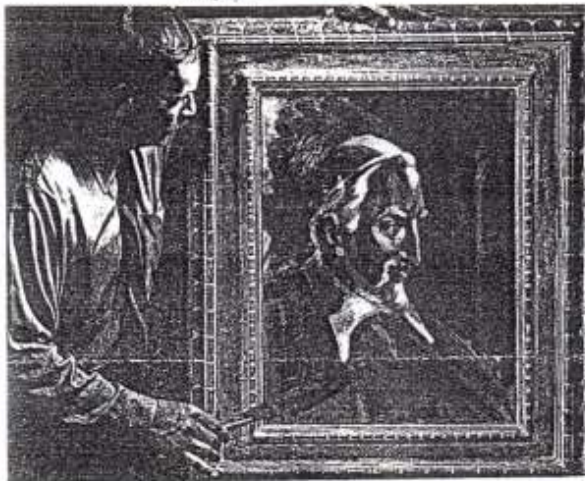
During the past summer months the **History and Travel** TV Stations spent a lot of time filming and interviewing old and new generation acrobats from the World famous "Muscle Beach"... Pictured here are just a few of the photos taken during these sessions. Les & Pudge Stockton, Reina McCray, Paula Boelsems, Doddie, Armond Tanny, Pat Baker, Trish and Harold Zinkin to name a few. One of the sessions was shot at the Venice "Muscle Beach" during their Labor Day "Muscle" show where Lou Ferrigano (The Hulk) and Joe Weider received an Honor Award.



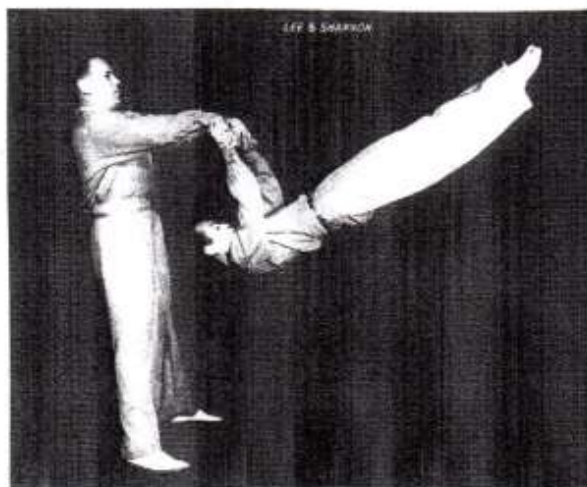
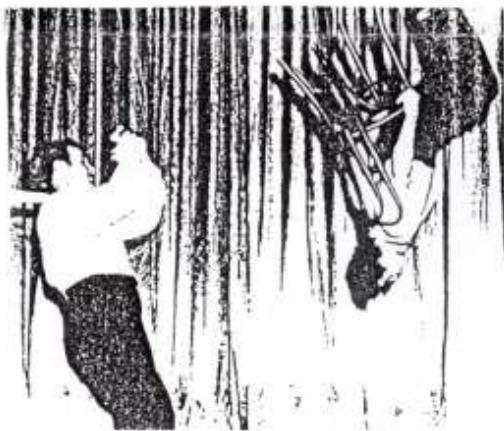


A LIFE REMEMBERED

Richard C. Lobs —Artist and Acrobat
February 20, 1915 – July 10, 2002



Richard Lobs with Portrait of St. Vincent de Paul



Richard C. Lobs, a native of Philadelphia passed away on July 10th of Sewell, New Jersey after a long illness. He was a man of many diverse talents. He was a Marine, an artist, an acrobat, a juggler, a gravedigger, a masseur and a vaudeville comedian. He painted every day of his life from 1945 until 2002 when Parkinson's disease interfered.

He was born in Philadelphia, son of Catharine and Charles Lobs, one of seven children. He is survived by his sisters, Frances Reilly and Catharine Morton of Philadelphia along with nine nephews and nieces.

While attending Jr. High School, he failed to pass an Art Course and made a resolve to correct that problem. He began by drawing for his Marine Corps buddies while serving in the South Pacific and China during World War II.

In 1946, when he returned from active duty, he used his GI Bill to attend several art schools. His mentor was Cameron Burnside at the Samuel Fleisher Art Foundation in Philadelphia. He gave credit to Burnside for allowing him to develop his own very bold and yet tender style. It is estimated that he painted over three thousand sketches, oils and watercolors. He learned mainly from observing Mother Nature, yet his many portraits are treasures for them that own them. One of his outstanding portraits is an oil of Saint Vincent de Paul (1580-1665). At the request of Father John J. Hodnett of the Immaculate Conception Church of Germantown, Lobs painted the portrait from verbal descriptions, since Saint de Paul had never posed for an artist in his lifetime.

His artistic ability has been rewarded in many ways, including the Gimbel and Judge Gold awards. His painting of general Robert E. Lee hangs at the boyhood home of Lee in Alexandria, Virginia. He was honored by the Da Vinci Art Alliance of Philadelphia for his Artistic Achievement in Watercolors. Cardinal Village in Sewell, New Jersey displays several of his paintings. One of the Holy Family used his gymnastics and acrobatics friends as models. Mr. Lobs has exhibited his works in many studios and art museums including the Gloucester County Art League in New Jersey.

In 1962 he traveled for four months in Europe. He paid in part for his room and board in twelve countries by giving his paintings to owners of the establishments where he stayed. He described his painting style as bold and yet colorful; impressionistic yet real—life.

Mr. Lobs retired in 1975 from which time on he devoted his life to painting on a daily basis, often working on a subject of eighteen hours a day. During the 1930's he held jobs as a cemetery maintenance man and grave digger; sold restaurant equipment; operated cranes and other heavy equipment at Medvale Steel Company. After the war he worked for the Philadelphia based Railway Express Agency. He later moved to Paulsboro, New Jersey where the home he bought became his art studio. When Parkinson's Disease overtook this robust athlete in 1992, he became a resident of Cardinal Village in Sewell, New Jersey.

Lobs' background activity as a gymnast and acrobat contains many interesting happenings. He had the physique of a "Mr. America" from his teen years in Germantown. For years he was the performer for the Germantown YMCA as well as the Philadelphia Turners. At one time in the mid-thirties he held the AAU rope climbing championship. He was later featured in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not" for being able to hold himself in a front lever on the rings using only his two middle fingers.

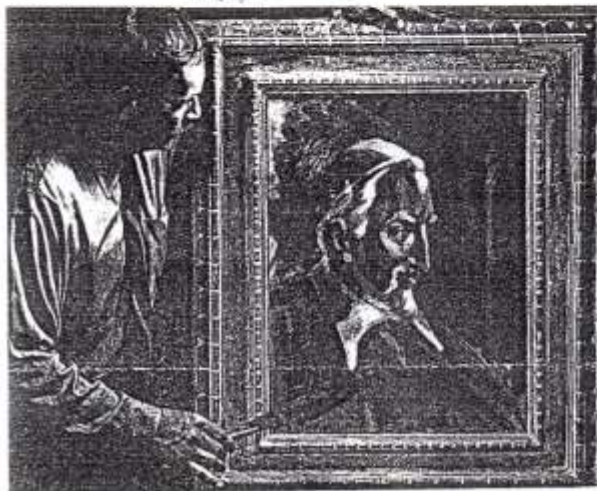
He was a comedy diver, a handbalancer, a trapeze artist as well as a circus acrobat during his performing days...He performed in Vaudeville and club dates on the east coast with several partners. His handbalancing partner in the 40's was Joe Schabacker in an act known as Lee and Shannon. For five years in the 50's, he teamed up with a Latvian acrobat in a comedy act known as O'Toole and Charlie. In the late 50's Lobs worked as a catcher with the famous Yacopi troupe on the west coast. This lifelong bachelor also worked with female gymnastics stars including Pearl Perking Nightingale and others.

Richard C. Lobs leaves a legacy not only of beautiful paintings, but also of acrobatics to all who knew him. Truly a special life remembered...J. S.

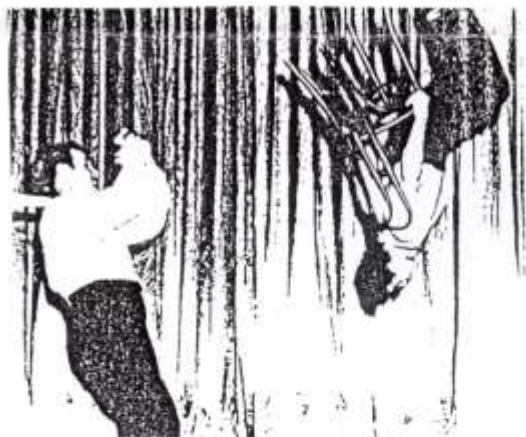


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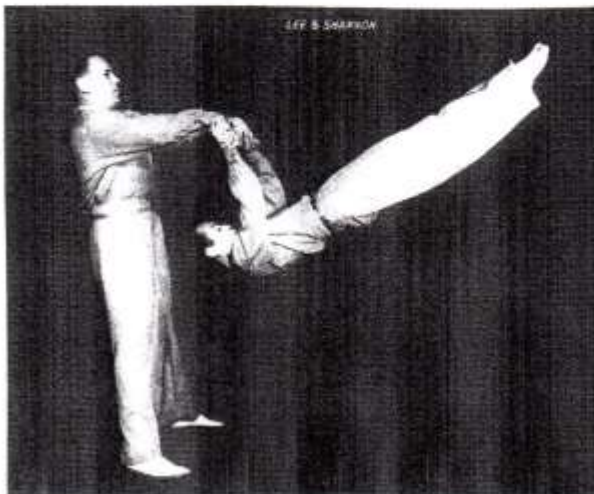
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LEE & SHANNON



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Helen Sjursen

1940 '44 WAS HONORARY OLYMPIANS
Because of World War II...no Olympic Games were held in 1940 & 1944...The Honorary list below by the WAS Committee... are of the top gymnasts who could well have been the USA Olympians in '40 & 44...

1940

WOMEN

Weissman
Florence Nightingale
Barbustiak
Helen Sjursen
Helen McKee
Meta Elste
Carruccio
Haubold
Caputo

1944

Helen McKee
Clara Schroth
Barone
Meta Elste
Helen Sjursen
Caruccio
Florence Nightingale
Erna Wachtel
Hoog

MEN

George Wheeler
Arthur Pitt
Paul Fina
Frank Haubold
Erwin Beyer
Canton Cobb
Danser
Kora
Lou Fina

Frank Cumiskey
Arthur Pitt
Paul Fina
George Wheeler
Caton Cobb
Lou Bordo
Harold Frey
Newt Loken
Vince D'aurio
(Joe Kotys-Ed Scrobe)



Newt Loken

Frank Haubold



Note: We would like to have photos of the W.A.S. Honorary Olympians to remember and include in Future Newsletters.

We would also appreciate photos and short, but interesting bios of Acrobatic Personalities for our Future Newsletters...GMS

World Acrobatics Society

A PROGRAM DEDICATED TO HONOR LEGENDS IN ACROBATICS

Seventh Annual Reunion
Hampton Inn-Tropicana

Las Vegas, Nevada
April 24th -26th 2003

The Gallery of Honorees' for 2003

The semi-final inductees before the January 4th meeting at Bil Copps are as follows:

Edsel Buchanan
Hal Holmes
Dick Browning
Rob Bollinger
Kurt Bachler
Steve Elliott

Dick Albershardt
Frank Bare Sr,
Frank Bare Junior
Lawrence Bestmann
Nancy (Smith) Blegen
Paula Boelsems

Alfredo Cadona
Paul Fina
Hal Frey
Karl Heger
Bruce Harlan
Loan Janes

Alexandra Moskalenko
Vasili Skakun
Gary Tobian
The Yong Brothers

Don't Forget

**The World Acrobatics Society
2003 Reunion**

April 24-26, 2003

**Hampton Inn-Tropicana
Las Vegas Nevada**

**Come meet living legends
Of Diving, Gymnastics, Circus
And Sport Acrobatics**

* * *

**View the 2003 premier of the
Documentary**

"Two Centuries of the Trampoline"

* * *

**See the induction into the W.A.S.
"Gallery of Honor"**