

## WAS - Trampoline & Tumbling Legend

### Bob Bollinger

*2002 Honoree*



### The World Acrobatics Society's Grandiloquent Founder

Bob Bollinger was born in Kenosha, Wisconsin on December 18, 1929. He first became interested in acrobatics in 1937 in Shanghai, China, during the Sino-Japanese War. During a reception at the British Embassy, he witnessed an acrobatic dance performed by members of the Chinese 29th Army Big Sword Corps whose performers executed aerial side somersaults with two swords in their hands. Although he did not realize it at the time, he remembered Larry Griswold doing a comedy diving act at the 1933 Chicago "Century of Progress" World's Fair.

Bollinger taught himself a standing backward somersault off of a dismantled back seat of a Model A Ford. At about this time he enrolled in the Chicago Jiu-Jitsu Institute and studied Judo and Aikido under Professor Masato Tamura, eventually earning the Nidan rank of Black Belt. He also began springboard diving in the early 1940s and in 1947, he jumped on his first trampoline at the Oak Park Y.M.C.A.

In 1948, Bob took second place in the Illinois State High School Diving Championships, first place in the Chicago City Championships and first place in the Central A.A.U. one meter diving competition. The same year, he attended Ohio State University on a diving scholarship and performed as a cheerleader with WAS legends Hobie Billingsley and Bruce Harlan.

In 1950, Bob Bollinger was the Central A.A.U. Trampoline Champion and in 1951, he won eight intramural sports medals at the University of Illinois at Navy Pier in boxing, wrestling, gymnastics, weightlifting, volleyball, long jump, high jump and bait casting. Additionally in 1951, Bob captured the Chicago intercollegiate one meter springboard title.

From 1950 to 1952, Bob came under the influence of Hal Frey at the University of Illinois at Navy Pier in Chicago as a member of the gymnastics team.

In 1953, Bollinger captured the 1953 southern intercollegiate tumbling championship and was a member of the National A.A.U. Championship team from Florida State University.

In 1955, he was drafted into the United States Army and was assigned to Special Services with an M.O.S. as an athletic and entertainment specialist. With partner Tony Napier and their act, "The Jyro Jets" they placed second in the All-Army Entertainment Contest at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Their act was selected to perform on the Ed Sullivan Show.

During 1956 and 1957, Bob then teamed up with Frank LaDue who was stationed at the Army Language School in Monterey and the "new" Jyro Jets act again won second place in the All-Army entertainment competition but Bob and Frank declined a second invitation to appear on the Ed Sullivan Show. In July of 1957, Bollinger received an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army and joined George Nissen and his wife, Annie, in a professional trampoline act.

Bollinger opened the first outdoor jump center in U.S.A. in Illinois where you could bounce trampoline for a nominal fee. In 1960, Bob coached Nancy K. Smith to a National Championship on Trampoline. He then coached Nancy to two World Synchronized Championships with her tandem partner Judy Wills Cline in 1965 and 1966.

In 1964, Bob attended the first World Trampoline Championships in London, England as the United States Gymnastics Federation women's coach. Additionally in 1964, Bob won the C.H. McCloy Research and the Nissen Research Awards at the National Gymnastics Clinic in Sarasota, Florida. He earned his Masters Degree in Physical Education in 1965 and devised the "Axial-Rotation System" adopted by the FIT for trampoline competitions. The same system is also used to determine difficulty in the sport of diving.

Between 1966 and 1970, Bob's Trampoline Town U.S.A. teams won many AAU and USTA Trampoline Championships. Divers from Trampoline Town U.S.A. won many Junior Olympic and regional diving titles. In 1969, Bollinger coached Judi Ford of Belvidere, Illinois, in trampoline. Ultimately, Judi won the title of Miss America. He performed with Judi live with on the Ed Sullivan Show broadcast from Memphis, Tennessee. In addition to Judi Ford, he also served as talent director for two other Miss Illinois contestants and one other Miss Arkansas contestant.

Bollinger invented the Double Mini-Trampoline in 1970. The Double Mini-Trampoline is used in competition today along side the trampoline and power tumbling and was one of the founders of the United States Trampoline & Tumbling Association. In 1972 he was inducted into the USTA organization's Hall of Fame. As a member of the USTA Bob won the "Coach of the Year" award many times.

In 1973, Bob conceived the idea of holding World Age-Group competition in Trampoline, Tumbling and Double Mini-Tramp. The first ever so conceived event took place in London, England with the help and financial assistance provided by George Nissen and Ted Blake. He coached Alexandra Nicholson to two F.I.T. World titles in Trampoline. One in 1972 in Stuttgart, West Germany, and one in 1974 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

In 1996, Bob conceived the idea of establishing a "World Acrobatics Society." Bollinger served as the first WAS Executive Director and as Chairman of the "Gallery of Honor" Committee after WAS was founded in 2000. He died in 2007. Bob Bollinger was a performer, a coach, a creator, a visionary and inventor of the highest order.