



NEWSLETTER

Summer 2019

Editor: Jim Bertz
www.worldacro.com

A Word From Our President...

Dear Members and Friends of the World Acrobatics Society,

We are only weeks away from this year's amazing WAS 2019 Congress and what will prove to be an exciting and memorable weekend for all!

New this year, is the Friday night **WAS Welcome Reception & All Disciplines Reunion**. I invite everyone to attend this special event to join in celebration of all 6 of our diverse acrobatic disciplines, to honor our history of 258 past Legends, and, most importantly, meet and welcome the Class of 2019 inductees. Family, friends, photo opportunities, drawings for special gifts and more -- you won't want to miss it!

We have an exciting line-up of WAS Congress presentations for Saturday afternoon; starting off with our traditional Meet the Legends - Q & A. During this hour we feature each of our 2019 honorees; giving them the time to share a little more about themselves and what they feel contributed to their great accomplishments. This is followed by -- well, the next presentation is still a surprise! But we know you will enjoy it. Look for future announcements in our WAS email blasts and on our Facebook page!

Saturday evening brings us to the highlight of the weekend: our gala banquet and induction of honorees into the WAS Gallery of Legends - Hall of Fame. The pre-banquet reception hour will provide you with another opportunity to meet up with old friends and welcome new members and into our acrobatic community.

Scott Crouse and Llieve Olivera will share Master of Ceremony duties; introducing each honoree along with presenting the Legend videos -- each video professionally created by Nel Fillinger and her associate Kurt Rasche. I look forward to congratulating each new Legend; it's one of my favorite moments of the evening.

Remember, registration and details for the 2019 WAS Congress & Gallery of Legends - Hall of Fame Banquet, are available via our website at: www.Worldacro.com.

Join me in thanking the entire WAS 2019 Congress planning team for their creative ideas, organization and perseverance in making this year's Congress a reality.

Finally, this WAS 2019 Congress marks the end of my four years as President of the World Acrobatics Society. During those four years, I've had the pleasure of meeting and working with our many talented members. Together, we strengthened the organization, increased membership and increased worldwide recognition and visibility. I extend a heartfelt thank you to each of you for your kind support throughout this year and for all the past years of the World Acrobatics Society.

I look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas!

David



An Interview with Nancy Thurston-Hughins



Nancy Thurston-Hughins is a 2007 WAS legend and a current WAS Board Member.

How did you get started in acrobatic sports?

My best friend Julie Lieken was taking gymnastics and had a gym in her basement. She started to teach me and I fell in love with tumbling, the beam, bars, etc. I loved all sports!

Were you active in one or several acrobatic sports?

I was a swimmer from age 5 and was competing in gymnastics at a young age, maybe 9 or 10. I started to teach myself to dive off the diving boards at my country club. Loved flipping in the air. My swim coach at the country club was the swim coach at my high school. They needed female divers so he asked if I would dive and swim. That led to a diving scholarship at I.S.U. (Illinois State University)

What was your most positive experience you had while participating in your sport?

My coaches: Gymnastics - Frank Freeman and Swimming - Mr. Richard Clopper. I also loved the camaraderie between my team mates. We all supported each other. I also broke records in high school and college and they were standing records for several years, very proud of those moments. When I was just learning how to dive my dad would challenge me. He told me, "If you learn a 2 1/2 pike off the 3-meter, I'll take you and your sisters to Six Flags (St. Louis)." I practiced it until I got it...we went to Six Flags. Next year he challenged me to learn a 1 1/2 with a full twist...got it! Went back to Six Flags again that summer. :) Thanks dad! Saw a high diving show and told my dad, "I could do that!" Years later I ended up working with some of those people I took pictures of in that show.

Was there any person you looked up to when you were involved in your sport?

Greg Louganis for diving and Nadia Comaneci for gymnastics. Loved her music and enjoyed watching her compete. She inspired me to compete. And Greg's talent and finesse was amazing to watch.

An Interview with Nancy Thurston Huggins (continued)

What is your most fond memory during your acrobatic career?

I was one of only two girls throwing a Front 3 1/2 tuck off of the 3-meter board for pre-quals for nationals my senior year in college.

Is there anyone in your life you would like to thank for the success you had in your acrobatic career?

Frank Freeman but I can't seem to find him. He was an amazing coach and a power house. I wish I had a picture of him when I was training. Mr. Clopper who passed away just a few years ago. My mom and dad who always supported and encouraged me in every sport I tried growing up. From basketball, softball, soccer to cheer leading, gymnastics, swimming & diving. They let me do it all and of course found my calling with diving.

After graduating college, I joined the U.S. High Diving Team and performed for many years at Magic Mountain Six Flags in Valencia California. Pursued my dream to be a stuntwoman. I grew up watching Wonder Woman, Bionic Woman and Charlie's Angels - all action-packed actresses. I thought, I would love to double an action actress someday. Well I ended up performing stunts for Holly Mari Combs on "Charmed" for 8 yrs. Then on "Heroes" I doubled for Hayden Panettiere for 4 yrs. On CSI: Miami I doubled for Emily Procter (Calleigh) for 6 yrs. & many more. Follow your dreams, they do come true!

Nancy's exciting Legend video showcasing her range of stuntwork can be viewed here. <https://youtu.be/ZCyCDSivM5s>

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WORLD ACROBATICS SOCIETY 2019 GALLERY OF LEGENDS – HALL OF FAME AND AWARD HONOREES

ACROBATIC GYMNASTICS

Dr. John D. Sweetland and Bob Monahan

ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS

Svetlana Boguinskaia

DIVING

Hongping Li

EXTREME SPORTS

Jeff Chumas

PROFESSIONAL ACROBATICS

Daniel COLA

TRAMPOLINE & TUMBLING

Roger H. Walker

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

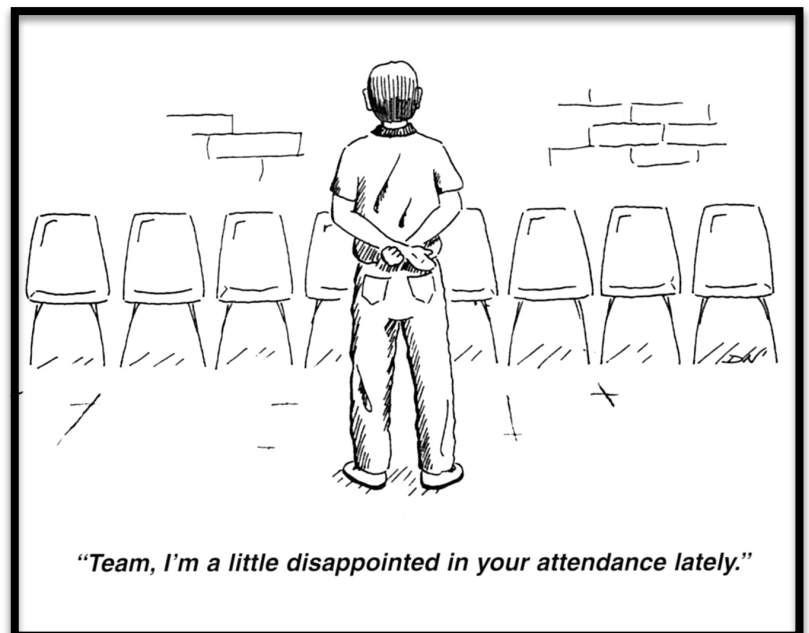
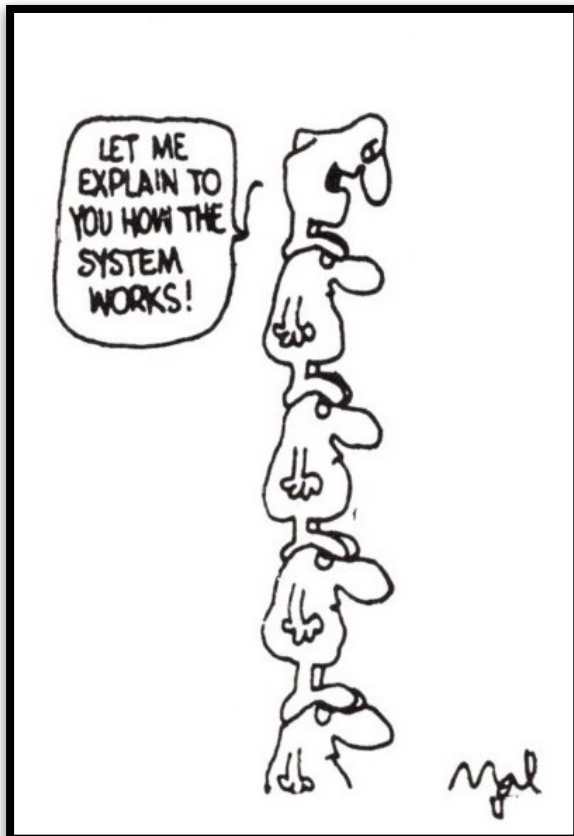
Dave Thor

GOLDEN ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Dr. Jay Whelan

CHARLIE POND SERVICE AWARD

Dagmar Nissen Munn





Bobby Dickson's Comedy Corner

Our humorous story this issue comes from Dave Thor, who will be receiving the WAS 2019 Lifetime Achievement award at the WAS Congress in Las Vegas.

I Know Not What You Did Last Summer!

While coaching gymnastics at Temple University in Pennsylvania, Dave Thor would sometimes travel to Atlantic City, New Jersey, to join Barry Weiner and Dave Costello, who were performing in a summer diving show at the Steel Pier. One of the main acts in the show was the famous "Diving Horse;" where a horse and female bare-back rider dove off a tower into an elevated pool of water. Barry was on the high-diving team and did a barani-out from a ridiculously high perch, into the ocean below - - through a hole that had been cut into the pier!

For a separate act, Barry got George Nissen to construct a special trampoline with a high bar attached in the middle. The trampoline-high bar act had a gymnast (the straight man) transitioning between swinging on the bar and bouncing on the tramp bed, when a "drunk" wandered out of the audience to perform as well. Since Barry and his partner, Dave, were doing multiple shows daily, they asked Thor to fill-in when one of them needed to take a day off.

Thor loved playing the "drunk." He alternated front and back sole circles, with stops to stand upright on the bar while putting his hand up to eyebrows to look off in the distance (a trick he stole from Jack Gunthard!). He then did repetitive knee-baranies with his head touching

the tramp bed (a trick he stole from George Hery!). He also did giant swings around the bar to a 3/4 flyaway to a stomach landing on the tramp bed and a back flip to stand. Of course, as the clown, Thor inevitably ended up in the springs (a trick he stole from his own trampoline performances while a gymnast at Michigan State!).

Though, whenever one of Michigan State's three 'real' trampolinists each happened to miss their routines and the Michigan team really, really, needed someone to score, Thor would attempt to perform a tramp routine without landing in the springs (This is a very similar situation to what Bobby Dickson had to endure at Iowa!). But back to the diving show....

While rooming with Barry, one would think that Thor would be content with the regular dangers of waking up with Barry's escaped Boa Constrictor on his bedpost... but no! It was Dave Costello's unique act involving an airbag, that drew Thor's interest. In this act, Costello, dressed in a gorilla suit, would run onto the pier and climb up the 50-ft diving tower. Barry, dressed in a safari uniform would shoot the gorilla, who did a 3/4 front flip falling into the airbag. He then jumped up taking off the gorilla mask and bowed to the audience.

Thor however, was not content to just play the part of the safari guy on Barry's day off. Thor wanted to be the gorilla and he convinced Costello to let him try it out because, well, an airbag jump sounded like a lot of fun! So, that afternoon right before the show, Thor took a practice jump at a height just below the top of the tower. When he landed on the airbag, Thor felt a "bottoming out" that he was just not comfortable with, so, for that show, Thor opted to play the straight man and wore the safari suit.

On cue, Thor shot the gorilla, who in turn fell into the bag. But this time, Costello did not get up to take his bows. Seems, King Kong turned into "King Konk" - - having sustained a serious head concussion. Needless to say, the next day the gorilla act was scratched; Barry and Thor did the trampoline-high bar act, while Costello was recovering in the hospital.

The moral of this story? A lot of hot air is not always a bad thing!

Tandem Surfing and the Kauai Gymnastics Academy

Jack Leonard, Guest Writer

After buying the only gymnastics school on a small island in the Hawaiian chain, Jack Leonard and his wife Kay, wondered how the uniqueness of gymnastics could help their community. The answer they discovered was - - gymnastics is universal!



Kauai Gymnastics Academy Owners - - Jack and Kay Leonard

Soon enough, Jack and Kay were helping a football player increase his fitness through plyometrics. Then a young female wrestler came in needing to improve her joint strength. They taught kite surfers how to flip and an aerial sky diver how to flip and twist.

Formerly with Hill's Gymnastics Training Center in Gaithersburg, Maryland, Jack and Kay have been involved with the sport for a long time. In fact, in 1971, Jack was the first recipient of the USTA Griswold-Nissen Cup!



George Nissen, Jack Leonard and Larry Griswold - - USTA 1971

Tandem Surfing (continued)

But it was in 2007, when 11-year old Ala Vierra, a gymnast at the Kauai Gymnastics Academy, decided to also take up her dad's sport of surfing, that Jack and Kay's involvement with Tandem Surfing began.

Tandem surfing traces its origins to Duke Kahanamoku, the renowned Hawaiian who won a gold medal in swimming at the 1920 Olympics in Belgium. He is considered the father of surfing and the creator of tandem surfing. In a classic tandem surfing ride, the male performer lifts his partner above his shoulders and as they surf the wave, the pair performs various acrobatic poses. Today, the International Tandem Surfing Association (ITSA) oversees world and continental competitions.



Duke Kahanamoku & Viola Cady surf tandem at Laguna Beach, circa 1925

Ala and her father took private lessons at the Kauai Gymnastics Academy, initially using the spotting belt and finally graduating to unaided lifts with Jack's help. Using his gymnastics knowledge to interpret their sketchy tandem skill drawings, Jack helped the pair perfect each lift. After many hours in the gym and in the ocean, the father-daughter duo was ready for competition.

Ala and Kalani have since competed worldwide, earning many top finishes; resulting in three World Tandem Surfing - - Ala is the youngest ever to hold this title!



Kalani & Ala Vierra 2009

Other surfers who trained at the Kauai Gymnastics Academy, include Tanner McDaniel, past National Champion and currently ranked in the top 10 in the world for body boarding. Tanner's signature move was designed from a trampoline skill: called a Jonah - - he performs it plain and with a full twist! Another surfer is Legend Chandler, yes, Legend is his first name! In 2018, at Huntington Beach, California, Legend won the National title for his age group.

Kalani Vieira and his new partner Krystl Apeles-Erickson, also train at Kauai Gymnastics Academy and have won two World Tandem Surfing Championships (2015, 2017). Their coach Jack Leonard is proud to announce that on June 28th, Kalani and Krystl-Erickson claimed the 2019 Tandem Surfing World Championship, in Waikiki, Hawaii.



Kalani Vierra & Krystl Apeles-Erickson at Makaha Beach, Ohau, Hawaii - - World Champ 2015

To overcome the challenges of dry land training, Jack has created a unique apparatus to imitate the conditions of the surf. For example, this custom board made of South African Sapele wood is combined with a Bosu ball. This particular configuration is for a competition in France. Adjustments can be made to imitate the surfing conditions of various beaches around the world.



Custom training board with Bosu ball,

Tandem Surfing (continued)



The Lazy Needle - - an original lift created at KGA

The latest news for the sport of Tandem Surfing is the possibility of performing/competing in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Surfing has made its way to Tokyo and Jack and his surfing athletes are hoping Tandem Surfing will also be included!

Through the years, it is apparent that Jack and Kay Leonard's Kauai Gymnastics Academy certainly has been of value to their community. In Jack's word, "The knowledge of gymnastics has benefitted us so much more than just teaching kids how to be upside down. We continue to grow within this beautiful sport!"

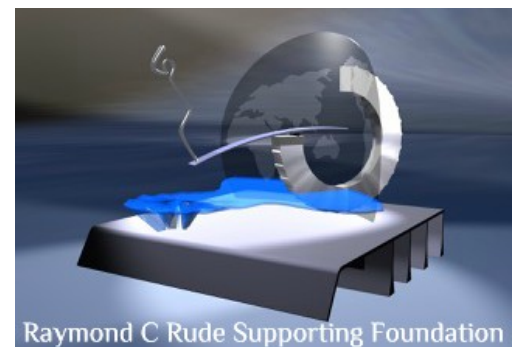
Photos courtesy of Jack Leonard

WAS

Want to Keep Receiving the WAS Newsletter?

Then **JOIN** or **RENEW** your membership in the World Acrobatics Society today! Our membership year runs from January 1st to December 31st, so this reminder is right on time! Important: Current paid members receive the WAS newsletter prior to it being shared with the public. Don't miss out on future event announcements and all the news about your World Acrobatics Society friends. To **JOIN** or **RENEW** your membership online just go to worldacro.com and follow the online instructions.

World Acrobatics Society Sponsors



World Acrobatics Society

2019 WAS Congress

*Tuscany Suites and Casino
255 East Flamingo Road ~ Las Vegas, Nevada 89169*

Master Schedule

Friday, September 6th

7:00 – 10:00 p.m. **WAS Welcome Reception & All Acro Reunion** (Florentine E)

Check-in and pick up your Congress name badge.

Join us - - to celebrate all 6 of our diverse disciplines, to honor our history of 258 past Legends, and, to meet and welcome the Class of 2019 inductees.
We have a dedicated room, tasty hors d'oeuvres, drinks, plus, photo opportunities and drawings for special gifts - - you won't want to miss this fun event!

Hosts: WAS President, David Jacobs and WAS Board Members.
Includes hors d'oeuvres and ticket for one free drink. Cash bar available.



Saturday, September 7th

9:00 -11:00 a.m. **WAS Board of Directors Meeting** (Firenze Room)

9:00 –11:30 a.m. **WAS Congress & Banquet Sign-in** (Foyer outside Firenze Room)

Please check-in and pick up your Congress name badge.

*****Name badge is required for admittance to
Congress Presentations & Banquet *****

1:00-3:30 p.m. **WAS Congress Presentations** (Florentine B)

1:00pm - Meet the Legends - Q & A

This features each of our 2019 honorees; giving them the time to share a little more about themselves and what they feel contributed to their great accomplishments.

2:30pm – Surprise Presenter!

This presentation is still a surprise! But we know you will enjoy it. Look for future announcements in emails and on our Facebook page!

Congress & banquet sign-in will be available.

6:00 – 7:00 p.m. **WAS Banquet Reception Hour** (Florentine E)

Take this opportunity to meet up with old friends and welcome new WAS members, family and guests.

Cash bar will be available.

7:00 p.m. **WAS Gallery of Legends Hall of Fame Banquet*** (Florentine E)

**Men: Coat & tie (black tie optional), Women: appropriate evening attire.*



Congress (continued)

Sunday, September 8th

9-12 noon

WAS Membership Meeting (Sienna Room)

You must be a current/paid member to participate in voting.



1 - Congress Registration & Costs: WAS Congress “Package”

\$125.00/per person

Included in the “Package”:

Friday - Welcome Reception & All Acro Reunion

Saturday - Afternoon presentations

Saturday - Gallery of Legends – Hall of Fame Reception & Banquet

Sunday - Membership Meeting

Please register & prepay online at: <https://worldacro.com/>

Note: Step 1: Complete online banquet information form.

Step 2: Complete online payment.

Register early and save! Due to the hotel requiring a final count for prepaid banquet dinners, online registration and payment will no longer be available after August 31. You will still be able to register and pay for the banquet onsite, at the door, Saturday, September 7 - - the onsite banquet cost at that time will be \$130/person and dinner selections may be limited.

To attend ONLY the Friday night: “WAS Welcome Reception & All Acro Reunion”

\$ 50.00/per person

Prepay online at: <https://worldacro.com/> or, pay at the door.

Note: To attend the full weekend of activities, choose “WAS Congress Package.”

2 - Hotel Information:

Location:

Tuscany Suites and Casino
255 East Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, Nevada 89169
Hotel Telephone: (702) 947-5925

Special Room Rates:

Friday & Saturday \$129.00/night.
Special rate is available only until August 1, 2019

Book by phone:

1-877-887-2261, WAS Group Code: **0919WORL** (for special rate)

Book Online:

<http://www.tuscanylv.com/> Group Code: **0919WORL** (special rate)

WAS Mission

The mission of the World Acrobatics Society is to advance the education, communication and cooperation among all individuals and organizations interested in fostering the growth, development and safety of the various acrobatic disciplines along with preserving their histories.

The World Acrobatics Society is a not for profit private foundation. Corporate and individual donations to WAS, are 501 (c) (3) deductible.