

REUNION EDITION

NEWS FROM ICE CAPADES ALUMNI

June 2025

## NEW memories were made at the Ice Capades Reunion Cruise 2025



[Click here to view more pictures](#) ←

# In the News

## Ontario Sports Hall of Fame



We're thrilled to celebrate Elizabeth Manley's induction into the Ontario Sports Hall of Fame, 2025!

A silver medalist at the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics and one of Canada's most beloved figure skaters, Elizabeth's unforgettable performance on the world stage inspired a nation. Born in Belleville, Ontario, she has continued to give back to the sport through coaching and advocacy.

Congratulations, Elizabeth, on this well-deserved recognition. Your legacy continues to inspire generations of Canadians.



Thank you.

We are proud to share that we SURPASSED our goal of \$40K in 40 Days, raising **\$41,088** for UNCLE ROY!

Thank you to all who gave, shared with their family and friends, or simply sent out good energy to this project. It took a village of 218 backers to make this happen and it's all because of you!





## [The AIDS Monument](#)

Tai Babilonia's recent tribute to John Curry and Robert Wagenhoffer, from The AIDS Monument.



"He is remembered as one of the greatest stylists and artists in figure-skating history." - Tai Babilonia

Listen as former figure skater Tai Babilonia recalls her time in the skating world, paying tribute to two of her dear friends and ice skating legends: Robert Wagenhoffer and John Curry.

[Click Here to view the video](#) ←



## Why Our JoJo Starbuck is Ageless



JoJo Starbuck\_1978\_Cup O Noodles Commercial

<https://youtu.be/7DR8YIJNv7g> ←



Click here to read an article from Rodale/Prevention Magazine

[https://youtu.be/DKZ\\_xs7ipKo](https://youtu.be/DKZ_xs7ipKo) ←

# A little Dorothy Hamill History



Dorothy Hamill wasn't just a skater—she was a revolution on ice. Her rise to Olympic gold in 1976 wasn't just about jumps and spins; it was a journey of resilience, heartbreak, and triumph that captured the hearts of millions.

Imagine a 12-year-old girl stepping onto the national stage for the first time, winning the novice ladies' title at the U.S. Championships in 1969. A child prodigy? Maybe. But the road ahead would test her in ways she never imagined. She placed second at the junior level the following year, and by 1971, she was skating with the seniors. That was when the U.S. Figure Skating Association saw something in her—something rare. They arranged for her to be coached by Carlo Fassi, one of the sport's most renowned mentors. Under his guidance, Hamill honed not just her technique, but the steely mindset of a champion.

The world took notice when she became U.S. champion in 1974, a title she defended for three straight years. But it wasn't all smooth skating. At the 1974 World Championships in Munich, she faced a moment that could have broken her spirit. As she took the ice, the crowd erupted in angry boos—not at her, but at the scores given to the skater before her. The hostility rattled her. She left the ice, tears streaming down her face. But champions aren't measured by how they fall—they're defined by how they rise. Hamill wiped her tears, returned to the ice, and skated her heart out, clinching the silver medal.

Then came another hurdle: an injury before the 1975 U.S. Championships. A pulled hamstring threatened to derail her, but she fought through the pain and took silver at the World Championships, narrowly missing gold. She was hungry—hungry for redemption, for victory, for the one thing that had eluded her so far: the Olympic crown.

But as the 1976 Olympics loomed, chaos struck. After an underwhelming performance at nationals, her coach, Carlo Fassi, left to train another skater in Europe. Hamill, weeks away from the most important competition of her life, was suddenly coachless. Desperate, she turned to Peter Burrows, who helped her regain confidence. She wanted him by her side at the Olympics—but the federation said no. She was forced to reunite with Fassi, training with him in Germany before heading to Innsbruck, Austria.

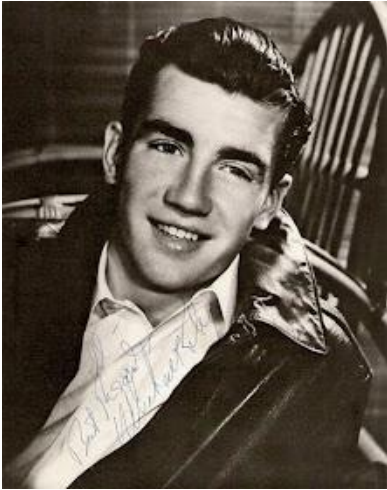
Under the immense weight of expectation, Hamill stepped onto Olympic ice. The pressure was suffocating. She placed second in the compulsory figures, but when it came time for the short and long programs, she was flawless. Every movement, every glide, was a symphony of precision and grace. When the scores came in, history was made. Dorothy Hamill was an Olympic champion. And in a twist of fate, she became the last skater to win Olympic gold without performing a single triple jump.

Her Olympic triumph was just the beginning. She dominated the 1976 World Championships, cementing her status as the best in the world. Then, at the peak of her career, she made a bold decision—she turned professional by joining **Ice Capades**. But Hamill didn't just skate; she changed the sport. She created the "Hamill camel," a revolutionary move that blended athleticism and artistry. And off the ice? She became a cultural phenomenon. Her signature bobbed haircut—crafted by stylist Yusuke Suga—became the must-have look for young women everywhere. She was the face of Clairol's Short & Sassy shampoo, her image plastered on magazine covers and television screens.

More than a skater, more than an icon, Dorothy Hamill was—and remains—America's sweetheart. Her journey was more than just a story of victory; it was a testament to perseverance, to the unbreakable will of a girl who dared to dream. And in the echoes of her blades on the ice, her legacy still lives on.

# A Sensation from Sydney: The Michael Kirby Story

*Photo courtesy Will Grendahl*

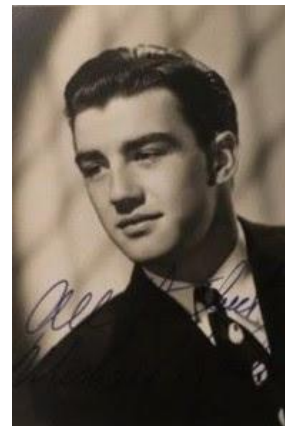


"Figure skating is more than a sport-hobby. It is a way of life!" - Michael Kirby  
Born on February 20, 1925, in the picturesque town of Sydney, Nova Scotia, Michael John Ronald Kirby was the son of Frederick Luke Kirby, a department store manager from Toronto who had served as an airman during The Great War. His mother, Ann (McIsaac) Kirby, hailed from Glace Bay and was the daughter of the general traffic manager for the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation. Both parents were raised in devout Roman Catholic households. When Michael turned four, the family left their home on George Street in Sydney and journeyed west to Winnipeg, where his father took on the role of manager at the local Woolworth's store.



Not long after they arrived in the Prairies, Michael fell extremely ill with a heart deformity caused by rheumatic fever and was bedridden for approximately a year. A visiting heart specialist recommended skating as a healthful activity that might put a little pep in the sickly boy's step. Fred Kirby, an ex-hockey player, held the strong belief that a parent should be a child's primary educator. To fulfill this role, he purchased a pair of figure skates and dedicated himself to mastering them, all to teach his young son, Michael. As Michael's health began to get better, he started picking up skating skills from his dad on a pond in a vacant lot that had been transformed into an ice rink by the local fire

department.

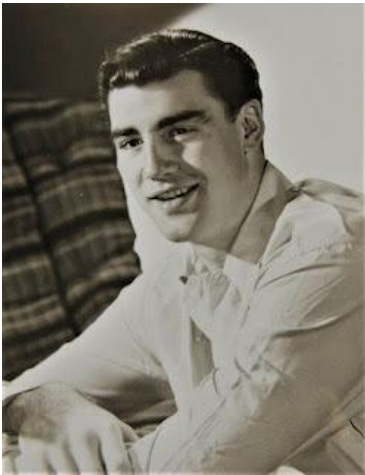


When Michael began taking formal skating lessons and entering competitions, his health improved dramatically. At six foot three and one hundred and seventy-three pounds in his teens, he towered over his competitors. In 1938, he headed to Montreal for his first Canadian

Championships, where he placed last among the five skaters vying for the junior men's title. The following year, the Kirby's packed up again and headed east to Toronto when his father was transferred to the Woolworth's store there. Michael joined the Toronto Skating Club and returned to the Canadian Championships in 1940, where he finished



second in the junior men's event to Denis Ross and won the junior pairs title with Shirley Ann Halsted. The following year, he won the junior men's title and the fours title with Tasie (Theresa) McCarthy, Donald Gilchrist and Virginia Wilson. His success as a fours skater earned him a trip to the 1941 North American Championships in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, where the Toronto Four he was part of won the silver medal.



In 1942, Michael teamed up with Donald Gilchrist, Virginia Wilson and Eleanor O'Meara to win a second Canadian fours title and won the senior men's title on his first and only try. The July 18, 1953 issue of "The Montreal Ensign" recalled that in winning the Canadian men's title, "He was no sickly invalid doing the glide and waltz type of skating but a robust, square-shouldered young man who dazzled his audiences with his violent twists, leaps and spins."

Several factors contributed to Michael's decision not to remain in the amateur ranks. During World War II, pretty much every Canadian men's skater was

involved in the War effort in one way or another. Michael had no one to compete against and the cancellation of international skating events during wartime meant he had little to strive towards. He had also graduated from a five-year high school course at St. Michael's College in January 1942. An offer from Shipstad and Johnson's Ice Follies tour was just too attractive to pass up for a seventeen-year-old.



*Photo courtesy "Skating" magazine*

While on tour, love blossomed between Michael and a familiar face, Canadian women's and pairs champion Norah McCarthy. However, the tall, dark and handsome young Caper was on the verge of being lured away from the tour by what appeared at first to be a more attractive contract offer from MGM. He turned to Norah for advice. In the July 18, 1953 issue of "The Manitoba Ensign", Michael explained, "I have always had a great respect for a woman's intuition so before I signed on the dotted line with MGM, I wanted a woman's viewpoint first. I had known Norah since I was twelve, had been in competitions in Canada with her and we were at that time partners in the Ice Follies. She had good common sense as well as intuition so I took her along to the studio with me. That day I discovered that I needed Norah not only as a pass to get me past MGM but I needed her life partnership as a pass to get me past St. Peter." The young lovebirds

married at the ages of nineteen and twenty-one at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Beverly Hills, California. Their attendants were Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Shipstad.

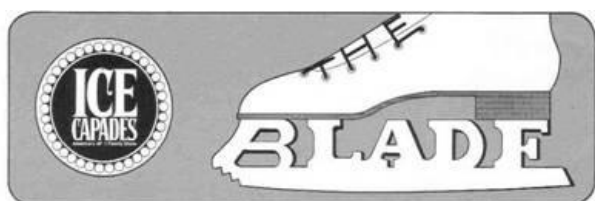




*Sonja Henie and Michael Kirby*

Initially, the decision to sign with MGM seemed to have been an unwise move. Given bit part after bit part, Michael appeared to be on the fast track to nowhere. All of that changed in 1948 when his contract ended and he was cast as the leading man in the Universal film "The Countess Of Monte Cristo" alongside [Sonja Henie](#).

[Click here to read the complete article](#) ←



The website, [www.icecapadestheblade.com](http://www.icecapadestheblade.com) has been revamped and more information has been added. If you have something to add, please send them.

Look here for **2025 Ice Capades Reunion** information, including reunion pictures  
**Cast, Precision & Production Pictures** – Relive some memories.

**Past reunion Pictures** – Check them out for some you may have missed.

**Rosters** – Looking for someone or remembering who you skated with in the show?

**Video links** – have been collecting skating 'You Tube' links from the early years.

**Program Covers** – we had the most beautiful covers

**Past Issues of The Blade** – just in case you missed an issue

**Past Reunion Pictures** – relive the times you attended the reunions

**In Memorium** – remembering those who have left us too soon

Check it out!

## Upcoming Events





CELEBRATING THE JOY  
OF DANCING ON ICE

**Ice Theatre of New York, Inc<sup>®</sup>**  
**presents**

<https://www.icetheatre.org/>

Ticket and information at [icetheatre.org/tickets](https://www.icetheatre.org/tickets)

If you know if someone who would like to receive The Blade, please send me their email address or if you would like to be removed from receiving The Blade, please type 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

Email me directly at [gspoden@rogers.com](mailto:gspoden@rogers.com)