

WAS - Gymnastics Legend

Glenn M. Sundby

2000 Honoree



Some Magazines and Many Dreams

If you have been active in gymnastics for a while, you will know something about Glenn Sundby. There's even a good chance that you have met him at a national Congress or competition promoting his latest project. There have been many. Glenn has thousands of friends in the related fields of acrobatics, artistic gymnastics, body building, weight lifting, fitness, trampolining and tumbling.

Sundby was born in 1921 in Minneapolis and spent his childhood years in South Dakota's Black Hills. The family then moved to Los Angeles and, except for a brief period in New York City at the end of his acrobatic career, he has been a resident of Southern California ever since Jr. High School. He credits his start in gymnastics to "Muscle Beach", where, on a small patch of ground within sight of the famous Santa Monica Pier, the legends of body building, fitness and hand

balancing gathered to practice their arts. Stunt men and stunt women were also sprinkled into the mix of hard body regulars. Always looking for promising top mounters and training those who followed their directions, they found young Sundby to be promising. He pressed to his first handstand atop Les Stockton, a Muscle Beach regular, while still in High School. As a teenager Sundby also worked with a wide variety of strongmen like Bert Goodrich, the first Mr. America John Grimek, twice "Mr. Universe" Harold Zinkin of "Universal Gym" fame and Joe Gold, founder of "Gold's Gym".

At University High School ("Uni Hi") in Los Angeles, he came under the influence of Van Dixon, his teacher and gymnastics coach. Sundby was a mainstay of the team as a senior specializing on parallel bars. After High School, he teamed up with George Long to form a professional hand balancing act. Later, his sister Dolores joined them and the "Wayne-Marlin Trio", derived from the middle names of Sundby and Long, was born. The act was very successful with billings at many of the larger theaters in the United States and abroad. The trio toured with the famous Spike Jones band and broke up when his sister married in 1955.





Sundby had a passion for keeping in touch with and writing about the acrobatic world. He produced the first issue of *Acrobat* in 1949. Five numbers followed. *Acro-Chat* succeeded his first publishing effort but was short lived. In 1957, he returned to Santa Monica where he single-handedly and with little experience in the field, layed out, published and circulated gratis, a complimentary issue of the *Modern Gymnast*. The magazine was widely circulated throughout the gymnastics community. Presently known as the *International Gymnast* or "IG", the magazine is in its fifth decade of publication suffering many ups and downs in the interim. Recently (1999) Sundby cleaned up the last vestiges of his beloved magazine. Currently produced in Oklahoma, he remains "Publisher Emeritus".

During the years that the present national governing body was struggling for recognition, Glenn Sundby was a one-man communications officer and the organization's first vice president. His magazine became the official publication of the new organization for a time. Without his promotional efforts, the emergence of the fledgling NGB would have been much delayed. The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) maintained control of the sport by forcing gymnasts to be dependent upon it. Sundby described the new organization, the first in the United States devoted exclusively to gymnastics, in terms of "evolution" rather than "revolution", however. Then known as the United States Gymnastics Federation (USGF), his ideas were positive and progressive. For example, the first World Cup held in Long Beach (CA) in 1969 was his formulation and was later adopted by the FIG in 1975. He also started an International Gymnastics Hall of Fame in Oceanside (CA) in 1986 and single-handedly renovated a former health club to become a museum at great personal expense. It was the first such facility for the sport.

Sundby was instrumental in the founding of the United States Sports Acrobatics Federation. The sport, now known as "Acrobatic Gymnastics" was adopted by USA Gymnastics and the latter is the current national governing body. Sundby produced a *Newsletter* for the Muscle Beach Alumni Association; published the only magazine in the field exclusively for girls and women (*Mademoiselle Gymnast* 1966-71); initiated IG's *Technical Supplement*, the forerunner of USA Gymnastics' *Technique* and provided an early voice for Rhythmic Gymnastics. He has always been an active church member and studies the Bible in his daily routine. His devout Christian faith has served him well over the years. He is a role model for the "Givers" of this world. Sundby's honors include citations from every major organization in the sport. His first national recognition followed his 1949 walk down the Washington Monument on his hands reported in Robert Ripley's "Believe It or Not". He was elected to the national Gymnastics Hall of Fame in 1968 and is a "Spirit of the Flame" honoree of USA Gymnastics' Athlete's Council. His lasting contribution to the sport has been his vision and converting dreams to reality.

Glenn passed away on March 17 2009.

Click [here](#) to read IG's tribute.

Click [here](#) to read USAG's tribute.

Click [here](#) to read LA TIMES' tribute.

1921-2009



Reclining on issues of his magazine (*Modern Gymnast / International Gymnast*), while holding a copy of his Complimentary Issue, Glenn retires as publisher (From *IG* cover January, 1993).

Ripley's Believe It or Not!

ANDRONICUS
(1125-1185)
Emperor of Byzance
PUT TO DEATH 22,000 MEN WHOSE NAMES BEGAN WITH THE LETTERS 'IS' TO THWART A PROPHECY THAT SOMEONE SO NAMED WOULD DEPOSE HIM
ONLY ONE ESCAPED — HE WAS ISAAC ANGELUS AND HE DID SUCCEED ANDRONICUS

THE CASTLE OF KEROUEN - Quimper, France
WAS WON IN A SINGLE GAME OF CARDS! (1880)

GLENN SUNDY
of New York City
WALKED DOWN THE ENTIRE 898 STEPS OF THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT — ON HIS HANDS!
Dec. 29, 1949

POTATO
WITH A JIMMY OLIGANTE SCHNOZZOLA
GROWN BY KATHLEEN O'CONNELL
Salt Lake City, Utah

MONUMENT TO A COW
Woodstock, Ont.

THE STEVIA PLANT OF PARAGUAY
(*Euphorbia Rebaudiana*)
IS 300 TIMES AS SWEET AS SUGAR!

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"Have a Happy Handstand"

An acrofanatic named Glenn,
Traded muscular feats for a pen.
Although less than well versed,
For his new role on earth,
He prevailed and was hailed ... so AMEN!

A. B. Frederick

References:

- Willoughby, David, *The Super Athletes*. Cranberry, NJ: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1970.
- Cumiskey, Frank, *A History of Gymnastics: A Personal Review*. Published serially in the IG (July, 1983 – April, 1984). Available bound from the "Roots Project". Click [here](#) to see it on the web.
- *Mademoiselle Gymnast* – The first magazine devoted to girls and women in gymnastics (1966-1971).
- Spencer, Charles, *The Modern Gymnast*. London: Frederick Horne Co., 1866.