

How times have changed...

UNIONVILLE — When the Unionville Skating Club was born 26 years ago anyone interested in skating had to be tough as well as talented.

The pot-bellied stoves in the Crosby Memorial Arena weren't exactly adequate when it came to keeping the dressing rooms warm. Children could carve their initials in the frost on the Arena walls. Music was supplied by a portable record player with a finicky temperament.

There was only one teacher then (Miss Christine Kennedy) and lessons were supplied on a 50 cent pay-as-you-learn basis.

Volunteers

From such humble beginnings, the Club prospered, and put on the first of what was to become an annual ice show in 1952. Then as now, the show's success was made possible by the time and efforts of hundreds of volunteers who turned out to hammer paint and sew.

By 1954 the skaters had progressed to the point where membership in the Canadian Figure Skating Association became imperative.

500 members

Today the Unionville Skating Club is one of the most popular in the area with 500 members straining the facilities of the undersized Crosby rink.

Club President Bill Harnding is justly proud of the teachers, professionals (among them an Olympic Silver Medalist, Canadian and World Champions) who provide the expert instruction so necessary to this entirely fee-supported club.

Eight times eight

He explains that, once 14 preliminary 'badges' have been earned (which may take from four to eight years), skaters progress to 'school figures' - eight in all.

These figures are actually the same figure (the numeral eight) which may be executed in a variety of ways.

Unlike hockey skates, says Club Director Dorothy Sale, "figure skates are 'hollow-ground'; with two edges per blade."

Each figure is carefully examined by judges to determine whether the correct 'edge' has been used, and whether the figure is precise, and perfectly symmetrical.

To finish all eight figures perfect free-style techniques and thus qualify for a 'Gold Skater' classification may take many years, according to Sale.

By this time a skater's equipment has become rather expensive.

A custom-made figure boot, a custom made free-style boot, and custom made blades may cost

upwards of \$500 — and there's still the custom-tailored skating outfits! But these numbers should not frighten off mothers with children just beginning to learn.

According to Sale, a well-made, snugly fitting figure skate from any reputable sporting goods store is enough to begin.

Popular

Figure skating is becoming increasingly more popular with boys; according to this year's registration figures, 19 per cent of the skaters will be male. As well, more and more parents are themselves donning skates and taking to the ice.

Ice show

The highlight of every year in the Unionville Club is the annual Ice Show, billed as one of the most popular in Canada. So sophisticated is this annual event that the Club has actually opened a costume rental department to provide costumes to other less-established organizations. The number is 297-4572.

This year's show takes place April 15, 16 and 17, with tickets at \$2.00-\$3.00 each.

Like any community-run organization, the Skating Club is always in need of volunteers; in this case ice Supervisors and assistants. Anyone interested is asked to call Dorothy Sale at 297-2065.



...at Unionville Figure Skating Club

**Look Ma,
no hands**

Eight-year-old Lynelle Manson of Fort Hill Boulevard in Unionville has everything under control as she skates the light fantastic. Nice style, as you can see.

Photos by Hogg

Story by Tom Gale



First, you do this

Twelve year old Debbie Fish of Sciberas Road in Unionville goes through the motions of inscribing circles on the ice before swinging into her figures.



All my tomorrows

Instructor Hans Ahlgren gives a helping hand to 7 year old Mary Cousens of Southdale Drive, Markham, as she gets

ready for some future date at the Olympics? And why not? At Mary's age everything is possible, nothing impossible.

Especially with that smile. Mary is one of 500 members of the club who bulge the straining facilities of Crosby rink.