

Farewell Gloria



Gloria's farewell in the canteen. Her first full time student, Richard Lynch, is also in the photo.



*Everyone at Gloria's farewell. Gloria's husband, Ray, is on the far left of the photo.
Photos: Christina Grogan*

As many of you know, Gloria Pracey has decided to retire from coaching. It was a sad day when Gloria came in to the rink for her farewell in February this year, as Gloria has been a fixture at Canterbury Olympic Ice Rink (COIR) for many years.

Gloria wishes to express her thanks to everyone involved in her farewell morning tea at the rink (see photos above). In particular Gloria wishes to

thank everyone for the lovely flowers, the special presents, cards and well wishes extended to her and Ray that morning.

Gloria first became involved in figure skating at the age of eleven. She loved the sport so much that she had private lessons straight away, and by the age of 13 was skating in pairs at the national championships. Gloria was skating in singles at the national championships at the age of 15, and passed the gold medal test (Senior) at the age of 16.

Gloria never went overseas as a skater, but later went with a number of her skaters when they competed internationally, especially skaters such as Lauren Winsborrow and Belinda Noonan. She visited countries such as China, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Germany, Italy, Slovenia and Canada.

Gloria began skating at the Glaciarium, which was located near Railway Square in the city. Interestingly, the rink had a band, restaurant, snack bar and enormous locker room. When Gloria was 17 the rink closed down, and she then met her future husband Ray, married, and later had a baby.

Gloria skated in ice shows (usually pantomimes) at Her Majesty's Theatre, the Tivoli, the Capitol Theatre and St George Leagues Club.

In 1960, Gloria began teaching at the ice rink at Homebush, and her first permanent student was the now adult skater (and SFSC life member) Richard Lynch. Curiously, Gloria became involved in coaching when her dance partner went to teach chimpanzees how to skate for an ice show in Europe, and apparently they could do a flying camel (although Gloria says not very well).

Gloria then went to teach at the ice rink in Bondi Junction, but when this closed she went back to Homebush, before teaching at the new rink at Burwood from 1965-69.

Gloria began teaching at the COIR in 1971 until she retired in 2015 (a total of 44 years)! In 1979 she went to Worlds in Vienna with her pupil, Belinda Noonan, and many of Gloria's pupils became involved in judging, coaching and administration in the sport.

Gloria remembers Blake Adams as being special, because he landed an axel at his first attempt! Interestingly, in the early days, Gloria used to be so nervous at skating competitions that she wore high necked collars to hide her red necks caused by her apprehension for her skaters. But, as she said, she got over this with time.

Gloria was secretary of the Australian Professional Skaters Association (APSA) for 43 years and was awarded an Australian Sports Administration Award in 1999, and the prestigious Australian Sports Medal in 2000.

Gloria had been involved in Christmas shows from 1960, and for Christmas shows at Canterbury from 1972 until 2013, a period of 41 years. An amazing period of time and history of involvement.

Gloria became known as the spin queen from the time in 1989 when she had coaches sending their students to her to develop their spins. Gloria has coached many students during this time and said that she has really enjoyed ice skating, and especially the thrill of seeing her students becoming excited when developing new skills. She also enjoyed the interactions with so many parents over the years.

Gloria, and her husband Ray, have been fixtures at COIR for many years. We miss Gloria in her usual position outside the Skate Hire encouraging many students to improve and realize their potential. We also miss her expertise, her laugh and her chats in the canteen, but wish both her and Ray all the best for the future.