

## ***PIONEERS IN JUDGING***

**A series of portraits leading up to the National Symposium:  
*New Frontiers: Steering Our Path Forward***

### **Jan and Patty: Bewitching Wisconsin for Over 45 Years**



Few coaches or judges in Wisconsin can remember a time when both Jan Adkins and Patty Brestrich weren't involved in the gymnastics scene. They joined forces in the mid-70's as judges for the newly formed NAWGJ, but both had been judging meets for years.

Jan Adkins was a YMCA gymnast in Des Plaines, Illinois and a gymnast on the first Northern Illinois University team before moving to Madison, Wisconsin as a newlywed in 1972. She had, though, gotten her judging feet wet back home. "At Northern, the coach told two of us to take pens and paper down to the local junior high school, and the coaches would tell us what to do when we got there," says Jan. "We really didn't know what we were doing!" In Wisconsin, coaching the Sun Prairie High School team was the priority, since she knew the DGWS (Division for Girls and Women's Sports) compulsories. Baby daughter Tricia came along to the practices.

Meanwhile, Patty Brestrich, a former gymnast in Sheboygan and a physical education major at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, was recruited into Dr. Mary McLellan's trial judging group, which was sent on assignments around the state. When Dr. McLellan helped found NAWGJ in 1974, she appointed Patty and LaCrosse college gymnast Linda Brannstrom as Wisconsin co-SJD's. This meant a trip to Boulder, Colorado to attend the first NAWGJ Symposium in 1976.

"The lectures were in a hotel, but we were driven to a school to see live gymnastics," Patty remembers. "And the banquet was held up in the mountains." Yvonne Hodge modeled the NAWGJ uniform there, wearing a white skirt, reversible royal blue/white vest and royal blue jacket. Another LaCrosse gymnast, Kathy Flaherty, had designed the NAWGJ jacket patch. "At first judges wore red, yellow or white shirts with their uniforms," Patty recalls. "That continued until we got a directive from Betty Sroufe that said the shirts had to be white." Pins collected at various meets were also popular—some judges fastened them all over their jacket lapels.

"One time when flying back from a meet," Patty says, "we had to transfer in Minneapolis. We were wearing our royal blue uniforms since we hadn't had time to change. People thought we were stewardesses and started asking us questions about what the weather was like in various parts of the country and other questions about the flights!"

She also remembers when Erna Wachtel came in for a college meet in LaCrosse that Dr. Mac was hosting. Many of the judges who volunteered were testing. "She told us to put our books under our pillow and sleep on them and we would pass. Unfortunately, it didn't always work."

Both Patty and Jan, as NAWGJ members (dues were \$15), continued to judge all kinds of meets—AAU, YMCA, club, high school and various University of Wisconsin colleges, including the Division I program at Madison. Soon, however, Patty and Linda Brannstrom found their shared SJD position overwhelming. Communication was by phone or mail, all contracts and newsletters had to be printed and mailed, and there were no funds to pay the expenses. They turned the position over to Sue Olson, who helped Dr. Mac run the fourth NAWGJ Symposium in LaCrosse in 1982.

Patty and Jan served on the Wisconsin State Governing Board for many years. Jan became SJD in 1985 and did not retire from the position until 2010. Because she and her husband Dave ran a printing/office supply store, she had access to copy machines and other equipment to help create a steady stream of judging aids, including the popular *All U Need* that was eventually sold in the NAWGJ Library. She also began a fall Judges' Invitational meet to raise money to pay her SJD office and travel expenses (the national SJD workshops began in 1989.) The meet has been a staple on the calendar ever since.

“Almost every Wisconsin judge participates one or two days,” Jan says. “We come up with a different theme every year.” (This year, it's *pirates*).

Patty, of course, is one of those faithful attendees, even though she doesn't like to wear costumes. “I like the comfortable themes,” she jokes, “like sports.” Patty continued to judge as much as she could during her career as a special education teacher at Grafton, Wisconsin middle school and high school. What was a temporary gig with North Shore Gymnastics in nearby Cedarburg also led to a steady coaching job. Even though she retired from teaching in 2013 after 39 years, she still loves going to the gym several days a week. Holding a lower level judge's rating the past several years has allowed her to keep a foothold in judging without the pressure of turning down too many assignments. “I'm a sucker for saying yes,” she admits.

Meanwhile, Jan received her elite rating in 1989 and became a Brevet judge in the early 1990's. And not only did Jan contribute her administrative skills to NAWGJ, she founded the Wisconsin High School Judges' Association and became the Rules Interpreter in 1984, a position she still holds. She also served on the National Federation of High Schools National Rules Committee twice, just finishing a six-year term as chairperson. She received the NFHS Outstanding Service Award in 2011. Jan also received a Contributor of the Year award from Wisconsin USAG.

Whether dressed as witches or pirates—or judges—Jan and Patty have given Wisconsin gymnastics quiet leadership and participation since their college days, and the 40 Wisconsin judges driving the roads today have them to thank for paving the way.



Jan Adkins



Patty Brestrich

Next month: *Pam Zak: The Judge in the Boat*