



Janet Packwood: California Girl

Brevet judge and former NAWGJ SJD and RJD Janet Packwood has spent all of her 46 year judging career in Region I—specifically Sacramento, California. Legendary Oklahoma judge Betty Roberts, whose family was running a business in Sacramento in the early 70's, recruited Janet when both Betty's daughter and Janet's daughter, Ashley, were gymnasts at Agile-Lites. "She took me out of the stands at a meet," Janet recalls, "and said 'you're a judge now'. My sports were track and basketball! I had to work hard to learn everything, but it was worth it."

Janet is from Eugene, Oregon, and she met her husband, Ray, at the University of Oregon, which was right in town. They moved to Reno for a few years, to be near his parents, but settled in Sacramento to expand their retail clothing businesses. "*We Fit the Hard to Fit* – that was our motto," she explains. They owned a Red Wing shoe store, Mr. Big and Tall, and Men's Limited (for shorter men). Even today, Janet and Ray still work at the stores part time.

After taking her first judges' test, Janet's gym-mom life became a bit more complicated, as she was working at the stores during the week and judging on weekends. She joined NAWGJ in 1974 and bought the uniform. "K-Mart Blue," she laughs, "You could wad it up and stick it in your bag and it would come out without a wrinkle!" She remembers a lot of uniform variations back then, especially white skirts or pants.

To further judging in the area, small monthly clinics were organized by the likes of Judy Smith and Shirley Anderson, mostly at people's houses. "Shorthand came into vogue, so that helped a lot," Janet says. "Back then meets were not as long. We judged compulsories in the morning, took a lunch break, then judged optionals in the afternoon."

Janet also attended the 1978 NAWGJ Symposium in Santa Barbara, her first of many. Soon after, she began traveling around California to judge age group and college meets. She recalls that many junior colleges had teams back then. Traffic was always a problem, though, especially to the Bay Area from Sacramento. "We would get home after midnight sometimes," she notes.

One of her fondest memories is helping at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. "We wore yellow and pink uniforms with white tennis shoes," she remembers. She served as a scorer in the women's competition venue and also as a runner for rhythmic gymnastics. "Peter Ueberroth (U.S. Olympic Organizing Committee) was very good to us. He was so appreciative. And, we had a big reunion the next year."

Janet was SJD for Nor Cal for a few years before she became Region I co-RJD with Joan Geel in 1995 for two terms. After that, she was the sole Region I RJD for two more terms. "When I first got in there as SJD," Janet laughs, "Dale Brown, who succeeded Joanne Aschenbrenner as NAWGJ's President, initiated me by make me the chairman of the first Judges' Cup in Reno in 1989!" That weekend also marked the first SJD Workshop, held in conjunction with the meet. She recalls a crazy time trying to set up the gym in 103 degree weather, but they managed to make some money.

Janet was a member of the National Governing Board for 16 years, handing the RJD job over to Cindy Lord in 2011. Among her favorite activities was chairing the “NETTIE” (NAWGJ Network) awards committee with fellow thespians Joan Geel and Mary Lee Martin. In 2014, Janet was honored as a NAWGJ Lifetime Member. “It was a great run and I do miss it and all the wonderful people I worked with.”

These days, besides judging and working part time, Janet lends support to breast cancer patients at UC-Davis, having survived breast cancer herself over twenty years ago.

“There were some excellent role models through the years,” Janet reflects, “like Jackie Fie, Connie Maloney, Delene Darst, Joanne Aschenbrenner and Yvonne Hodge. They were great people who made gymnastics important to me.”



Janet & Joan Geel enjoying lunch.



New Lifetime Member Janet with Fran Earles & Patty Shipman 2014 Atlanta NAWGJ Symposium



Janet with her fellow Nor Cal judges.