

PIONEERS IN JUDGING

A series of portraits leading up to the National Symposium:

New Frontiers: Steering Our Path Forward



Lesley Ogg: Learning from the Best

When Lesley Ogg was teaching physical education in junior high school back in Newton, Massachusetts in the late 1960's, she didn't imagine that a curious interest in gymnastics would develop into a lifelong commitment to the sport as a coach, Brevet judge and USAG Officer.

Her map, however, was simple: gather knowledge from the best coaches around, starting with Newton High School's excellent gymnastics coach, Dr. Joe Massimo. "I just listened and learned," Lesley says. Later, she went to clubs and camps to learn as much as possible from prominent national coaches like Bill and Ginny Coco (Mannettes), Bill and Donna Strauss (Parkettes), and Muriel Grossfeld, a former Olympic gymnast who coached the Olympic teams in 1968 and 1972.

In 1970, Lesley relocated to Colorado to get a master's degree in counseling and education from the University of Denver and began teaching high school there. She also worked into a part time coaching position at The Denver School of Gymnastics, run by Rod and Debbie Hill. At that time, Debbie was training hard for the 1972 Olympics. She made the team, Lesley recalls, but was later replaced by Cathy Rigby. Rod Hill went on to become an assistant Olympic coach in 1976.

"I started with beginner and intermediate kids," she recalls. "But their program was amazing, especially the elite program. The Romanian and Czech teams came in for competitions." Several DSG gymnasts were successful at the national level.

Lesley started traveling to invitationals with the club when it was standard practice to bring a judge along. "Nobody wrote anything down, there was no feedback, no paper, no classes," she says. About a year later, however, Lesley and many others, including current Region III RTC Carol Bunge, took a judging class from Sharon Weber and soon passed the Class III and II judging tests.

Another big influence was Longmont, Colorado's Joanne Aschenbrenner, who was the first National Secretary of NAWGJ and its President from 1980-1984. Later, FIG's Jackie Fie asked some of the judges, including Lesley, to audit and eventually attend the elite course, where Lesley received her Brevet rating .

The Hills sold the club in the late 1970's and left to coach the team at Brigham Young University. Lesley's direction in life also changed when teaching days became intolerably long, so she quit to become a travel agent. Soon after, she took some sports medicine classes back at the University of Denver as well as an EMT class, and went to work in the emergency room of a local hospital. Eventually, she became an ER unit coordinator, which

involved a lot of computer work and “transcribing orders from really bad handwriting.” Lesley retired from the position in 2012, but she has continued to do work with the hospital’s trauma committee, culling patient data.

Since 1975, Lesley has not only judged but also contributed to Colorado gymnastics by serving as the State USAG Chair from 1975 to 1982 and as the Region III Technical Chair from 1984 to 1992. She then served for eight years on the Colorado State Board as education coordinator and secretary.

Lesley continues to judge State Meets, Region III Championships, and the large invitationals in Colorado, which attract many of the best gymnasts in the country. The journey from Massachusetts, however, hasn’t been all about gymnastics education. “I’ve met some wonderful people,” Lesley says of her long career. “I’ve judged some very fun meets, especially the ESPN Challenge and the Olympic Festival. And I’ve had the opportunity to travel, visiting all of the cities on my bucket list!”



Summer Friends

Lesley (second from right, bottom row) with some illustrious summertime friends, among them Joanne Aschenbrenner, Judy Bodman and Nichole Otterson, Colorado's SJD.



“Pink Meet”

Lesley joins her fellow judges at a recent "pink meet" in Kansas City