

ICE THEATRE OF NEW YORK



Rehearsal Fund Benefit

May 9, 1994

The Natural

by Edward Z. Epstein

"Powerful, athletic, graceful - he's a natural. What more can I say?" declared movie star Paulette Goddard, on hand when Dick Button skated to victory at the 1948 Winter Olympic Games in St. Moritz. He was the first American ever to win Olympic Figure Skating Gold. Goddard later paid Button the ultimate compliment: "What Charlie was to movies, Dick Button is to figure skating" (Goddard was referring to her mentor and former husband, the legendary Charlie Chaplin).

Paulette was on target--as were enthusiasts who found Dick reminiscent of a world famous innovator in the field of dance: "Button is the Gene Kelly of skating," wrote many critics. The young athlete had forever changed the sport: he'd successfully landed the first double-axel in competition; the first triple-loop. He invented the Flying Camel spin (initially known as the Button Camel).

Having seen Dick practice at Iceland, the rink located in the old Madison Square Garden building in New York City, I vividly recall my reaction. Everyone had talked about his jumps, but that was only part of the excitement; his spins were incredible (to the present day, it's rare to find a male skater who can jump and spin with equal dexterity).

By the time I saw him skate, he'd already turned professional (in the Ice Capades, he stopped the show with a rousing Charleston). He'd enjoyed an unparalleled amateur career: two Olympic Gold Medals, five consecutive World Championships, seven U.S. Championships. He'd even won the European title, thereafter inspiring the Europeans to limit competitors to Europeans!

While pursuing his goals, Button hadn't sacrificed a formal education. He graduated from Harvard, earned a degree from Harvard Law School, became a bestselling author and proceeded to popularize figure skating throughout the world with his incisive commentary on the ABC-TV network (he won an Emmy as outstanding sports personality-analyst). Button continued (and continues) to fulfill the fantasies of figure skaters everywhere by creating new venues for the sport, such as the World Challenge of Champions.

One cannot help but wonder, however: what's Dick Button really like? The great former American champion, Maribel Vinson Owen, saw how impressed I was that day, years ago, watching her friend Dick tear up the ice at Iceland. She smiled at me. "He is a wonderful skater, isn't he?" She paused and added knowingly: "That's only part of what he has to offer. He's also a wonderful person."

Ice Theatre of New York

Presents

an Evening with

Dick Button

*hosted by Debbie Gordon, Chair
and Doug Wilson, Honorary Chair*

Cocktail Reception 6:30 pm

Introductory Remarks 8:00 pm

Moir North, Director of Ice Theatre

Debbie Gordon, Chair

Doug Wilson, Honorary Chair

Film Presentation and Guest Speakers

Aja Zanova Steindler, Michael Booker, Barbara Ann Scott

Carol Lawrence, Dennis Lewin, Paul Wylie, Jirina Ribbens

Dr. Tenley Albright

Coffee and Dessert 9:30 pm

Thank you and have a good evening!

Ice Theatre of New York Rehearsal Fund Members

George Akst	Mr. & Mrs. Myles Goldberg	Sergei Pospelov
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*Sponsoring Members

Special Thanks

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 Dyansen Galleries expresses their appreciation for all of Dick's help with the Toller
 Cranston Exhibit/Opening at Trump Tower