



Kansas City Skate Trip Notes **January 15-23, 2017**

Highlights:

- My fifth skating event, started by my sister Beverly. Boston, Chicago, St Paul, Boston again, and now K.C. Beverly went to Chicago again in October when I couldn't (in Riviera) and will likely go to San Jose in January when I can't (in Italy.)
- Spent time with Dave and Dana, my NJ running then hiking friends, now moved to Colorado Springs but visiting KC family.
- More time with Alayna who lives in Plattsburg about 45 minutes away.
- More time with Marie who has family in KC and schools in KU about 50 minutes away.
- Eating fish tacos five times.



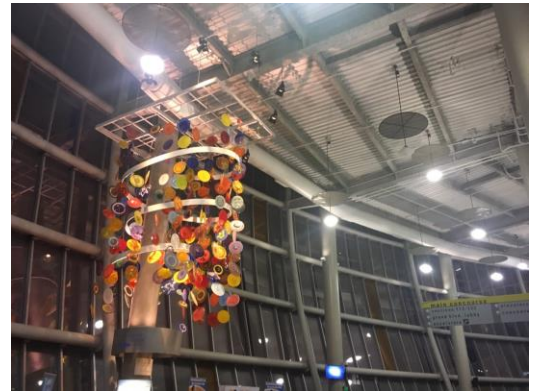
Beverly, Alayna, Marie and Diana

Notes sent home

Adventures in connection with Kansas City Trip - i.e., Me Again!

Multiple reasons for this trip (in no particular order):

- -Ice skating competition at the Sprint Center - the initial impetus to travel to KC. See picture of artsy chandelier.
- -Visiting with sister Beverly who I last saw while in Boston for ice-skating competition in March
- -Renewing acquaintance with daughter Alayna who I can't remember when I last saw



I am a travel junkie. Though travel has some frustrations, most of them are fine with me. I like the challenges, the new experiences, and the sense of freedom - like a cat. Like a bird. To emphasize that, I wasn't even on the plane till I found a few challenges:

- -Why does United Air use not only the very end gate but even the lone one that is downstairs with limited sitting area and almost limited standing-room?
- -My flight was oversold and they were offering a big voucher and a first class seat for a later flight but since it goes through Chicago there was no interest by me. But on the other hand, the end result would suggest that I may as well have done that.
- -A premier global traveler got five family-members upgraded into first class and they were loudmouth kids. FIVE!
- -While packing out I happened to look at the weather in Kansas City for the week and I not only needed my coat for freezing temperatures but I needed a rain jacket for temperatures in the 60s

later week. Quick repack while thinking about needing warmth in the cold-cold skating rink. And this was 15 minutes pre departure all going into a hand-carry piece of luggage.

- -There was some doubt that my plane could even go due to severe ice storms in Kansas City.
- -I should have had a premonition. Earlier in the year I contracted for a KC apartment for this trip but the owner shockingly reneged (he got a better offer) and we were left to search a very full town for a suitable hotel and give up the two bedroom, living room and kitchen, and free parking contract within a walk of the Sprint Center. Should I tell VRBO about his lack of ethics? I softened when he tried to give us a free house but it was too far away.

I arrive and the weather seems pretty OK but on the edge of icy drizzle. However Alayna lives about 45 minutes north and it was considerably colder there, ice covered, and small narrow roads in between her home and the airport that would have been dark by the time she headed home.

What to do? Though I was without a car and there was no restaurant within a walking area of the residence Inn, the kind shuttle driver offered to drive me wherever I wanted to include to a liquor store.

Abuelos Restaurant within Zona Rosa shopping area turned out to be very nice and pretty. Those are fish tacos and a sangria. I told Tom that I had vegetables in my tacos and fruit in my sangria

See? There's usually plenty of good things about travel and most things work out OK. And in fact, tomorrow should be warm.

I am sure that this is not THE END.



Chapter 2 from downtown Kansas City

Staying at the airport hotel turned out to be a good choice because of the icy and wet weather conditions. It was also a wonderful bargain of a hotel, large, recently renovated, lots of food, and good staff. The continuity of a chain like Marriott is always comforting.

Breakfast came in part one and part two. I managed a big meal before Alayna arrived (she lives about 45 minutes north and has a house full of dogs to care for in the morning) and then we went off to IHOP for another breakfast. A well stretched tummy from the Mexican meal the night before helped hold it all.

Moving into a downtown hotel gave quite a different outside view but still the continuity of a Marriott. With about one half the square footage, I begged for a second room but they claimed to be sold out. There is a boat show going on across the street and we watched the three block lineup of boats being delivered from my 20th floor room. You will see the picture of their civic center which might remind you of the Sydney Opera House. During my last trip I had a walking tour inside.

There is a new mode in hotel elevators. If you get into the elevator and there are no buttons to push, get back out where you will find a keypad; you enter your floor number and the computer chooses which elevator you're supposed to take. It is all very disconcerting and just one more lack of control with the computers taking us over. Smile.

With Alayna leaving in time to avoid the dark and wet roads, I waddled off to dinner at the hotel's especially generous concierge's lounge. I'll do it again in the morning for breakfast before Dave and Dana (ex: New Jersey, now Colorado Springs, spending a month in Kansas City with Dana's family), pick me up for a trip to the Kemper Museum of contemporary Art. It is known for having a good restaurant where Beverly will meet us sometime early afternoon but well before our ice-skating show begins at the Sprint Center around 5:00 PM.

Thanks to Beverly's son Chad, I am missing sleep due to the book he hoisted on me. Smile. I had asked our hiking group what books they had remembered over the years and Chad's first choice was called "The Sword of Shannara" which is a long time classic and the first of a series. I thought it wasn't my kind of book but that I should give it a try without realizing it would keep me up a couple nights in a row. Thanks Chad. When I'm done with Shannara, I'll try to go cold turkey, avoid the rest of the series, so as to get some sleep.

The last picture is friend Judy's cake that I thought you might enjoy and it really is THE END.



Airport hotel. Kansas City big sort-of-new auditorium. Downtown hotel. Judy's cake.

Chapter 3 - entails a full day in downtown Kansas City

In the 60s I worked downtown at 10th and Grand Avenue. Needless to say the city is nothing the same. We always claimed that Kansas City had a cocktail lounge on every street corner. Though that may still be true it is interspersed with culture, theaters, museums, and it has become a sophisticated town in some ways.

Early in my first full day in downtown Kansas City, I came face-to-face with a whole different and super smart retiree. (Why wait until you're in your 60s?). Dave really knows how to retire. He does it at age 40 and very quickly gets into the civilized retired life. Here's an example: he didn't want to join me for breakfast if it was as early as 8am! (So I ate enough breakfast in the concierge's lounge for all three of us.)

Dave and Dana picked me up from the hotel at 10 AM and off we go to the Kemper Museum of contemporary Art. I need a docent tour. I need to understand what some of this silliness is. But the docent was leading a group of preschoolers and yet she offered that she didn't need to ID us and that we could join along if we wanted and I did find myself running out into the hallway every once in a while to see what the kids were doing. There were sing-alongs from my Girl Scout days

It seems that the old man Kemper was a banker with a large private collection and he not only donated it but enough money that the building is new and lovely and celebrated the 20th anniversary in 2014 - fortunately just before he passed away.

There were some interesting pieces and to start with a couple of huge glass chandeliers by Dale Chihuly at the doorways. We learned that they own a lot of inventory and only a small amount is shown at a time. We walked over to their administrative building to see some more but never were able to see the Georgia O'Keeffe items.

Maybe just as interesting is that they have a Café Sebastienne that has won a number of awards to include a James Beard award. The price was surprisingly favorable for their awards and the food was well worth it.

Check out the pictures of our food, and in particular the surroundings that entertained us throughout lunch by trying to recognize which artist was represented.

Sister Beverly arrived from Columbia somewhere after 1:30 PM and we perused the art collection again - we saw some of it under a different light with Beverly's artistic eye.

Our only deadline was to get back to the hotel long enough to park, unload luggage and get to the Sprint Center for 5:00 PM ladies skating practice. Practice was less than exciting because some of our favorites were either not doing well (Gracie) or, even worse, were unable to attend at all (Polina) due to injury.

For a very late dinner, bar food in the hotel was pretty OK. Kansas City was offering a restaurant week and there was a unique two course dinner offered for \$15. (We were too late for the concierge lounge.).

Unpacking Beverly's care packages gave me a whole bunch of new books to read and a lesson in "long island tea". Wow, I had no idea it wasn't really tea. It is Tea with a punch.

We start again early tomorrow morning with an early breakfast then men's practice. Do I mostly look forward to the fresh blueberries at breakfast or the super strong skater bods? (The body pic is a Mapplethorpe not a skater).



Photographer Mapplethorpe of who knows who. Dave's tri-plate of goodies.
Dana's Reuben that has won prizes for the Café, and the Crème Brulee.
Artwork in the background that made me think of Jackson Pollock but unfinished.



The Café Sebastienne walls were covered with reproductions, or portions. Huge architecturally significant building, entry and parking all free. Kansas City Restaurant week gave us multi course meals for \$15 all in.

Chapter 4 and 5

Who eats fish tacos every day? Someone who doesn't have many Mexican restaurants around? Someone who gets stuck in a rut? Someone who has trouble making choices and just asks the server if they have fish tacos? Someone who loves fish tacos and the great variety they come in? Me. Me. Me. Me.

Who starts their day at 7 AM just for some ice skating spectacular and ends it at midnight? Who sits on their ass all day with only a break or two for eat and drink? Who is willing to eat stadium crap all day instead of going out for a good meal? Me. Me. Me.

Who joins the "friends of skating" and then wonders why? Who wonders if they're looking for a second life? Who buys into the charity luncheon to support the young skaters? Me. Me. Me.

A stuck record, a song, or a repeat proving what one which might call obsessive?

I do love the programs, music, stories, and people - and look forward to World Competition in Helsinki this March. Except that I'll greatly miss Beverly. She knows the skaters, the rules, and the music. She is sticking to U.S. competitions and we are next in Lake Placid in November.

Update about Thursday programs. There were some very special happenings. Gracie Gold had not been doing well: during practice she seemed to be doing nothing. Rumor had it that she was depressed. Yet when she did her short program she came in fourth and looked quite good though we still worried that she doesn't look quite the same Gracie. Mirai Nagasu isn't always consistent but she was very good if not flawless and came in second. Katie McBeath had fallen during practice, hit her knee, had to be carried off the rink and was immobile for a long time. But she came back to do her short program and did reasonably OK.

Ashley Wagner still impresses me and she is one of my favorites. She is said to be a little bit old for a solo skater but she has a lot of determination and maybe extra ego that makes for good show.

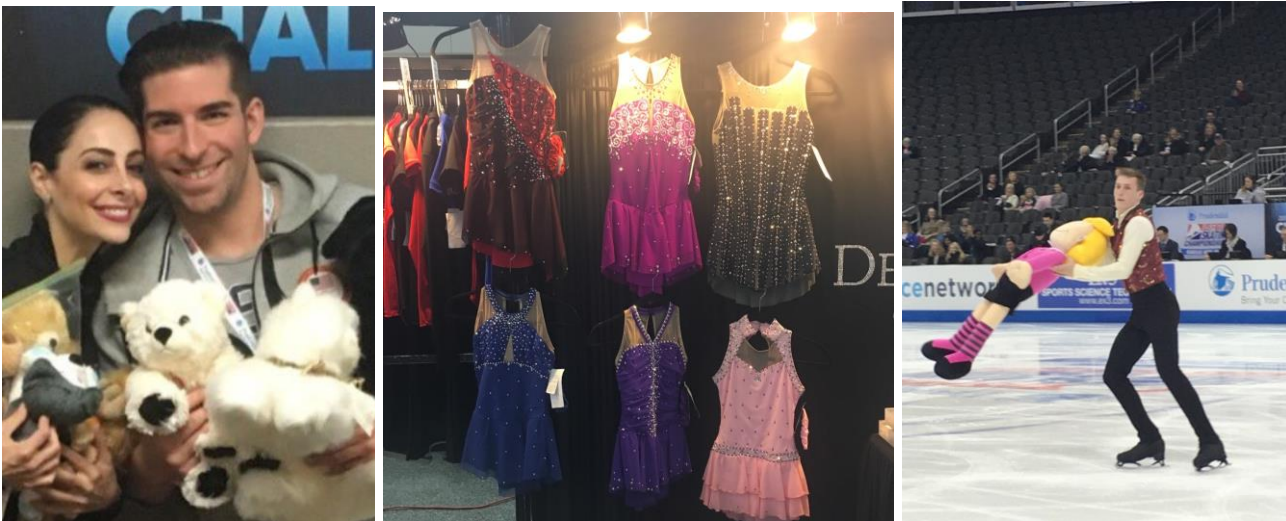
There was a little hot shot gal who danced with a padded butt. Was that to make her behind look better? We think it probably was because she had some bruises and it made her more comfortable and not fearful of falling.

I'm into Friday and there seems to be a similar 7am to midnight schedule but without the hour and a half break we enjoyed on Thursday. Then we were able to scurry back to the hotel for a free dinner in the concierge lounge. (We scurried fast enough for Beverly to hate me on the up-hill climbs).

We saw a unique story. She is age 33, having been out of skating for 12-15 years, reentered competition pairs skating 6 months ago and now in the running. She looks 20 at most. That's her picture with much younger skating partner.

Also a picture of one of the stuffed animals thrown out on the court. Instead of flowers stuffed animals and fabric flowers are thrown to the ice but never before have we seen anything that looked the size of a skating partner.

There is also a picture of some of the costumes for sale. They are wildly expensive.



The surprise couple discussed above. Costumes really cost a lot.
This was the second largest gift tossed out onto the rink by a fan.
Later you'll see a larger one that we'd seen earlier "sitting" in the stands.

Chapter 6 - condensed spectating continues

Our front row seats were a very nice addition and something new to experience. One of my first events in Boston we had row three seats for a while but they weren't even our seats. Smile. When we found our purchased seats they were in the nosebleed section.

Individual Radios are provided by prudential and give choices of different commentaries. They are most helpful to understand the judge's decisions. By the way, judging is very computerized and not left to just judgments but rather much on technical requirements.

Stadium is named the Sprint Center. It is a very nice new modern facility but sadly never felt like it was sufficiently full. Sprint provided a lot of charging stations for our devices; amusingly a number of them were broken. So much for that advertisement.

Watching the juniors skate has advantages and is mostly entertaining no we sometimes think they are in slow motion compared to the champions. Beverly watches and remembers them. It is probably too much for me to watch Junior's in the morning and seniors in the afternoon. I've learned a lesson so that on my next event I will skip most of the juniors so that I'll have some attention span left for the championships.

Skater surprises were numerous. Fun, sad, disappointing, shocking:

World record was made by Nathan Chen and then broken an hour later at a Canadian event. He set a US record. How many quads? Lots! Gave him a mind blowing point lead. Here is a link.

<http://web.icenetwork.com/news/2017/01/21/214042926/>

Full moon? We had to wonder for the number of hotshot skaters who kept falling. In particular Max Aaron would have been expecting a shot at worlds but he fell numerous times. Many of us were sad for him. But maybe not as sad as seeing a favorite Jason Brown fall.

One pair had a fall where she (probably protecting that knee I told you about yesterday) fell into the backdrop, hit her head, and then had to withdraw the next day due to a concussion. Another pair suffered the flu and had to withdraw.

Costumes are always of interest and entertaining. I'll give you a few pictures.

We were tickled to have a number of friends report in having seen us on television. Some told us we needed to smile - just proving how serious we are. To say nothing of having numb butts.

Outside. Oops. There is a life outside of skating. Local historical hotels might be worth a visit. We took a picture of the outside of the old historical hotel Phillips and inside where it looks like an old bank. The Marriott used to be only in the old hotel Muhlbach that they retained and built a new air walkway connected to the building where we reside.

The Marilyn Monroe type picture was off the ice network site. I trust that he caught her.



Chapter 7 - I'm still here

The skating association does a lot of good but clearly they could use some administrative help. (And I'm sorry to realize that it's easier to complain about bad than good). So - here are some things they screwed up on:

- -No sponsor or VIP lounge to buy into.
- -Only expensive crap vendor food and they prohibit us from bringing any of our own food into the stadium. (We sneak it in via our pockets anyway).
- -Hotels heavily blocked and held by the skaters group. Then open up late.
- -Schedule kept changing. Worse is a change the day before. Even "worse" is moving the schedule earlier. Some will be missing the event since their tickets show a later start time.

A big plus is the Memorial Fund. I am a Friends of Skate member and when they offer a VIP Lounge or lunch, I'll pay up for that too. We had a reasonable lunch with entertaining speakers today for \$100.

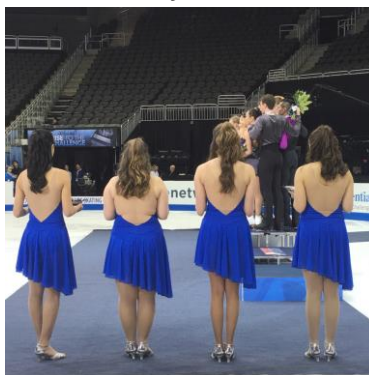
Seat-mates too can be both good and bad:

- -One sitting behind me kept yelling in my ear.
- -Two next to me chattered non-stop. Then they let a kid sit on their lap and I finally had to say "she's cute but she's obstructing 1/3 of the rink".
- -Yet they were well connected, knew everyone, plus skate rules.
- -I learned Schitzing term from them. It was hot. It was cold.

A lot of amazing sexy bods. But not all. I'll picture the extremes. Skaters have enviable fabulous bodies. (See the video and catalogue of muscles). Spectators and award supporters not so much. (See the fried-egg gal flowing over the chair or the young gal with boobs on her back.) Some kooky old folks who are at every event on same spot. (See the flag wearers - sadly they are four whereas they used to be six).

Skaters are as screwed up as much as the rest of us. A few have to travel with their comfort dogs. Sweet things. I hope it works for them but it appears it's not working for Gracie Gold. Inside the Sprint Center at night.

This is not THE END because we still have another full day.



Bodies at these events truly are extremes. Skaters put together a #ShowMeHealthy video to prove how muscular they can be. Some of the award presenters saddened me: young but forming fat already. Then at the VIP memorial lunch, one that had lunched too much.



These are the four in US flag jackets that are at all events. There used to be six of them. I wonder if sitting all day, days on end, gave them an early demise. See Meryl with one pooch, another waiting for their skater mommy, and still another yet at the kiss-and-cry.

Chapter 8 - going home.

How was the weather? We felt anything from 33° up to almost 60°. Fog and more fog and very thick fog was in the cards most mornings. The rink was consistently at about 55° necessitating a coat and gloves no matter the outside temperature. It was the weather going home that was worrisome because the East Coast was under alert for a severe northeaster.

The last skating day gave us our men's skater winners and a very nice surprise that my favorite Jason Brown would be going to "Worlds" in Helsinki. The next to last day gave us all of our winners and word of which pairs, dance, and ladies would be going to worlds. That was nice news for me that Ashley Wagner earned a spot again.

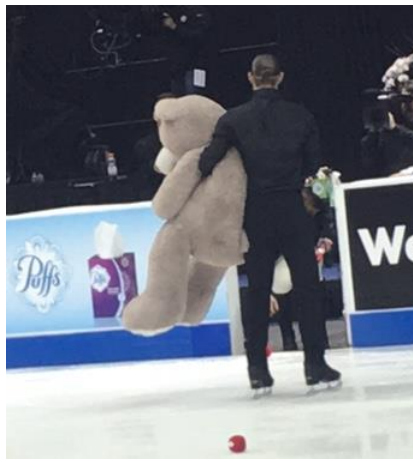
A big bonus of skating week is the final show called the spectacular or exhibition skate. The top four winners in each category perform whatever they want, without judges, and in a fun mood. It certainly earns the term spectacular. Joining Beverly and me were Alayna, Marie, Dana and her mother Brenda who I'd known from New Jersey but now living in Kansas City as a Grandma Par Excellence.

People and Skater Pictures



That is really part of the ice skating – not a still pose.

Do you recognize Tara Lipinski and Johnny Weir, past champions? They are moderators now. Four women winners with two going to World's in Helsinki.



Jason Brown got the largest gift seen. Remember that instead of flowers to the ice that small stuffed animals are thrown out? Sometimes practically covering the ice.

That flowing costume is the gold medalist in her exhibition/spectacular show. No wonder I like the Spectacular better than the judging events.



Marie who took a bit of time from her KU studies. Dana and her mother Brenda. Beverly and Alayna in the stands and obviously happy. Marie, Beverly and Alayna.

More challenges

Getting to the airport was easy via the Super Shuttle as its almost copying Uber with the computer tech. Yet there were United Air challenges: I'm mostly unfazed at travel delays. I expected many and it started with a computer glitch the night before my flight, grounding all domestic flights. It was coupled with a severe weather warning for the east coast due to a northeaster. United offered free change fees. Then the flight was oversold but I couldn't risk taking a voucher and a later flight due to my quick turn-around to Hawaii when I got home. So when we boarded early, the door closed, it reminded me how we worry for most things that never happen. Yet – when we left the gate, nearly onto the runway, we got a sudden 60 minute hold, but it didn't hold for long, and despite all the long odds, I got home on my scheduled time.

And now to THE END but only for this event and family trip. I'm home for 3 days before heading to Maui for hiking for ten days, then home a week before heading the opposite direction to Israel for two weeks plus. Then – to Tallinn and Helsinki for Skating World's!

Itinerary
Kansas City U.S. Figure Skating Championships
January 15-23, 2017

Sun Jan 15

11:30am Depart Newark EWR via UA3490
2:03pm Arrive Kansas City MCI

Hotel Residence Inn Kansas City Airport – 1 night
10300 North Ambassador Drive, Kansas City, MO 64153 Tele: 816 741 2300

Mon Jan 16

Alayna offers to pick up from hotel and take to hotel and to grocery store

Hotel Marriott Downtown – 7 nights
200 West 12th Street, Kansas City, MO 64105 Tele: 816 421 6800
½ mile walk to Sprint Center; 350 SF, refrig, \$18 day parking

Tue Jan 17

Beverly expects to arrive later day but in time for 5:30pm event
5:30pm Championship Ladies Practice, Group A, B, C and D until 8:15pm
8:45pm Junior Pairs Short Program Competition to 10:20pm
10:20pm Opening Ceremony Rehearsal to 11:20pm

Wed Jan 18

8:30am Junior Men Short Program to 10:10 am
10:25am Championship Men Practice Group A, B, C & D to 1:00pm
1:15pm Championship Dance Practice Group B, C, A to 3:15pm
6:00pm Junior Ladies Short Program to 7:30pm
8:00pm Junior Short Dance to 9:40pm

Thu Jan 19

11:00am Junior Pairs Free Skate Competition to 1:00pm
4:00pm Championship Pairs Short Program Competition to 6:25pm
7:30pm Opening Ceremonies to 8:00pm
8:05pm Championship Ladies Short Program Competition to 11:15pm

Fri Jan 20

8:30am Junior Ladies Free Skate Competition to 10:05am
Followed by Awards Junior Ladies
10:35am Junior Free Dance Competition to 12:53pm
Followed by Awards Junior Dance
1:45pm Junior Men Free Skate Competition to 3:56pm (time difference between schedules)
Followed by Awards Junior Men
5:00pm Championship Short Dance Competition to 6:58pm
5:30pm Happy Hour with Brian Boitano to 7:30 p.m. (Happy Hour pricing ends at 7 p.m.)
Cleaver & Cork, 1333 Walnut Street, KC, MO 64106
Join 1988 Olympic champion Brian Boitano for a special U.S. Championships Happy Hour at Cleaver & Cork. Brian will be mixing his special KC Gold cocktail (among other food and drink specials) and will be available for autographs and photos! This event is open to the public.
7:30pm Championships Men's Short Program Competition at Sprint Center to 10:56pm

Sat Jan 21

9:30am Championship Pairs Free Skate Competition Group 1-3 and
Championship Free Dance Groups 1-2 to 1:02pm
2:10pm Championship Pairs Free Skate Competition Group 3 and 4 to 3:41pm
4:01pm Championship Free Dance Competition Group 3 to 4:51pm
Awards Championship Dance and Championship Pairs to 5:26pm
6:00pm Championship Ladies Free Skate Competition to 9:50pm
Followed by Awards Championship Ladies to 10:05pm

Sun Jan 22

7:30am Rehearsals start to 10:15am
1:00pm Championship Men Free Skate Competition to 4:52pm
Followed by Awards Championship Men
5:32pm Men's Exhibition Rehearsal to 6:02pm
7:00pm Skating Spectacular to 9:30pm

Mon Jan 23 - Diana

7:30am Beverly offered to take Diana to airport; will offer to take a shuttle since flight now earlier
9:30am Depart Kansas City via UA#3496
1:07pm Arrive Newark EWR

Notes

Skating competition - www.2017usfigureskatingchampionships.com
At Sprint Center, 1407 Grand Boulevard, KC 6406