



## **St Paul Figure Skating Championships Trip Notes** **January 19-27, 2016**

### ***What and Why?***

This was not the first time, and won't be the last time, that I managed a trip that had me sitting on my arse for hours and days at a time and sometimes as much as 12 hours in a day. My first experience with ice-skating competition, other than on television, was a Boston event with my sister Beverly. That might've been three years ago and we followed it on with a different type of skating which included not just Americans but international stars and was held in Chicago.

Call it a marathon? Beverly gave me this sweet figure skating tree ornament. I will hang it with my 120-plus marathon medals and call it a Sitting Marathon.

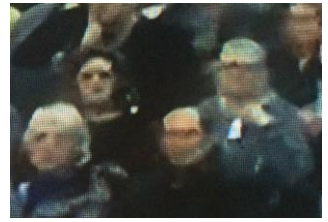
Next up are what are known as the "Worlds" i.e., International competition to be held in Boston late March of this year. (The "Worlds" might only come to the U.S. every 10 years). To be in St Paul and see the Americans compete and who wins the right to compete in the Worlds is a special gift. Thank you Beverly. Already we have all-event tickets for the national ice skating event to be held in Kansas City in January 2017.



### ***Skating highlights***

- I like the music, the costumes, the good looking skaters, yet not so much so the heavy requirements to do harder and bolder feats. So very athletic that it sometimes loses the beauty of skating.
- We are able to use personal radio devices to hear commentators explain the components, and also why the judges either grade up or down. I have mixed emotions about this but participated this year and learned quite a bit. Commentators are oftentimes famous skaters and/or judges.
- Most of all, I learned that I particularly like the last event called the "spectacular" where the top three winners in each event can do whatever they want without worrying about the judges and points. A treat. I suppose this means that Ice Follies or Ice Capades are somewhat more to my liking.
- The competition was unusually good and for the first time for many years the Americans might now have an opportunity for a gold medal at the "Worlds" in Boston. It was pretty special to see history in the making and that many of these young hot shots will compete with the international community in Boston and we will see it happen.
- From my first time watching skating live I saw a very young gal named Polina Edmunds who I thought had exceptional grace, poise, and hopefully was also a good skater. She has proven herself and will be competing in Boston. My other favorite was Jason Brown but he was absent due to an injury.

- Of the men, I have never been a fan of the extreme athletic maneuvers of the Asian skaters. They lose the grace that I enjoy when trying to perform feats like quad jumps and other not so graceful components. Yet history was made when one young Asian performed four quads in a row. Unfortunately he seems to have quickly suffered an injury and it is hard to imagine if he can now compete at the "Worlds" in Boston. Another favorite of the men skaters was not able to come to St. Paul for having suffered a long term injury. (Is there a message here?)



- We had good seats! That's us, blurry or not, off the TV screen. We'll have good seats in Boston but not as good as Kansas City in January 2017 when Bev got us front row seats. (Yet once at a Montreal hockey game with front row seats a puck hit me straight in the forehead so I should be careful what I wish for?)

**Such the St Paul Family Coincidence**

You might remember that my nephew Colin (Beverly's second son) has been on hiking trips with me. You might not remember that he came from Kansas City area and then moved to Indianapolis with his girlfriend and her new job. Chelsea was quickly promoted to a new job in St. Paul Minnesota and her job was starting almost exactly when Beverly and I arrived. So in between skating we had a bit of a family event. Here's one of two family members who traveled with and reside with Colin and Chelsea. In his coat.



**Were we tourists?**

Between the skating competition, that might start early morning and end as late as 11 PM, and visiting Colin and Chelsea, there wasn't much time for touring. A few years ago (maybe as recently as 2011), I was in Minneapolis for the Twin Cities Marathon and had a couple days also in St. Paul where the marathon ended on the Capitol steps.



On Sunday we did go to church. We went to St. Paul's Cathedral where service happened to be ongoing so we had to be cautious about looking like tourists. (Colin took our selfie. For a 44 year age difference, I still look cute, right?) For a church in the U.S. this is a dramatically beautiful and historical building. It just celebrated 100 years. I especially liked the museum area with some of the original drawings, the angel up on the top of one of the domes and the copy of Michelangelo's Piet





Near to the Landmark Building, next to the ice rink, and with a multitude of bronze statues of Peanuts characters is the old historic St Paul Hotel. I'd stayed there years past when the company where I worked had investors nearby. It is probably the best hotel in town and has the ritziest of restaurants. The picture is of trompe l'oil wall coverings made to look like draperies.



The Landmark Building contains multiple museums, galleries, an old post office, two court rooms now used for weddings, and a lovely European type interior. I had been there before, visited with Beverly, and returned on my own. Here are pictures of the interior, the wood carvings museum and the music museum. That's a bunch of trumpets, flutes and miscellaneous instruments surrounded by pianos.



We shuttled to a shopping area called Grand Avenue that was like a town within a town with restaurants galore and many shops. It is noted for the Café Latte where I ended up a couple times and where Beverly had dined years back when her step daughter was schooling in St Paul. We searched and felt quite proud of ourselves for finding a suitable housewarming gift: a hamper to use as a coffee table, filled with a furry blanket wrap (it matches one of Collin and Chelsea's cats), a matching throw pillow, and a luxurious white hooded robe bordered with the same fur. Here is the sales person wrapping our gift that Beverly then took to them via her first ride ever, but surely not the last, with Uber.



## **Weather**

The weather was quite cold and icy in Saint Paul before I left New Jersey. St. Paul was having weather in the minus -5 degree range so I shouldn't complain because it warmed up to the teens and even touched 30° once. I also must not complain because once again I was away and avoided a major East Coast storm.

Weather problems are made easier to survive through in St Paul with their massive amounts of Skywalks. One might have to walk 15-20 minutes instead of 5-10 minutes, but it is warm and dry. As a tourist, my first time out was not within the Skywalk and I really suffered the cold.

## **St Paul Downtown Oddities**

- There is the Skywalks mentioned above and they are well marked on maps but it's easy to get off onto a Dead End and signs are sometimes difficult to find or misleading. We followed a sign for Macys once and finally found out that it had closed down over three years ago.
- Private buildings are connected by these Skywalks. Wells Fargo dared me to take any of their pictures but since they are also on the web, and not under copy-right, here's one:
- Charles Schultz who created the Peanuts cartoons was from the area and there are bronze statuettes all around the city. One needs to be there in the summertime so as to find them as they are oftentimes under a heap of snow.
- Stores and liquor stores do NOT exist. The hotel sent me "3-4 blocks" to a grocery store that ended up being 7-8 blocks away and only a gas station type store with a few shelves of junk. The liquor store that was to be "across the street" was across a bridge and a major highway, without a decent sidewalk, and in a seedy side of town. After an hour, I successfully got my bottle of brandy and a half gallon of milk. (The store clerks didn't know what a "quart" size of milk meant when I asked. They only had a half-gallon size.)
- There are NO souvenir stores or any kind of merchandise except one lovely old-time book store with limited hours. There was one t-shirt store in the food court with very limited hours and only open Tuesday through Friday.
- The hotel offered a free and continuous shuttle to most anywhere in the downtown area. (I should have taken it to the liquor store but I expected to be a superwoman.) Why the ice skating spectators paid \$150 for a bus shuttle I don't know.
- The Skywalks and food courts and most restaurants close down at the end of the business day and are virtually empty or closed during the weekend. Waiting until 5pm for food can be a surprise as every food court was closed. Here's a view from our room with St Paul Cathedral behind the Landmark building, and Wells Fargo glass skylight in the foreground.
- St Paul might have one of the bigger Scientology buildings I've seen other than in Los Angeles.



### ***Speaking of weather and airlines . . . .***

Beverly got home just fine but on my departure day I found that virtually every flight from St Paul/Minneapolis to the New York City airports were canceled so I got another quiet day in St Paul. I did very little other than walk the skyway, return to a bookstore, and hunt for food, etc., as I was simply done with being away or being a tourist. As a consolation prize, United Air gave me first class seating going home.

### ***Next up?***

I'm home for a week and then off to the Los Angeles area for the start of a photo tour with hike out of Santa Barbara. It is called Beauty and the Beasts for the Monarch Butterflies and the Elephant Seals. I'll not likely be patient for all of the photo sessions but I do look forward to learning something. After a week I'll go to Santa Monica for a few days in celebration of Ellen's birthday.

Then later February, proving that "I Have Paris on My Mind" I'm off for another two week visit on my own. Tom's not totally left out: he was offered but chose for a ritzy trip to Paris in December instead.

## ***Itinerary***

### **Tue Jan 19 - Beverly**

11:20am Depart St Louis via Delta #2658 - Confirmation GXGKWY  
12:53pm Arrive Minneapolis/St Paul MSP

#### **- Diana**

1:45pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#3507  
4:03pm Arrive Minneapolis/St Paul MSP

Super Shuttle readily available and no reservation needed. \$14-\$16  
Taxi is \$30 to \$40. Turned out that Uber is about \$15.

Hotel Doubletree by Hilton Hotel St Paul Downtown – total of 7 nights  
411 Minnesota Street, St Paul, MN 55101 Tele: 651 291 8800  
<http://doubletree3.hilton.com/en/hotels/minnesota/doubletree-by-hilton-hotel-st-paul-downtown-MSPMSDT/index.html>

5 blocks to Xcel Center via skyway for a 15-minute walk. Shorter walk if outside.  
Room includes refrig, microwave and wifi; 2 beds. Green line to connect in '14.

<http://www.2016uschampionships.com/>

Event: Xcel Energy Center is located in downtown Saint Paul and will host novice, junior and senior level competitions as well as select practices. Regarded as one of the finest arenas in the world, Xcel Energy Center is a one-of-a-kind multi-purpose sports and entertainment facility located in downtown Saint Paul, home to more than 150 sporting and entertainment events and roughly 1.5 million visitors each year.

### **Tue Jan 19**

3:15pm Session 4: Junior Ladies Short Program, Junior Men's Short Program, Junior Pair's Short Program

### **Wed Jan 20**

11:20am Session 5: Junior Short Dance, Junior Pairs Free Skate  
6:45pm Session 6: Junior Men's Free Skate, Junior Ladies Free Skate

### **Thu Jan 21**

2:45pm Session 7: Championship Pairs Short Program  
7:30pm Session 8: Opening Ceremony and Championship Ladies Short Program

### **Fri Jan 22**

9:00am Session 9: Junior Free Skate  
2:30pm Session 10: Championship Short Dance

5:00pm Reception at Intercontinental Hotel (ex Crowne Plaza) until 7:00pm

Hall of Fame Class of 2016 - Join U.S. Figure Skating in congratulating Hall of Fame inductees Evan Lysacek, Sasha Cohen, Tanith Belbin and Ben Agosto and Gustavo F. Lussi at the Hall of Fame Reception celebrating the Class of 2016. The reception will take place in the Great River Ballroom at the InterContinental Saint Paul Riverfront, from 5-7 p.m.

Shuttle buses will be mindful of the 5 p.m. reception start. Please note the true program begins closer to 5:30 p.m. The reception will be held in the Great River Ballroom at the Intercontinental Hotel.



Walk from Xcel Center to Intercontinental is 15 minutes by Skyway (circuitous route) or 3 blocks by outside street.

7:30pm Session 11: Championship Men's Short Program

**Sat Jan 23**

9:00am Session 12: Championship Pairs Free Skate (Groups 1 and 2)  
Championship Free Dance (Groups 1 and 2)

12:30pm Reception at CC22 Club Level of Excel until 1:30pm

Memorial Fund Reception - Each year the U.S. Figure Skating Memorial Fund provides \$350,000 in scholarships and grants to skaters of all levels. Join U.S. Figure Skating as it celebrates the history of the Memorial Fund from 12:30-1:30 p.m., at section C22 on club level. All ticket proceeds directly benefit the U.S. Figure Skating Memorial Fund. (Section C22 is in Xcel Center?)

1:30pm Session 13: Championship Pairs Free Skate (Groups 3 and 4)  
Championship Free Dance (Groups 3 and 4)

6:00pm Session 14: Championship Ladies Free Skate

**Sun Jan 24**

1:00pm Session 15: Championship Men's Free Skate

7:00pm Smucker's Skating Spectacular (Beverly paid for tickets but they were sent to Diana)

**Mon Jan 27 – Beverly**

To visit 'kids'

**Tue Jan 26 - Beverly**

3:00pm Depart Minneapolis/St Paul via Delta #5254

4:37pm Arrive St Louis

**-Diana**

4:20pm Depart Minneapolis/St Paul MSP via UA#3499

8:00pm Arrive Newark EWR

[www.visitstpaul.com](http://www.visitstpaul.com)