

TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY SPORTS SPOTLITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SHANAMAN SPORTS MUSEUM

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Kaye Hall swimming the backstroke. (Courtesy Kaye Hall)

KAYE HALL'S OLYMPIC TRIUMPH

By Gail Wood

The moment could have been overwhelming, filled with "I can't."

And yet Kaye Hall, as a 17-year-old youngster and a senior at Wilson High School, felt only excitement, a sense of satisfaction and achievement. She was about to begin the biggest race of her life at the 1968 Olympics.

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SHANAMAN Sports Museum

The mission of the Shanaman Sports Museum of Tacoma-Pierce County is to recreate the history of sports in the community by chronicling the evolution of various sports through written, visual and audio mediums and to educate the public about our sports heritage.

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LEND YOUR SUPPORT

by Kim Davenport

It has been more than a century since our community last faced a pandemic, and the past several months have been a challenge for us all, individually and collectively.

Like many other organizations in our community, the Shanaman Sports Museum relies on your support to fulfill our mission. With the postponement of our annual Tribute to Champions event due to current restrictions on public gatherings, we need that support now more than ever.

Become a Member

Membership to the Shanaman Sports Museum supports the museum's efforts to preserve the sports history of Tacoma-Pierce County and to educate the public through online exhibits, including our Online Photo and Artifact catalog, Old-School Sports Programs, Clay Huntington Broadcast Center, and Tacoma-Pierce County Sports Hall of Fame. Members at all levels will be recognized on our website as well as receive this quarterly newsletter featuring articles written by local journalists.

For more information about membership levels and to sign up, please visit our website here: www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/membership

Make a Donation

The Shanaman Sports Museum also welcomes financial gifts of any amount. For more information, please visit our website here: www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/waystogive/

We thank you for your interest in preserving the history of the sports and athletes of Tacoma-Pierce County!

Kaye Hall, continued from page 1

"It was exciting," Hall said.

As the world watched, as Hall got into the pool to begin the 100-meter backstroke finals in the Olympics in Mexico City, she wasn't filled with doubt. She was filled with hope and glee.

Sure, Hall had never beaten Canada's Elaine Tanner, losing all 33 times they swam against each other since they were 7-year-old kids. In their qualifying swim of the backstroke at this Olympics, Tanner beat Hall by nearly two seconds, setting another world record. Winning a gold medal didn't seem likely for Hall.

But she beat the odds and beat her nemesis, breaking a world record and beating Tanner to win her prized honor – an Olympic gold medal.

"The record was just frosting on the cake," said Dick Hannula, the legendary Wilson High School coach and Hall's club team coach for many years.

This moment was a dream Hall had first had in 1964. It was a dream planted by Hannula, the Hall of Fame swim coach at Wilson and the Tacoma Swim Club coach.

"When I was 12 or 13, I really started thinking about the Olympics," Hall said. "Coach set me up to be focused on going to the next Olympics."

Back then when Hall was only 13, the Tacoma News Tribune ran a story about Hall's goal, her ambition for qualifying for the 1968 Olympics.

"Coach set up that story that said I had my sights set on the '68 Olympics," Hall said. "And they had a picture of me as a 13 year-old seventh grader."

The dream was planted. And it was a dream come true as Hall headed to Mexico City. In the preparation leading up to the Olympics, Hall, under the direction of several Olympic coaches,

worked extremely hard, too hard Hannula said. For four or five weeks, Hall worked out at Colorado Springs. The U.S. swim team trained there because of the high altitude, preparing them for the high altitude at Mexico City. Hannula thought Hall had over trained at Colorado Springs.



Kaye Hall at the top of the podium at the 1968 Olympic Trials. Coach Dick Hannula is second from left. (Courtesy Kaye Hall.)

"At the training camp, they trained hard and they trained for a lot of distances," Hannula said. "They put in a lot of mileage at altitude. She wasn't recovered from training."

And in the prelims in the backstroke at the Olympics, Hannula saw a fatigued Hall swimming and finishing nearly two seconds behind Tanner.

"The plan was resting that whole week coming off of that," Hannula said. "And not having anything really hard for that week. I think that was a big factor."

So, that meant no workouts, no sightseeing and no goofing around. Just resting and taking it easy.

"Coach didn't want me to get worn out," Hall said.

Up to that point, Hannula had just been an observer, a fan in the stands early in the

Olympics. But he was given the coaching duties for Hall after her swim in the preliminary.

“I believe she was just too tired from all of that altitude training she did in Colorado,” Hannula said.

Often, the mindset leading up to a big race is train harder. But Hall didn't work out at all.

“I think she was comfortable with that,” Hannula said. “Both of us were.”

It was the perfect plan. Hall, pushing herself, got off to a spectacular start in the 100-meter backstroke finals, taking an early lead against Tanner and never giving it up. Hall won with a time of 1:06.2, beating Tanner by a half second.

And Hall won by breaking the world record, the record Tanner had just set in the preliminaries. Tanner also broke the world record in the finals. And yet it still wasn't fast enough to catch Hall. For Hall and her winning performance, it was all about mental preparation.



“I swam the winning race in my head,” Hall said. “Elaine was the last thing I thought about.”

To help Hall get that proper mindset, she kept everything in perspective. She knew that making it

to the Olympics was a big achievement, something that couldn't be taken away. Winning medals was an added achievement.

“I knew people in Tacoma were really proud of me,” Hall said. “I found a letter my dad had written to me. He just said look, you have done a

fabulous job. Get out there and do the best you can. And we love you and we couldn't be happier no matter what happens.”

That meant she wasn't going to let anyone down if she didn't win.

“That was the permission to just let go,” Hall said. “In that sense I remember it was almost a feeling of relief. I didn't have anything to lose. I just had to get out there and swim my race the best way I knew how. And everything would be okay.”

Hall didn't disappoint. She ended up winning two gold medals and a bronze medal in the 1968 Olympics. She won her first gold medal swimming the backstroke as the lead-off leg of the medley relay, which set an Olympic record. Then she won her second gold medal by beating Tanner in the 100-meter backstroke. She then placed third in the 200-meter backstroke to win a bronze medal. An international swimming magazine named Hall the best swimmer of the meet.

For Hall, who married Ken Greff in 1976 and now has two children and five grandkids, her Olympic achievements were all about focus.

“She was focusing on just one thing,” Hannula said. “And that was to focus on herself. No way did she focus on what other people were doing in that race.”

It's one thing to have talent. It's a different thing to have the determination, the willingness to train and use that talent. And Hall's legacy is she didn't waste her talent. She made the most of what she had, winning two Olympic gold medals.

“She was an amazing talent,” Hannula said.

Gail Wood is a Wilson High School grad (class of '72) and former sportswriter for USA Today and the Daily Olympian.

JOIN THE TEAM

The Shanaman Sports Museum honors the history of sports and the rich culture of athletics in Tacoma-Pierce County. In order to maintain that tradition, the museum and the board of directors is pleased to invite the general public to show their support by becoming a member.

For more information about membership levels and to sign up, please visit our website here: www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/membership

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HALL OF FAME SPOTLITE **MAC WILKINS**

By Gary Brooks

When Mac Wilkins entered Clover Park High School in Lakewood, he was drawn to the track and hoped to become a miler for Bill Bowerman at the University of Oregon. His body quickly grew out of the frame of a miler and the field part of track & field became his domain. He helped lead Clover Park to the 1968 Washington state championship in track & field then moved to Beaverton, Oregon for his senior year. He was closer to Bowerman and the powerhouse Ducks program, which drew him to Eugene for college.

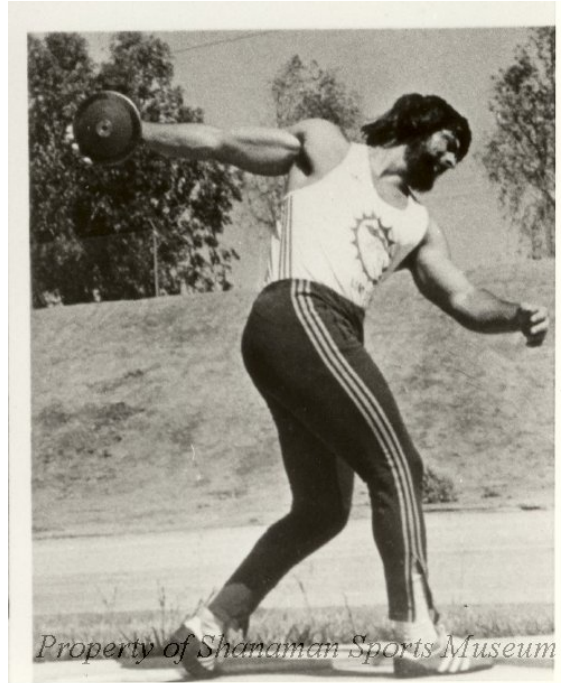


With a lot of effort on technique and strength, Wilkins became one of the elite throwers in the world. He placed fourth in the discus in the 1972 NCAA championships and won the event in 1973 leading Oregon to a 2nd-place team finish and

being named team MVP. Three years later at the Olympics in Montreal, Wilkins won gold. Before the Olympics, on May 1, 1976 in San Jose, California, Wilkins set new world records on three-consecutive discus throws – 229 feet, 230' 5", and 232' 5.75". It was one of many special days with momentous spins and hurls of the 8.6-inch, 3.85-pound disc.

Wilkins remained a world-class thrower, winning the U.S. championship eight times in the discus. His Olympics opportunity was interrupted when the U.S. boycotted the 1980 Games in Moscow but Wilkins returned in 1984 taking silver in the Olympics in Los Angeles. His Olympics career ended with a 5th-place finish in Seoul in 1988.

The discus took him to the peak of his specialty, but Wilkins excelled at the other throwing events as well. When he was inducted into the U.S. Track & Field Hall of Fame in 1993, he held the world record for combined distance in the discus (232 feet, 10 inches), shot put (69', 1"), javelin (257') and hammer throw (208' 10").



Wilkins throwing the discus in 1976. Photograph from the Shanaman Sports Museum Collection.

WANTED

We are always looking for artifacts that will more effectively allow us to preserve our sports heritage. Whether it be an old family scrapbook, a uniform, glove, programs, photos, posters, or even an old baseball from the turn of the century, each artifact tells a story and contributes to the folklore that we strive to preserve for generations to come. We must understand the past in order to appreciate the present and unique memorabilia will allow us to accomplish this objective.

To make a contribution or for further information, contact Marc Blau at marc@tacomasporthmuseum.com.

HALL OF FAME SPOTLIGHT GERTRUDE WILHELMSSEN

By Gary Brooks

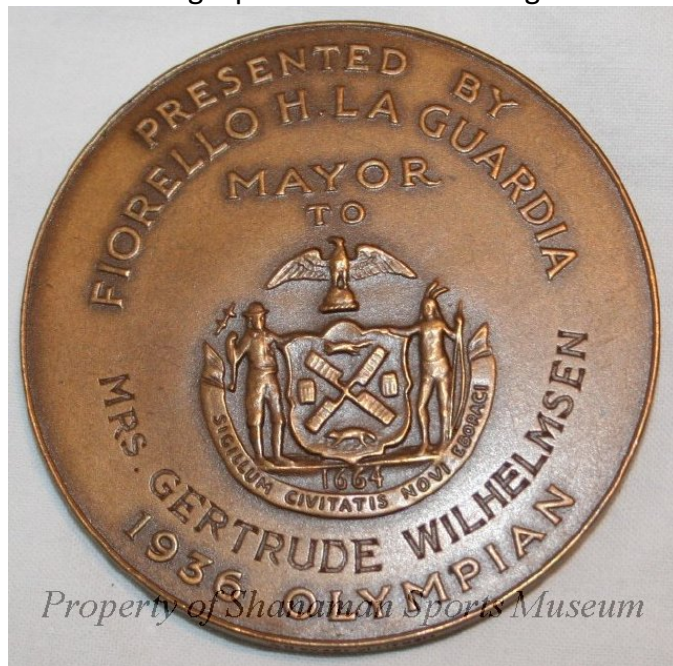
In the early 1930s in Puyallup, Gertrude Stelling set a new standard for female athleticism in Pierce County. She was a strong, farm-raised girl eager to compete in all sorts of sports. She grew up with a single father after her mom died in 1920. When they weren't working the farm, there was time to play, just about anything.

Puyallup High School coach Pop Logan invited her to train in track & field events with the boys. After graduating from Puyallup High School, four decades before there were state championship events for girls in high school, Stelling narrowly missed making the U.S. Olympic team in 1932, placing fourth in the trials in the javelin.



Gertrude Wilhelmsen, third from left, with other female members of the 1936 USA track and field team. AP Photo.

She kept at her athletic training, married Andrew Wilhelmsen and had a child in 1934. By 1936, her skills grew to a world-class level. She became the first female Olympian from Pierce County, placing seventh in the javelin (122' 6½") and eighth in the discus (112' 11½") in Berlin. She was the top U.S. finisher in both events. At the time, there were only six track & field events for women (100m dash, 80m hurdles, 4x100 relay, high jump, javelin, discus). Along with the competition, she remembers seeing Jesse Owens run and taking a picture of him winning a race.



Medallion presented to Gertrude Wilhelmsen by New York Mayor La Guardia for her participation in the 1936 Olympics. From the Shanaman Sports Museum Collection.

The Olympic throwing events brought her acclaim, but she was also a standout local competitor in basketball, golf and with the Tacoma Tigerettes fastpitch softball team in the early 1940s. She was inducted in the Tacoma-Pierce County Sports Hall of Fame in 1971 and the Tacoma-Pierce County Baseball/Softball Hall of Fame in 1994. Wilhelmsen died in Puyallup on March 19, 2005.

OLYMPIC GAMES PARTICIPANTS FROM TACOMA/PIERCE COUNTY

This list is a work in progress – please send any corrections to mhblau@comcast.net.

1928, Amsterdam, Netherlands

* Herman Brix. Silver Medal, Shot Put.

1936, Berlin, Germany

* George E. 'Shorty' Hunt. Gold Medal, Rowing Eight.
* James R. Needles, Gold Medal, Coach of Men's Basketball.
* Gertrude F. Wilhelmsen. 7th Place, Javelin; 8th Place, Discus.

1948, St. Moritz, Switzerland & London, England

* Gretchen Kunigk-Fraser. Gold Medal, Grand Slalom Skiing. Medal, Alpine Combined Skiing. 13th Place, Downhill.
* Robert D. Martin. Gold Medal, Four with Coxswain Crew.
* Eugene Stayton Hicker. Shooting Team Adjutant.

1952, Helsinki, Finland

* Jim Fifer. 4th Place, Pair without Coxswain Crew.
* Frederick L. Denman. 4th place, Team Modern Pentathlon.
* Maxine Mitchell. 6th Place, Individual Foil/Fencing.

1956, Melbourne, Australia

* Jim Fifer. Gold Medal, Pairs without Coxswain Crew.
* Dan Ayrault. Gold Medal, Pair with Coxswain Crew.
* Maxine Mitchell. Fencing.

1960, Rome Italy

* Dan Ayrault. Gold Medal, Pair without Coxswain Crew.
* John A. Sayre. Gold Medal, Fours without Coxswain Crew.
* Maxine Mitchell. Fencing.

1964, Tokyo, Japan & Innsbruck, Austria

* Gerald G. Conine. 6th Place, Light Heavyweight Freestyle Wrestling.
* Jerry and Judi Fotheringill. 7th Place, Pairs Figure Skating.
* George R. Farmer. 29th Place, Luge.

1968, Mexico City, Mexico

* Casey Carrigan. Pole vault.
* Kaye M. Hall. Gold Medals, 100m Backstroke, 400 Medley Relay; Bronze Medal, 200m Backstroke, Swimming.
* Jack Horsley. Bronze Medal, 200m Backstroke.
* Doris Brown Heritage. 5th Place, 800m Run.
* Maxine Mitchell. Fencing.

1972, Munich, Germany

* Ray P. Seales. Gold Medal, Light Welterweight Boxing.

* David L. Armstrong. Boxing.
* Doris Brown Heritage. 1500m Run.
* Barbara Mitchell. Swimming.
* Chuck Richards. 4th Place/Team & 9th Place/Individual, Modern Pentathlon (World/Olympic record in the 300m freestyle swimming portion of the event, which includes equestrian, fencing, shooting and running in addition to the 300m swim).

1976, Montreal, Canada

* Leo Randolph. Gold Medal, Flyweight Boxing.
* David L. Armstrong. Silver Medal, Featherweight Boxing.
* Miriam Smith Greenwood. Swimming.
* Mac Wilkins. Gold Medal, Discus.

1980, Moscow, Russia (US Boycotted Games)

* Mac Wilkins, Olympic Team Member, Discus.
* David L. Armstrong. Olympic Team Member, Boxing.
* Johnny Bumphus. Olympic Team Member, Boxing.
* Benji Durden. Olympic Team Member, Marathon.

1984, Los Angeles, United States

* Mac Wilkins. Silver Medal, Discus.
* Doris Brown Heritage. Coach, Women's Track.
* Olney B. Kent. 4th Place, 1000m Canoeing.
* Robert Shannon. 7th Place, Bantamweight Boxing.
* Jeff Durgan. Soccer.
* Doug Herland. Bronze Medal, Parks with Coxswain Crew.
* Dick Hannula. Manager, Swim Team.

1988, Seoul, Korea

* Mac Wilkins. 5th Place, Discus.
* Olney B. Kent. 8th Place, 500 Meter Canoeing.
* Dick Hannula. Manager, Swim Team.

1992, Barcelona, Spain

* Olney B. Kent. 9th Place, 1000, Canoeing.

1994, Lillehammer, Norway

* Scott Davis. Men's Figure Skating.

2000, Sydney, Australia

* Megan Quann Jendrick. Gold Medals, 100m Breaststroke, 4x100m Medley Relay, Swimming.
* Tom Mustin. Head coach, USA boxing team.

2008, Beijing, China

* Megan Quann Jendrick, Silver Medal, 4x100m Medley Relay, Swimming.

2012, London, England

* Adrienne Martelli. Bronze Medal, Women's quadruple sculls

2016, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

* Megan Blunk. Gold Medal, Women's Wheelchair Basketball.