

# Coupling retirement with a career

■ Cove woman reminisces about unusual career with the Ice Capades

By **Trish Yerges**  
For The Observer

Most people plan retirement in the sunset years of their lives, but Julie Witten of Cove feels she enjoyed her retirement early in life as a young, single woman with an unusual career.

After her graduation from Orange High School in Orange, California, in 1981, Witten was introduced to the merchandising world by her brother, Dirk Culver, who worked as a merchandiser for the Los Angeles Lakers. Dirk's boss landed a contract with the Ice Capades, a touring ice skating show featuring well-known former Olympic skaters who had retired from competition to skate for pay.

By 1981, Ice Capades had grown into three different touring companies under one umbrella: the East, West and Continental companies. Witten and three of her brothers worked for these companies in merchandising and were constantly touring.

Witten worked with the Continental Company from 1981 to 1989, then she switched to the East Company from 1990 to 1992, touring most of the big cities between Chicago and New York City.

"My last year, I had the highest gross sales at Madison Square Garden in New York City, making more than \$1 million in merchandise sales," Witten said.

She said it was all about "learning how to hawk merchandise, having a good voice for it and having good employees working under

you."

When Ice Capades were in their off season, Witten followed the tours of the Carlos Santana band and the Moscow Circus.

"I worked all around the country with Carlos Santana for a 3-month tour, so I got to meet him personally," she said. "He invited me up on stage and stand behind the curtain and watch him play."

She recalled that the Moscow Circus members didn't speak English at all, but they liked to party after the shows.

"In every city we had a closing night party, and we drank vodka with them," Witten said. "If you didn't drink with them, they got thoroughly hurt like you were dissing their country by not drinking with them."

She also worked for and watched the Harlem Globetrotters show.

"After the shows, I got to meet a lot of the Harlem Globetrotters," she said. "We would shoot hoops with them on the courts, and they always had to show us up with their fancy plays."

Witten also worked one-night shows for Tim McGraw, who she enjoyed meeting.

"One of the vendors named Ricky Hooter was a good friend of Tim McGraw, and I attended Ricky's wedding," Witten said. "To surprise him, Tim McGraw and Faith Hill showed up at the wedding and sang a couple of songs. Faith Hill and Tim McGraw were two of the nicest people ever."

She also worked the one-night shows for the Beach

Boys and Barbra Streisand during her come back tour in Las Vegas.

"Barbra came into the merchandise room one time to look at things. We had 10,000 T-shirts with her face on them, but she hated the picture of herself and made us pull all 10,000 T-shirts," Witten said. "I don't think she liked her nose in the picture, but her nose is her nose. She's known by her nails and her nose."

"Also in Las Vegas, I worked at the Larry Holmes and Gerry Cooney boxing fight and the Sugar Ray Leonard and Rafael Rodriguez fight and many other fights," she said.

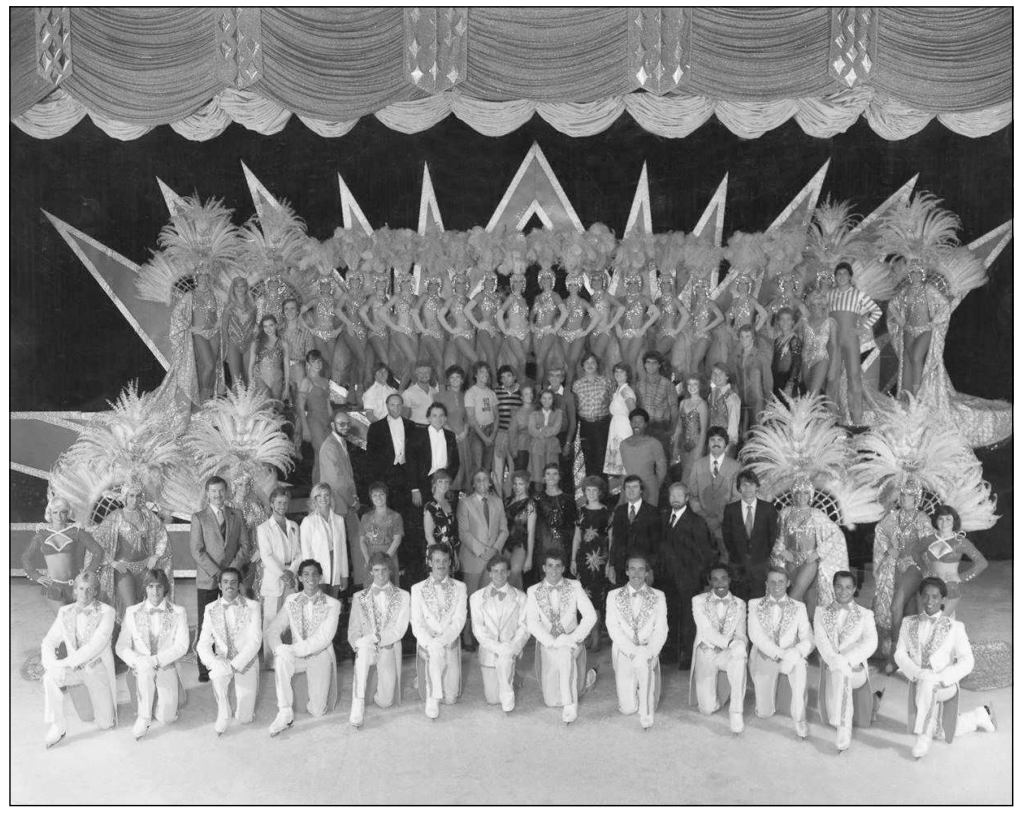
Witten also worked a couple of one night gigs for the Bee Gees and Rolling Stones in Long Beach, California, and ventured to San Diego to cover sales for Super Bowl XXXII.

She also followed the show tour for New Kids on the Block to Australia, New Zealand and Mexico.

"When we were in New Zealand, I went parasailing with all the New Kids on the Block," Witten said. "They chartered a boat and invited me to go along. We had a real nice lunch and afterward, they all went parasailing, and they were good at it."

When they were touring in the U.S., she also shared some fun times with the New Kids after the shows.

"I picnicked out in the parking lot with the New Kids, and we had the fire trucks called on us a few times because of the smokey barbeque, but it was fun," she laughed. "If I didn't feel like hanging out with the other vendors, I could hang out with the star skaters or the band guys."



Contributed photo

Julie Witten (center in white dress) spent 11 years following the Ice Capades show as they traveled to almost every major city in the U.S. and in Hawaii. It's what she called her retirement occupation.

One of those star skaters was Scott Hamilton, the 1984 Olympic gold medalist in men's figure skating.

"He's the most wonderful guy, and we went to lunch with him all the time after the ice shows," Witten said. "He was a single guy when he was with Ice Capades."

One of her last jobs before she moved to Oregon was merchandising at the Anaheim Stadium during the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim baseball games and afterward the Anaheim Ducks hockey games.

"Both of those teams were owned by Disney at that time," she said.

Her last job in the entertainment world was in May 2016, when she returned to New York to work a Billy Joel concert at Madison Square Garden.

She liked the touring pace, a new city and new hotel every week with Mondays and Tuesdays off to do a little touring

herself. In places like New York City, she stayed with the show for two to three weeks, which gave her plenty of time to check out the sights.

When she followed Ice Capades to Hawaii for a month, she stayed in a four-bedroom condo on the island of Honolulu — "that was a tough life," she teased.

When the West Company went to Hawaii for the first time with Ice Capades, Witten learned people there had never seen fiber-optic flashlights before with the little bulbs that turn different colors. She and her associates were making jokes when we were flying out of Hawaii that they would see the whole state light up with all the thousands of flashlights that were sold.

"We actually had ice skaters and the band members stuffing batteries in the flashlights because we could not keep up with the sales of flashlights," she said.

"They had an assembly line of skaters so when they weren't skating, they were in the back helping us."

"I feel I've done my retirement, because I've been to every major city in the United States, every province in Canada," she said. "I've been to Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, to Hawaii and Alaska on the Ice Capades tours."

Today, she lives a comparatively quiet life in Cove, where she and her husband, Jon, are raising the youngest of their three children. Witten works for the U.S. Postal Service as a rural mail carrier and waitresses at the Steakhouse at Cove.

Her future plans after she decides to quit working will include, of course, another retirement period. She wants to travel, maybe see some entertainers, but with no strings attached.

"My next retirement — toes in the sand," she said with a smile.

# Oregon governor race most expensive yet

The Associated Press

BEND — The 2018 race for governor is the most expensive in Oregon history, and there's still six weeks until the books will be closed.

The Bulletin newspaper in Bend reports Gov. Kate Brown has raised about \$11.3 million. Her Republican opponent, state Rep. Knute Buehler, R-Bend, has raised about \$7.4 million, according to state campaign finance reports filed through Monday.

The record total of about \$18.7 million tops the \$17.7 million raised and spent in the 2010 governor's race won by Democrat John Kitzhaber over Republican Chris Dudley.

Brown reported a month's worth of campaign finances Monday. Contributions included \$250,000 from Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun control group backed by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Brown also received \$250,000 from the Democratic Governors Association, which has now given her a total of \$353,000.

The true level of 2018 fundraising and spending won't be known until early next month when both candidates will have to adhere to a seven-day period between the time they raise or spend money and when they have

to report it.

Currently, candidates have a 30-day window. Brown's updated figures bring her reporting through Sept. 22. Buehler's is through Aug. 22. Both campaigns are complying with state law in the way they are currently reporting their finances.

The totals do not include money raised and spent by outside groups that are running ads against candidates.

Buehler has received a total of \$1.5 million from Nike co-founder Phil Knight, the largest donation by an individual to a candidate in Oregon history.

Brown's biggest single contribution is \$500,000 from EMILY's List, a national group that backs pro-choice Democratic

candidates. She has received a total of \$370,000 from Team Oregon, a political action committee created to promote her re-election and to build Democratic majorities in the Legislature. Defend Oregon Values, a political action committee created by House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, and other top Democrats to promote a Democratic agenda in Salem, has contributed \$693,000 to Brown. She received a new contribution of \$100,000 from the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, AFL-CIO.

The money to Brown from Everytown for Gun Safety is the second time in two years that Bloomberg has aided Brown. He directly

contributed \$250,000 to her 2016 campaign to finish out the term of Kitzhaber, who resigned in 2015 and was replaced by Brown, the secretary of state at the time.

Both campaigns have spent heavily on television. Brown's latest filing shows she has purchased a total of \$1.8 million in broadcast time through Buying Time LLC, a campaign consulting firm in Washington. Buehler has purchased \$2.3 million in broadcast time through Strategic Media Services of Arlington, Virginia.

The Oregonian newspaper has reported that national Republicans say Buehler has received a total of \$750,000 from the Republican Governors Association, an amount as yet to show

up on Buehler's campaign filings.

The Republican governors' group contributed \$2.5 million to Dudley's campaign in 2010, with much of the

money coming in the last six weeks of the close race with Kitzhaber. The group contributed only \$125,000 to Bud Pierce's 2016 governor's campaign against Brown.

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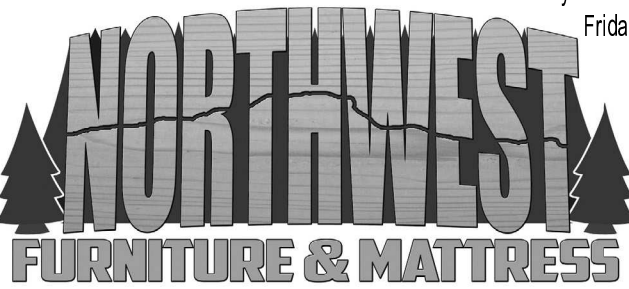
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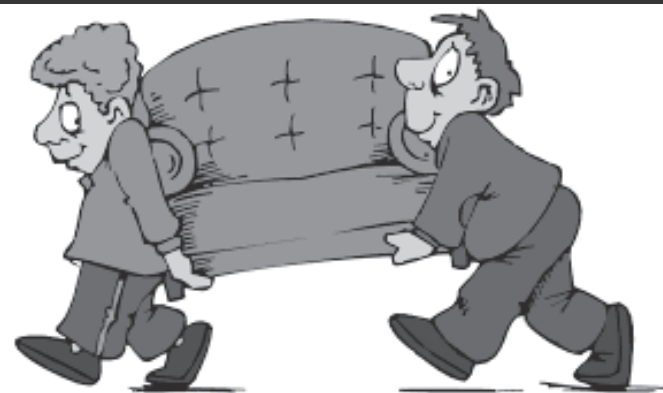


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