

# Betty Sroufe

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Betty Sroufe was a Charter member of NAWGJ, being one of twenty-nine judges when NAWGJ was officially organized in 1974. Serving as the National NAWGJ Secretary/Treasurer from 1974-2013, Betty has helped develop the organization into what it is today. Her influence will always be appreciated, not only for NAWGJ, but for the whole gymnastic community in the United States of America.

Transcript of Audio Interview 8/14/2024

This is documentation of a recording made on 8/14/2024 by Nancy Hulshult with Jody Borda and Betty Sroufe. Jody and I met with Betty in her home to get answers to the questions about Betty and her role in the history of NAWGJ. In parentheses are side comments brought forth within our conversation. The rest are direct quotes from Betty.

“I learned everything about gymnastics because of my dance background. I taught dance and acrobatics. When I was five years old, I started dance classes at Lubbers Dance Studio. Then I taught for Lubbers. When I quit working for them, I went to work at General Machinery as a secretary for three years.

“Then I started my own dance studio. I’ve danced practically all of my life. I had a Junior Ballroom class every Friday night, and any junior or high school kid who wanted to come could come. I taught them every phase of ballroom dancing.

“I never felt that I was really a coach. At Badin High School, it was Bud that coached the girls. I taught the dance, and Bud taught the gymnastics because he was a gymnast himself. Bud was the tumbler. He was on the gymnastics team in high school that went all over the state and other places where they would perform.

“I started the judging association with Delene Darst. I saw the need for some organization, the need for having more judges, and the need for judges to be trained, so I just started NAWGJ myself. Delene and I served on JCI together. JCI had been formed well before NAWGJ and lasted until USGF took over the certification of judges.”

(Bud and Betty judged Jody Borda when she was a gymnast at Miami University. Bud even told Jody that he had some old scores of hers in his judging bag. Jody came to one of Betty’s clinics and became a judge.)

(Betty taught all of her P.E. students how to judge gymnastics. She ran judging clinics all over the state and region to recruit and test new judges.)

(As far as favorite meets), “I used to judge a lot for the University of Alabama and Georgia.” (She also was good friends with Leah Little from UK.) “Those were my favorites. They paid well and treated us well.”

(Betty never missed a meet for which she was assigned.)

“Judging gave me many friendships that I would not normally have had. I also enjoyed traveling.”

“Bud died in 1993. Then I started going to Florida and judged a lot there.” (She also taught line dancing both in Florida and in Hamilton at senior citizen centers.)

(Betty honed her judging skills by watching and rewatching gymnastics films in slow motion. She made note cards for each skill in the Code of Points. She recorded each skill and each deduction in the Code of Points and listened to them over and over. She held study sessions and made up acrostics for judging formulas, such as SCALE for components of composition. She studied judging shorthand in order to record the routines faster and easier.)

“I ALWAYS SAID THAT I WAS BORN TO BE A TEACHER.”

(Betty is the last living sibling of 10 children. She attributes her long life of over 99 years now to “all the exercise and dance, not only in body but in mind”.)

“I have danced all my life.”

## Photos of Betty Sroufe



### Hamilton History Train

Ralph Goins · 9h · 📷

Mrs. Betty Sroufe briefs the juniors on the layout of the centerball court. Photo from “The Nodograph” Yearbook, 1962, Notre Dame High School, Hamilton, Ohio.



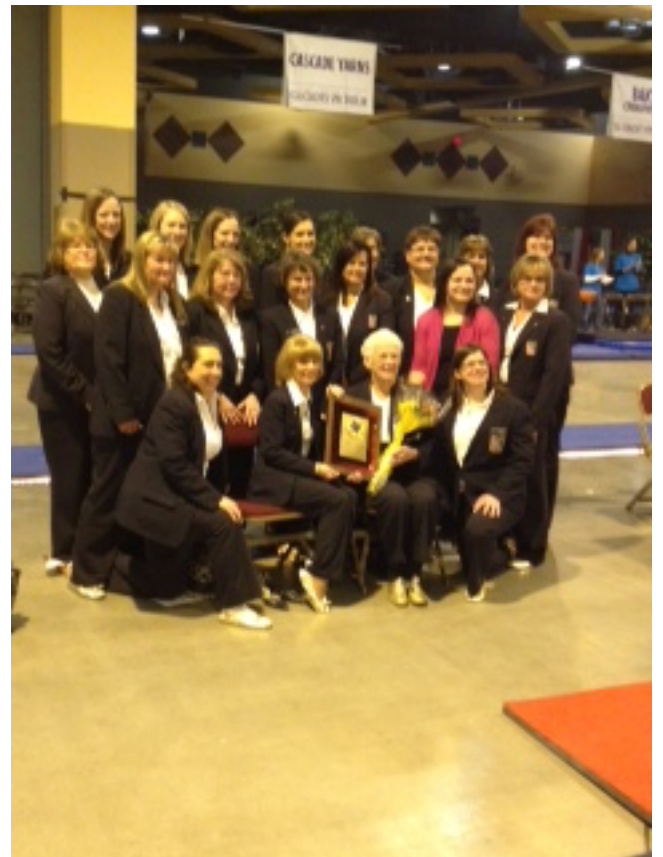
History of Hamilton, Ohio

























Dear Betty,

A **BIG THANKS** for all you've done for the NAWGJ and for ALL the judges- past, present, and future! You were the backbone of NAWGJ, always generous with your time to help SJD's do their job. When I was the SJD in Illinois and had no board members so you had to do everything, you always took time to help me with the financial report and any other questions or problems. You also did a terrific job finding a uniform that would look good on everyone. Working on the uniform and helping judges all over the country get the right size - that was a full-time job!! You did so much more for NAWGJ than just the Treasurer's job. NAWGJ and all judges owe you a debt of gratitude for the job you did to further professionalism on the gym floor and respect for the judging profession.

I've included a few pictures of Erna Wachtel in the early years of our Illinois Judges' Cup meets. Erna was our "guiding light", and a mentor, teacher, and friend. We all learned so much from this wise woman who was a pioneer in our sport and had a deep passion and love of Gymnastics. You have been that "guiding light" for thousands of judges all over the country and it's been greatly appreciated!  
I hope you enjoy more time to do all the things you would like to do in the future! Keep that Energizer battery going!!

Sincerely,

*Betty Axelsson-McCalland*

*Lordy  
Kathy Fallmon  
35 years NAWGJ  
member  
Mesquite, NV*

Dear Betty, 11/30/12  
Congratulations on your retirement. Thank you for all of your years of service to NAWGJ and our wonderful sport of gymnastics. Wishing you best for the days and years ahead. Enjoy!

#### ODE TO THE BOOP!!!! 2013...Retirement

From your ardent admirer...Judy Dobransky, Poet in residence

Betty Boop, the years have flown  
We used to groan and now we groan!!  
Our jackets snug, the waistband spreads  
The numbers garble in our heads!

You'll always love the work you do  
And you will miss our motley crew  
Those coffers your protected well  
May not flourish for a spell

But lessons taught and lessons learned  
From you our crew has never spurned  
We'll keep them filled and watch them grow  
To taxes, we will holler NO!!

So lets look back at years of Boop  
You led, you judged, assigned your group  
You saw it all and through no fault  
You vowed and never did do vault!!

Thank you dear for all you gave  
You spoke your mind and acted brave  
You guarded funds and set the bar  
Without you, we could not go far!!

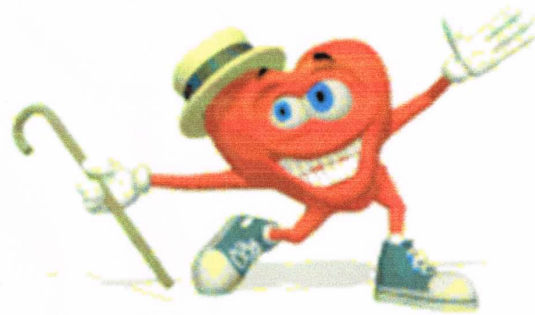
The best was how you truly cared  
You loved the kids and always shared  
The line dance will not be the same  
You can be sure it sparks your name!

Enjoy the new, the free each day  
Keep up with Bingo and slots to play  
But keep in touch and don't forget  
We'll always love our own great BETTE!!!!

#### TOP 10 "BETTY-ISM'S"

1. You can't come off a meet unless you are dead or in the hospital on your deathbed.
2. No more than three pins on your jacket!
3. How can you judge with your hair in your face?
4. We're so busy this weekend, we even need Mo to judge!
5. Nyat, nyat, nyat!
6. No turtlenecks!
7. Sit like a lady.
8. Make sure you have your NAWGJ insurance!
9. I don't give a rip!
10. Blouses should always be tucked in!





November 27, 2012

Dear Betty,

I'm sorry I can't be with you celebrating all your hard work and accomplishments, but I'm thinking of you!

I think of so many things when I think of you. I think of sparkles – red, white and blue sequined hats, gold shoes and all. And I think of your great, sparkly smile especially when you are dancing. I remember the great tap dancing routines you organized, especially the one at National Symposium (I think in Florida, but the one where Stormy Eaton sang). You led us so many times in learning line dances and we had so much fun! And you had more energy than any of us!

I think of all the wonderful Regional Symposiums that you and Betty Heppner gave us. I learned so much at each and every one of them! You worked hard to give us great clinicians, something for every level, and a lot of fun.

Most of all, though, I thank you and honor you for EVERYTHING you have done for judging in Region 5 and the U.S. You and the other founders of NAWGJ had such a vision. Every judge in the U.S. should thank you for the education, testing procedures and everything else NAWGJ has done. You have helped make each and every judge a better judge!

On a personal level, I always enjoy seeing you and being around you. Even when we disagree, I feel we can talk with each other. I will miss you, but I hope we get to see each other – maybe even at events other than meetings or meets!

**HAPPY RETIREMENT, BETTY!! YOU DESERVE IT!**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Hilary".



Contributions included in a Memory Book for Betty Sroufe  
For her Retirement in 2013

When I first knew of Betty, I had heard she was a very tough, strict assigner. I was getting ready to move to the Cincinnati area, and I was a little nervous to move away from all the judges I had basically grown up with. Much to my surprise, Betty helped me feel right at home in Cincinnati. She assigned me to meets right away, and was always very nice to me. She has always gone out of her way to tell me good job, and to thank me for volunteer positions I have held. She has always stressed professionalism to all of our judges in Ohio, and it is obvious just looking at any group of Ohio judges that we are a very professional, hard-working group. Betty, thanks so much for all of your years of service to the sport of gymnastics! You have made a lasting impact on the sport and all of its participants, and for that I say Thank You!!!

-Katie Smigiel, SW Judge

\*\*\*I know that I riled you up a few times with my State Newsletters when I was state chairman or when I was upset with a score but in either case, our 'conflicts' were simply a result of the fact that we cared about the kids.

I don't know if you will remember this but when President Clinton turned the Oval Office into the Oral Office, I will never forget your reaction about the recall attempt being made. It was something about any American made women would do the same with him!

We would be remiss to not mention our fond memories of Bud and how we enjoyed his company.

We wish you a long, happy, healthy retirement and always remember that you always were and always will be a highly respected lady who always tried to do the best thing possible for the girls and for the sport, and for that, we thank you.

With love and best wishes,  
Ron and Joan Ganim

\*\*\*One time at Judges' Cup Betty kept telling me her mouse died. Since I didn't associate her with computers that much I thought she meant a pet mouse. Later I came to realize that she is quite proficient with the computer; much more so than she lets on.

-Jennifer Morgan, SW Ohio Judge. (NOTE: Jennifer is a programmer and the most tech savvy person I know)

\*\*\*Betty Sroufe is an institution in Region V for the sport of gymnastics. Over her many years of service, she has touched the lives of judges, coaches and athletes. Personally, she and her husband were clinicians during my formative years as a judge. Betty will be remembered by many for years to come. I wish her a well-earned, restful retirement.

Kathy Kelly  
USA Gymnastics  
Vice President of Women's Program

\*\*\* Betty,

What can I say?!!! You have been so wonderful to all of us judges through the years. I remember how I felt when I would see you walking towards me (scared the \_\_\_\_\_ out of me until I got to know one of the



most wonderful Friend and Judge that I could of found through the sport of Gymnastics. You Carol and myself had gone through alot of ups and downs but mostly UPS. Do you remember getting to throw the pie in John's face? I know you really enjoyed doing that; how much FUN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
Best wishes for a wonderful retirement and all your future plans!!!

Love,  
Joyce Brown

\*\*\*THE BUTTERFLY. (NOTE: This was a poem written by an Ohio Judge, Barb Rambaud, as a tribute to Carol Arnaut, former SJD. She and Betty were quite close. Appropriate now for both of those Ohio icons)

A butterfly fluttered among the flowers  
on a warm and windy day,  
for Carol had left us suddenly  
many friends gathered there to pray.

We know her lovely soul is at rest  
though we miss her still today  
and now one year later is seems  
we still feel her guide our way.

Carol, we miss your tender smile  
and look back to where we've been  
no one will ever replace your heart,  
or the spirit of you within.

When your butterfly lit upon the flowers,  
we knew that you were there  
to help us cherish your memory,  
erasing burdens everywhere.

Your butterfly has come to symbolize  
all the goodness you had inside,  
for we deeply miss your presence now,  
as in heaven you now reside.

One day we'll surely meet again  
in God's Kingdom you will wait,  
watch over all your friends down here,  
till we meet at heaven's gate.

By Barb Rambaud



\*\*\*Betty will always be my favorite judge EVER! There was a time in my gymnastics career when I was a Class three gymnast. I was so nervous because Betty and my mom were judging bars and it definitely wasn't my favorite event. Well, I ended up taking the event and the score came up (and I swear this is true!) a 3.50! I will NEVER forget that day! Betty will be missed and the gold shoes will live on forever...no one can ever live up to those beauties! To this day I still feel uncomfortable if my hair isn't up, skirt, hose, and heels on to make me feel appropriately dressed to judge a competition. I love you Betty and hope you are living large somewhere beautiful!!!

Donagene Jones

Gymnastics Ambassador, International Choreographer and former Queen City Gymnast

\*\*\*TOP TEN REASONS WHY WE TREASURE AND LOVE OUR BETTY BOOP!

- 1) Betty's gold shoes went straight up in the air with her head straight down as she fell in the Buckeye pit while walking around as our meet referee while judging!
- 2) Betty's tireless work to keep us in uniform which made us all look as professional as we do today which is a GREAT thing!
- 3) Betty's love of her doggie, MO!
- 4) Betty's stories of her dance teams and teaching days where her Drill Sargent approach which produced many winning programs!
- 5) Betty's fun stories about Nancy and Denise in those early days of dance team and producing gymnastic judges out of them!
- 6) Betty's guardian angels and crosses that she wears to show her strong faith.
- 7) Betty's care to please the meet directors and judges with her many years of assigning officials! Does she hold the US record for assigning?
- 8) Betty's time she told me that our Catie was a talented gymnast but she was so small that she could not keep the proper rhythm to the floor music?
- 9) Betty's love of her two Patrick's at The Cup and the great time she had with each of these fine men.
- 10) Betty's love of gymnastic and people which will be always be in our hearts!

WE will miss you, Betty, more than you ever will know as we have been friends for 38 years!!!!!!

Love, Char (Christensen)

\*\*\*My memories of Betty Sroufe during the past 27 years are too numerous to pick out just one or two to talk about. So, I just want to say, Thank you Betty for all of your years of service. You have worked long and hard for the good of NAWGJ and women's gymnastics. You always made sure all of the judges in Ohio (especially the "South") had every opportunity possible to go to clinics/workshops/symposium and have spent countless hours doing the assigning for the South.

Again, thank you for everything you have done for me during my time as a judge. I will miss you.

Damie Scott,

SW Judge

\*\*\*Dearest Betty,

Words cannot adequately express my appreciation and admiration for all you have done for the gymnastics community - nationally, state wide and locally.

Personally, you trained me as a judge and taught me to see the big picture, always put the gymnast first and to be impartial and objective when affiliated. You also taught me how to stand on my own two feet, and not be a "fence sitter!" I am most grateful for your help with the NCAA college coaches -you were instrumental in the scholarship offers that Bethany received.

You encouraged the SW Ohio judges to be comfortable in our chairs before we tested up. And you stressed professionalism inside and out. You made us the "best of the best" by emphasizing that we were prepared, current in our certifications and education, and dressed in our NAWGJ finest.

I will always remember our time in Panama City together and meeting your winter friends! It was fun to soak up the sun and attend bingo, your line dancing classes and church - and we did have a wild ride there :)

Here is a happy memory of my first meet which I have shared with many of the judges:

With trepidation I prepared for my first gymnastics judging assignment. I was to judge beam and floor at the Campbell County YMCA. I had reviewed, studied and practiced with videos both of these events. While not completely confident, I was at least prepared! The Friday before the big day (about 12 hours before the big event) I received a phone call in the gym at Queen City. With fear and trepidation, I took the call from the National Secretary/Treasurer and SW Ohio Assigner, Betty Sroufe! At this point my only familiarity with Betty was observing her judge my daughter, monitor judging tests, and conducting one assigning meeting. I remember shaking in my shoes.....!. Betty asked if I would be willing to take her place at the Dynamo Invitational on bars! Her little Peke was ill and she didn't want to leave him :(

Well of course I said yes! I was fortunate enough to judge with a very patient Dona Jones who insisted I have my bar shorthand down by the end of the meet. During our lunch break, Betty called Vicki Haggard (the Meet Ref) to check up on my appearance and judging. Receiving positive comments, she then asked if I would like to judge the following day for her. Once again, I said yes and the rest is history.....Thanks for your confidence and encouragement Betty. I have loved my judging career.

Hugs and best wishes on many wonderful retirement years...

Pamela (Groskopf)

\*\*\*Dear Betty,

From your gold shoes to the way you keep your judges in line, I want to wish you the best in your retirement from judging.

You have been very supportive of Pamela (Groskopf) in her assigning tasks, and you were just great in helping Bethany find a college.

Also, A big thank you for allowing me to take video for the judges, the YMCAs, and the clubs.

The gymnastics community will miss you dearly.

Attached is my favorite shot of you, doing what you do best - judging. This shot includes Dara Grant and was taken back in 1997.

Sincerely,  
Tom Groskopf



\*\*\*Betty,

Thank you so much for being such a wonderful friend to my mom and an excellent judge. I will always remember your gold shoes and smiling face. I was always very excited to see you judging at Ohio State meets and it was somehow a comfort for me to see you there.

Thank you so much for your years of service in the gymnastic community. You have truly been a blessing to know!

May God bless you,  
Bethany Penton

\*\*\*TOP 10 Betty-ism's

1. You can't come off a meet unless you are dead or in the hospital on your deathbed.
2. No more than three pins on your jacket!
3. How can you judge with your hair in your face?
4. We're so busy this weekend, we even need Mo to judge!
5. Nyat, nyat, nyat!
6. No turtlenecks!
7. Sit like a lady.
8. Make sure you have your NAWGJ insurance!
9. I don't give a rip!
10. Blouses should always be tucked in!

So many wonderful memories were made by the JCI Board over so many years of work. You were a very special part of all those memories and all that work, and the world of women's gymnastics judging was moved forward as a result.

Can't begin to count the number of times we worked together judging meets, teaching judging clinics, teaching compulsory routines, planning events, and sharing all that life offered in good times and in bad.

I love you Betty and thank God that He brought you into my life to share so much together. You have been such a blessing to me in so many ways. I wish you the best that life has to offer as you move on to another chapter. I know you will shine in whatever you do and bless those around you as well.

Keep in touch!

Love, Delene Darst

\*\*\*What can I say about Betty Sroufe without crying onto the paper? I started my daughter in gymnastics at White Oak Physical Arts Center in 1977. I walked into the gym with John Thomas the owner and asked how I enroll her. She took classes for 2 yrs and made the team. Mary Lee Tracy was on the team also. Lee was 16 yrs old and my daughter Dona was 8 yrs old. Lee quit and became a Bengal Cheerleader and the rest is history. She was actually my daughter's first optional coach. My husband, Phil Jones, didn't much like her or anyone for that matter, and took her out of the program, when Lee set Dona's bars wrong at her first optional meet in Louisville, KY! Phil Jones took her over to Queen City in 1979 and said Lee didn't know what she was doing. Lee was 18 yrs old. Phil passed away at 41 yrs old. When Lee put two athletes on the 1996 Olympic Team, my son Billy, whom I miss so much, said, "Dad never knew what he was talking about anyway."

While she was on the team at WPAC, parents were not allowed to watch. I was divested! LOL I saw a sign on the wall about becoming a judge, call Betty Sroufe. 1978. With her help and tutoring, I received a Class I Rating in 18 months. Equivalent to a Level 10 rating now. I had no gymnastics experience at all and with her help, and she didn't cheat, I passed the test. I loved judging so much, and she gave me meets all over. I met such wonderful people through my first years of judging. Denise DeLotell, Jody Borda, Betty's ex- gymnast, Nancy Hulshult, Janet Fraver, Delene Darst, Joanne Hester etc.....

In August 1979 at Queen City, Gary asked me if I would come in and help with the team for Dona's tuition. I said yes and the more I coached, the more I wanted to coach instead of judging. Betty taught me dance technique, judging technique, her husband Bud was brilliant. We did have fun studying for those damn tests every year. She was hard on us, wanted us to be professional, dress correctly, hell she made me quit chewing gum and to this day I don't chew gum. My daughter was an inherently gifted dancer, and Betty loved Dona. Bought her Leotards from all over her travels. I still have the gift she got me from the 1984 Olympics in LA!

When my husband and I separated in 1983, I needed to make so much more money! She gave me meets all over the place, plus my coaching. I was a very conscientious person and she knew that. She had her favorites and I think I was one of them. She didn't hesitate to yell at me if I misbehaved and I did that a lot. LOL!

I was there at her house the night her husband died. She showed me old pix of the both of them. We talked for hours that night. Until then I never knew how old she was. It was a deep, dark secret! I knew both her handsome sons, Barry and Phil, her sister Toots and her daughter-in-law Kim.

I must thank her for getting me into a sport that I love so dearly. That helped me overcome so many obstacles in my life! She gave me a profession, that without her I would never have been able to accomplish what I have accomplished! I went to see her several months ago, since I am retired and have to time to play! She thought I was mad at her after I lost my son, and didn't talk to her. I told her I loved her very much, and that I hated the world for years. It was not her I hated, it was everybody! I am going back to visit her after the holidays

There will never be another Betty Sroufe. She was honest, fair, kind, considerate, and spoke her mind. I must tell you a short story, when I was at Championships in 1992 in Columbus, OH. She was the out of bounds judge. She stood up for what she believed in. Kim Zmeskal went out of bounds on her first pass. I was there with my athletes. Betty raised the flag. Madame Fie walked around the floor and told the judges she was not out of bounds and the deduction was not taken. Betty told Jackie, it is your ball game baby...and never raised the flag again all weekend.

She took shit from no one! Ever! Practiced what she preached. I hope to visit her more since I am retired. She is like my second Mom. Without her there would never have been a Pat Warren! EVER! I love you dear lady! FOREVER!

Love,  
Pat Warren

p.s. I must tell you she did over score my daughter on floor. Oops!



In Memory of Betty Sroufe  
NAWGJ Charter & Lifetime Member



It is with great sadness that NAWGJ would like to announce the passing of our beloved Betty Sroufe. Betty passed away on December 12th, 2024 at 99 years of age.

Betty was a founding member of NAWGJ. She served as our Secretary/Treasurer from 1974-2014. Her service and dedication to the NAWGJ Board of Directors and NAWGJ Ohio will long be remembered.

When Betty was recently interviewed for a NAWGJ History project in August of 2024, she was quoted as saying:

"Judging gave me many friendships that I would not normally have had. I also enjoyed the traveling."

May we always remember her friendship, her dedication, her leadership and those spectacular "Golden Shoes".

