

Reporters' Notebook: At the roller rink, partying like it's 1968

By **READINGEAGLE**

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Bill Clark and his fans at a local roller rink in the 1960s. Clark opened **CC Skate Ranch** near Douglassville on Oct. 18, 1968. Now 88, he was celebrated last week at **Fantasy Skating Center** in Muhlenberg Township, where he played as the skaters twirled.

Organist Bill Clark turned the clock back 50 years recently with a concert of roller skating music at Fantasy Skating Center in Muhlenberg Township.

Clark, 88, who lives in Florida, founded the former CC Skate Ranch on Route 422 in Douglassville with partner Harold "Chas" Christman. Billed as the "East Coast's greatest organist," Clark was featured at opening night on Oct. 18, 1968. The rink boasted a dust-free maple skating surface, 500 pairs of new rental skates, a modern snack bar and parking for 300 vehicles.

"Bill Clark was a skater, and in his early days started playing organ at several roller skating rinks," said Mike Bowman, former operator of **Overlook Skating Rink** in Lancaster. "He developed a name for himself and skaters would travel distances to skate to his unique style."

Skaters danced and bounced in harmony with Clark's renditions of 1950s and 1960s rock 'n' roll classics on Saturday nights for about a decade at **CC Skate Ranch**, which the partners sold in 1978.

Clark returned for a guest concert at **Fantasy Skating Center** in 2010, and was featured in a Reading Eagle story.

With the advent of disco music in the 1970, Clark said, the crowds dwindled at roller skating rinks.

"Although there are multiple organists that have adopted his style, Bill was always an innovator and mentor to them," said Bowman, who considers Clark a friend and mentor.

Clark, who retired to Florida, still plays organ at retirement homes and in the Tampa theater.

– Ron Devlin, reporter