

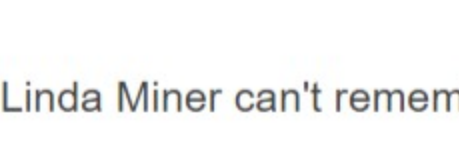
TOP STORY

## Roll with the changes

Christopher Buckley cbuckley@heraldstandard.com Jan 27, 2016 Updated Jan 27, 2016 0



Valley Skating Center, located on Galiffa Drive in Donora. Holly Tonini



Linda Miner can't remember a time in her life when she wasn't skating.

She was just a toddler when her father, Floyd Shoup, put her in skates, the wheels tightened at first until she became steady on them.

Standing in the heart of Valley Skating in Donora, the rink she has operated since 1983, Miner recalls memories of those days growing up at her father's rink, Arena Roller Rink in Washington, Pennsylvania.



"For my father, skating was his passion," Miner said "But he was not allowed to compete because he worked in a roller rink and they considered that a conflict of interest.

"He lived his life, his dreams through me."

After 65 years of immersing herself in skating, Miner has reluctantly decided to sell Valley Skating, located in the Donora Industrial Park.

Miner first competed in figure skating in 1951 and a year later won her first state championship at the Melody Roller Rink in Uniontown, at age 5. By 1955, she won her first national title in Toledo, Ohio.

For 11 years, Miner competed. She married one day short of her 20th birthday. A year later, in 1967, she began a lifelong coaching career that spanned decades and hundreds of athletes, many who gained fame in figure and speed skating on the national stage.

When her father lost his Washington rink under an urban redevelopment project, the Washington County Redevelopment Authority moved Floyd Shoup to Roll-R-Skate rink in Canonsburg.

"It was the middle of the disco era and the people literally rolled in, especially during the weekends," Miner said.

The rink was located behind the current McDonald's. The fast food restaurant features a statue of Canonsburg native Bobby Vinton.

"Bobby Vinton met his wife in my father's rink," Miner said. "(Years later), my mom and dad were at Bobby Vinton's Blue Velvet Theater in Branson, Missouri. He stopped his show and went into the audience and told the people how he met his wife in dad's rink."

Vinton later sang in her father's rink, which also attracted big bands like the Lombardo Brothers and singers such as Chubby Checker and Patty LaBelle.

"They came for the dances and the policemen's balls," Miner said.

Her father opened a second rink, in Waynesburg. When his partner left, the Miners bought into the business in 1978.

Linda and John Miner broke ground in February 1983 for Valley Skating in Donora. It opened for business eight months later. After a strong first year, some lean years followed before the rink took off by 1988.

In addition to public skating and private parties, Valley Skating for more than 20 years hosted a nationally renowned international skating competition.

Looking out at the rink behind her, Miner flashes back to her father's rink in Washington.

"You could skate under two balconies," Miner said. "The one balcony had a beginners balcony."

Then pointing to a special corner of the Donora rink, she continues, "I really believe in a beginning rink and believe it is a necessity."

The couple had a son Shawn, now 46, and a daughter, Kylie, 42. Shawn Miner would be a national medalist in speedskating, his mom as coach.

Her son was in middle school, her daughter in third grade when they moved to Donora. Even today, Miner lives in a 3,000-square-foot home atop the rink.

The 85-foot by 185-foot rink at Donora brings back memories for Miner. She occasionally watches videos of her father skating and coaching her.

"There were days it was tough being coached by your dad because he expected perfection," Miner said. "But if it wasn't for my dad, I would not have accomplished what I did."

Her proudest memories were of watching her students win on the national stage.

Miner said she is selling the rink and moving to Daytona Beach, Florida, to be with her mother, who is now 88.

"I need to take care of her," Miner said. "It's time I go."

Miner said the sale could take a couple of years to complete.

Miner admits she will shed a tear when she walks out of the rink for the last time.

"It will be bittersweet moment," Miner said. "I will be embarking on a whole new adventure in my life."

Then reflecting back, Miner recalls, "I watched my dad leave the Canonsburg rink in tears."

She has had some interest from potential buyers, for various uses.

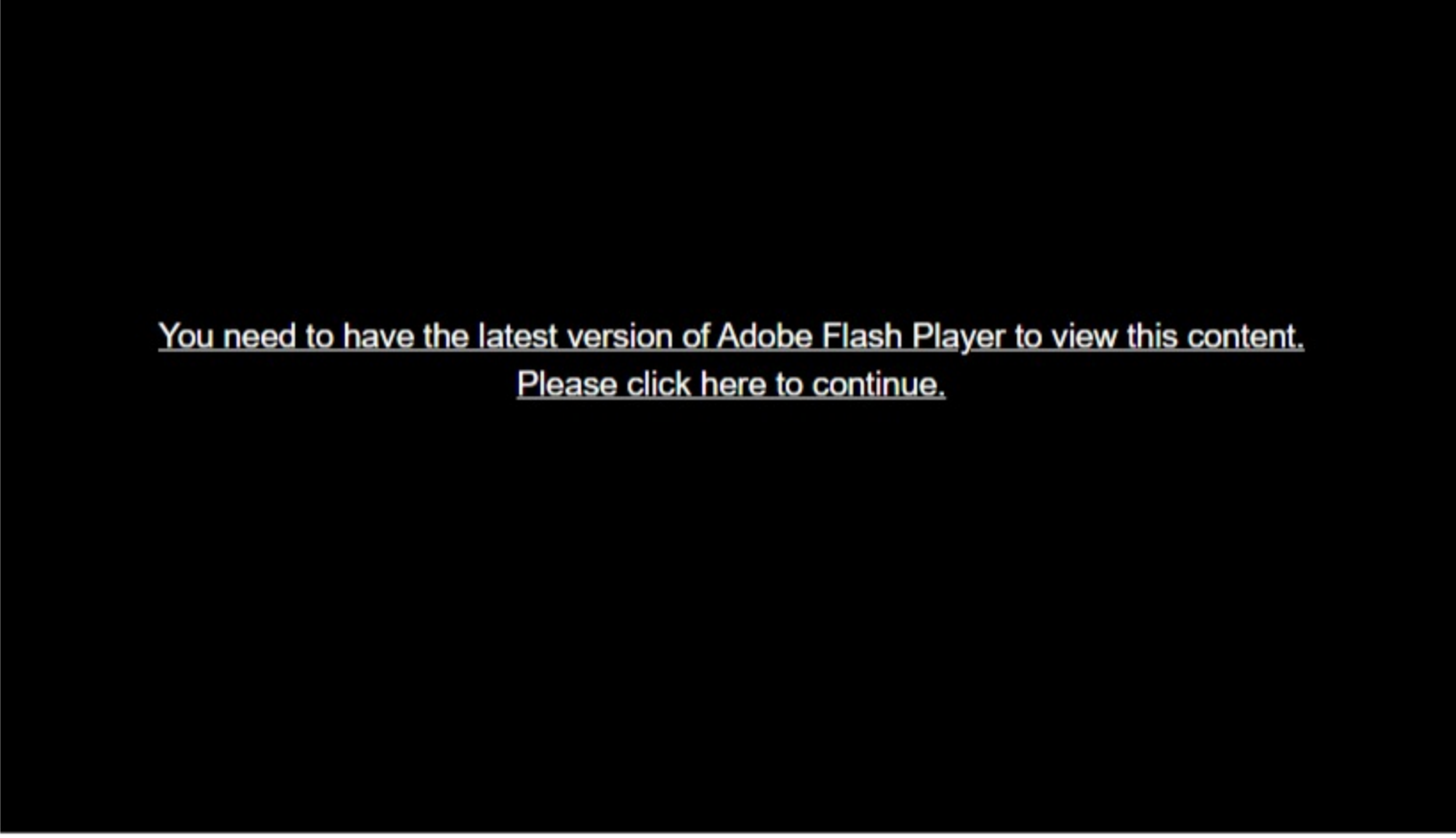
"I have to let go of it," Miner said. "I'd love to see it stay a roller rink because the kids of the Valley need a place to go to stay off the streets."

Miner laughs when she notes that if she hit the Powerball, she would donate the rink to the community.

Miner said her heart is in the rink.

"This place has become a part of me," Miner said. "I'll be leaving that part of my life."

"I don't have any regrets. I've had a fabulous ride with this."



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