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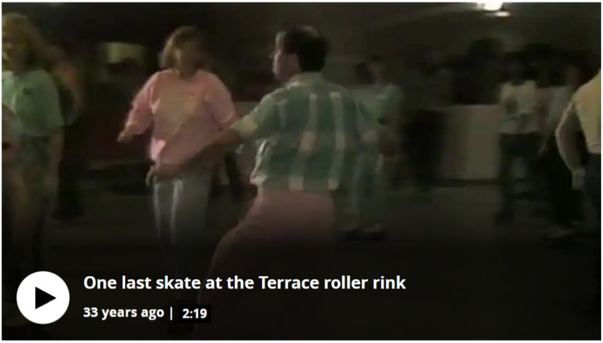
How 'old-timers' said goodbye to the roller rink they loved

At the Terrace, roller skating meant making friends and lifelong memories

CBC Archives · Posted: Apr 30, 2019 11:30 AM ET | Last Updated: April 30, 2021


One last skate at the Terrace roller rink
33 years ago | 2:19

Smiling and crying, roller skating enthusiasts young and old turned out for one last trip around the arena in 1989.

1 comments

The downtown Toronto building had gone through plenty of change. First it was a hockey arena, then a roller rink, then a three-level multi-purpose recreation centre.

But by April 1989, The Terrace couldn't withstand the building boom that had seized the city. It was going to be demolished to build luxury condominiums.

The Terrace hosted a skate for "old-timers" on its last day of operation on April 30, 1989. (CBLT News/CBC Archives)

CBC reporter Steve Paikin was there as roller skating veterans came out to the Terrace for one last skate.

'Sad' goodbye

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"We have a lot of friends and we're glad about it," said owner Ted Dickson. "I'm going to be sad, but I think it's one of those things that had to happen."

Steve King was one of those old friends. He was lacing up roller skates that he'd owned since before the roller rink opened in 1938.

"I got them at Eaton's in 1937, I think it was," he said.

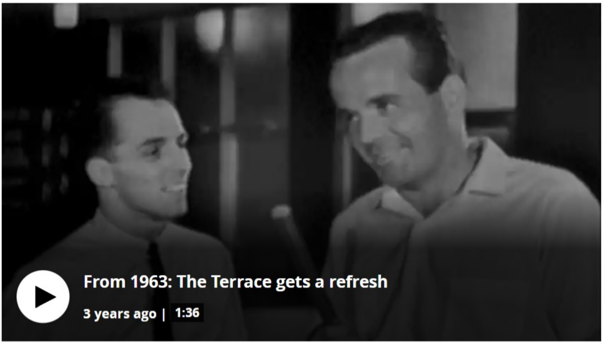
"I have met a lot of people here, and made a lot of friends over the years," said Doris Jenkins, who also met her husband there.

"I got them at Eaton's," said "old timer" Steve King, tying up his skates before the last day at The Terrace. (CBLT/CBC Archives)

Before it was a roller rink, the site was known as the Mutual Street Arena and was home to Toronto's NHL team "when the Maple Leafs were winners," noted Paikin.

Hockey announcer Foster Hewitt called his first game there for radio in 1923.

'Angry' new fans


From 1963: The Terrace gets a refresh
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CBC program On the Scene visits the refurbished roller rink and recreation centre in 1963.

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In 1962 the roller rink got a "facelift" and a new name — The Terrace — becoming a three-tier facility with 26 curling sheets, a gym and and a driving range for golfers, according to the Globe and Mail on Aug. 8, 1962.

"It also created a new generation of roller skating fans who are angry that the place is closing," said Paikin.

Outside, a bullhorn-wielding young man rallied those younger fans, some of them bearing placards, in a demonstration of anger and sadness.

'A hard day'

Lisa Coney and Helen Killeen, bereft at the looming demolition, said they had been coming to The Terrace every weekend for four years. (CBLT/CBC Archives)

"Some of us have nothing else to do but come here," said a weeping Lisa Coney, whose friend Helen Killeen buried her face in grief.

"It's my only entertainment, like, regularly," added a young man.

Back inside, the old-timers held hands and sang *Auld Lang Syne* to say goodbye before a cascade of balloons dropped to cheers and applause.

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With an hour left to skate, Paikin took the hand of a fellow skater he called Anna and glided off.

"It's my only entertainment," said a fan of The Terrace as young people congregated outside on The Terrace's last day. (CBLT News/CBC Archives)

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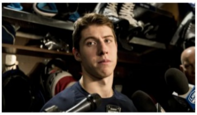

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Roosevelt Smith 3 years ago

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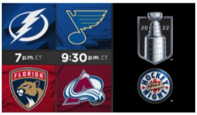

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