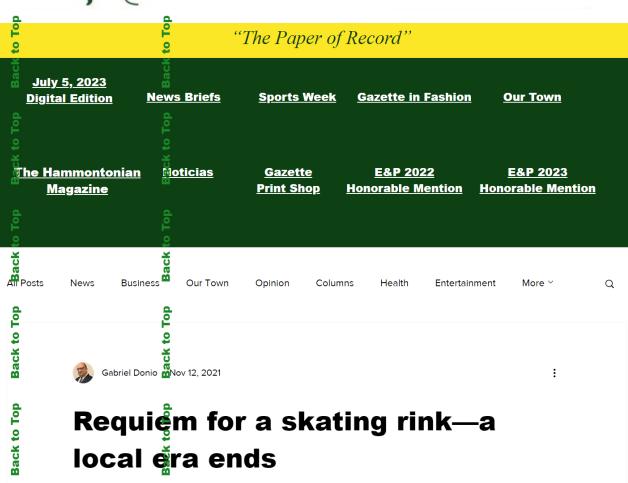
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The Hammonton Gazette





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Rita Bagliani, former owner of Rollway Skating Rink, was a competition skater. (Courtesy Photo)

You wouldn't think that a nondescript rectangular building located on Second Road in the Hammonton Business Park would hold so many memories, but it did. It first made those memories when Kollway Skating Rink was opened in 1970 by Carlo and Sara Drago. In 2016, Hammonton Skating Center continued to be a place where memories were made.

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Now those memogies are at an end, and the skating center is closed after decades as a source of entertaigment, socializing and fun for local and area youth and families.

h F. Berenato's excelle

Please read Joseph F. Berenato's excellent article on page 1 (in the November 10, 2021 Print Edition) about the kating center's closing. There are memories from names you know: Rita Bagliani, Jeffrey Boswell, Jenna DeLuca and several more who cherished their time at the skating center.

"I think about all the kids that are in town that now don't have a skating rink to go to, and it breaks my heart," Bagliani told Berenato.

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In Hammonton, where institutions tend to last longer than they would anywhere else because of the people who per un them and the people who patronize them, it's always a shock when a long-standing business or entity closes. When Kessler Memorial Hospital was shuttered, it felt that way. One person told me, "I can't believe I'm going to see it open and close in my lifetime."

Like the hospital, to possible the skating center was a victim of changing times. Not many businesses stay and after five years, let alone 50. Still, it was open until the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic hit. It's not too far outside the realm of possibility to say that if the pandemic hadn't happened, the skating center may still have been a going concern today.

But the pandemicalid happen, and so did a lot of other variables that led to the sale of the facility. There will be a void now—people did go there, although it's safe to say that the 1970s and 1980s marked some of the best years for what was known then as Rollway Skating Rink.

That era happens to be my childhood and teenage years, and I spent quite a bit of time at the skating rink back then, even if my limited coordination made me a poor skater. When I hit the skating rink, I literally hit it—falling down and getting up repeatedly.

I didn't mind. All my friends were there, and it was a wonderful place to hang out and just be a kid. Plus, they have space Invaders, only the coolest video game of the early 1980s, along with pinball machines. When I was tired of all that, I'd eat some pizza and drink a Coke at their snack bar.

Then, I'd watch people slow skate to "Open Arms" by Journey under the spinning disco ball in the darkened rink followed by skating out to the middle of the rink and joining everyone in the "Hokey Pokey"

Good times, good times.

I was optimistic when Hammonton Skating Center opened. They remodeled the place and seemed like they had intentions of making it last for more decades to come. It didn't happen, and now the longer of the skating center in Hammonton is at an end.

As winter is coming on, and the cold winds blow, the closing of this local institution reminds us that everything ends eventually. Maybe it's that luncheonette you used to go to all the time, or the school you used to attend or a favorite retail store. What warms us is the memories that linger long after the physical buildings and employees are gone.

