

## SHORT HISTORICAL NOTES XI

Anton Gajdoš, Bratislava, Slovakia

Ph.D. Anton Gajdoš born on 1.6.1940 in Dubriniči (today Ukraine) lives most of his life in Bratislava (ex TCH, nowadays SVK). He comes from gymnastics family (his brother Pavel have world championship medals) and he devoted his life to gymnastics. His last achievement is establishment of Narodna encyklopedia športu Slovenska ([www.sportency.sk](http://www.sportency.sk)). Among his passion is collecting photos and signatures of gymnasts. As we tend to forget old champions and important gymnasts, judges and coaches, we decided to publish part of his archive under title Short historical notes. All information on these pages is from Anton's archives and collected through years.



### ABIE GROSSFELD (born 1.3.1934, New York, USA)

Grossfeld received both his BS and MS degrees from the University of Illinois, and is Professor Emeritus of Southern Connecticut State University

Gymnastics legend Frank Cumiskey (1932, 1936 and 1948 gymnastics Olympian) stated, "After six decades of being in the trenches, Abie Grossfeld has influenced an untold number of gymnasts, coaches and judges who have notably impacted the positive development of gymnastics. Abie's level of excellence in the primary areas of gymnastics, as a whole, has been truly exceptional and, in my experience, has not been matched by any other individual." Abie Grossfeld has been active in gymnastics for 65 years and counting. While many of his accomplishments and contributions have been outstanding, it is his whole body of work that has been truly extraordinary. Paraphrased statements by Olympians: 1984 Olympian and NBC commentator Tim Daggett said, "After each encounter with Abie, as I was developing through the years, I always left with a better understanding of the wonderful sport of gymnastics. The success of Abie and his gymnast Peter Kormann (at the 1976 Olympics) was my catalyst to dream bigger dreams, which ultimately took me all the way to the Olympics itself - on a team Abie coached. We won Gold as a team and Abie made us a team. In gymnastics, he's done it all. He imparted technique, wisdom and guidance in me." 1984 Olympic Team Captain Peter Vidmar said, "Abie held the collection of the 1984 team members together...Abie knows every significant gymnastics person - officials, judges,

competitors – in the world...Abie brought a sense of neutrality to the team. He didn't play favorites. Subtly and very effectively, Abie created an atmosphere of camaraderie, ...not dissension. The team wound up having "good chemistry, and Abie was the chief chemist." Don Tonry, 1960 Olympian said, "If there ever was a legend in gymnastics, or any sport, it is Abie."



Figure: 1984 US Men's Olympic Team: (from the left) Makato Sakamoto (assistant coach), Scott Johnson, Peter Vidmar, Bart Conner, Tim Daggett, Jim Hartung, Jim Mikus, Mitch Gaylord, Abie Grossfeld (head coach).

Abie Grossfeld's official capacity as an athlete, a coach, judge or head of delegation involved 8 Olympic Games, 11 World Gymnastics Championships, and 5 Pan American Games.

Abie Grossfeld represented the U.S. in international competitions spanning 15 consecutive years (1953-1967). Among the quadrennial games in which he competed as a gymnast were two Olympic Games (1956 and 1960); two World Championships (1958 and 1962); and three Pan-American Games (1955, 1959 and 1963). He won four NCAA titles (all-around, floor exercise and high bar twice)

Abie served as a coach (spanned 28 years) within national team in 5 Olympic Games, three times Olympic Head Men's Coach - 1972, 1984 (won the team Gold medal – America's first) and 1988. Note: At the 1984 Games, the U.S. team defeated the reigning, the clear favorites and the same World Champion Chinese team who had defeated the Soviet Union's team (in Europe) at the 1983 World Championships eight months before. U.S. Olympic victory was a major upset, seven Olympic individual medals for men, including two Gold (Peter Vidmar on PH and Bart Conner on PBs) in 1984. Two times Olympic Assistant Coach (for men in 1964, for women in 1968). Five times World Gymnastics Championships Head Coach - 1966, 1981, 1983, 1985 and 1987. World Cup Head Coach - (Zagreb) 1982. The inaugural Goodwill

Games Head Coach – (Moscow) 1986. He was personal coach of Peter Kormann who in 1976 was the first post WWII U.S. Olympic gymnastics individual medalist since 1932 or in 44 years. Also personal coach of John Crosby who tied an all sports record by winning a clean sweep of eight medals at a single Pan American Games, including two Gold medals (for floor exercise and rings in 1971). Forty-two years was a collegiate gymnastics head coach – one year at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and 41 years coach at Southern Connecticut State University, where he was also a professor of exercise science and athletics.

Grossfeld has been an FIG Brevet judge (highest certification) from the first course and examination were given in the United States in 1969 (and through 2011). He has officiated at the highest levels of competition, including: two World Championships (1994 and 1999); three Pre-Olympics (1991, 1995 and 1996); the Pan American Games (1983); two Pacific Alliance (1996, 2002); German Unification Cup (1990); World (Moscow) Cup (2007); and two International Goodwill Games (1990 and 1998); numerous American Cups, U.S. National Championships and Olympic trials.

As an official he was member of FIG Coaches Commission, 2000. U.S. Olympic Gymnastics Committee, 1968-1976 (disbanded after 1976). Board of Directors for New York City's bid for the 2012 Olympic Games, 2000-2005. USA Gymnastics Board of Directors, 1976-1978, 1990-1995, 2001-2008. Head of USA Delegations at two World Gymnastics Championships, 1995 and 1997. Acting Head of Olympic Gymnastics Delegation for men – 1996. World Acrobatic Society Vice President, 2003-2006; WAS Committee member (2003-2014) USA Gymnastics National Hall of Fame Committee, 1988-2008. USA Gymnastics Ethics Committee, 1990-2001. National Gymnastics Judges Association National Director-At-Large, 1993-1996. College Gymnastics Association Vice President, 2000-2004. USA Gymnastics Men's Program Committee, 1974-77, 1981-1988. U.S. National Coaching Staff, 1966-1972, 1981-1988, 2000.



Photo: Abie and Anton at WC 2009 in London

He worked also as commentator or with media as NBC production staff at the Barcelona Olympic Games, 1992, ABC production staff at the Fort Worth World Gymnastics Championships, 1979. U.S. representative to Japan to report on the Japanese system of gymnastics, 1970.

Two U.S. Department of State tours of the U.S. National Gymnastics Teams to the Middle East: Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey in 1958; and Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Cyprus, Turkey, Pakistan and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1961.

He is also author of numerous articles, books, video and audio material, among them most important are: Dintiman, G., et al, A Comprehensive Manual of Foundations and Physical Education Activities for Men and Women (Wrote Chapter, “Gymnastics and Tumbling”), 1979. George, G, USGF Safety Manual (Wrote Chapter, “Horizontal Bar”) 1985 and 1990 Eds and Wettstone, E., Gymnastics Safety Manual, (Wrote Chapter, “Progressions in Teaching Skills – Parallel Bars”), 1977 and 1979 Eds., video Gymnastics Safety First, Second and Always (USAG), 1987.

Honors: U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame, 2009 (only the third all sports coach, and the only gymnastics coach, inducted). International Gymnastics Hall of Fame, Frank Bare Award, 2015. The only American to achieve the status of FIG Master Coach, 2000. FIG Insignia of Merit (awarded for world class performance as a gymnast in Olympic Games), 1960. USA Gymnastics Hall of Fame (as an athlete, coach and contributor), 1979. National Gymnastics Judges, Frank Cumiskey, Hall of Fame. Both USA Gymnastics (1984) and NCAA (1973, 1975 and 1976) National Coach of the Year. USA Gymnastics prestigious Spirit of the Flame Award, 1999. World Acrobatic Society Gallery of Legends Award. The New York Benevolent Association Medal for saving a human life in peril, 1951 Named by “Sports Illustrated” (2000) as among the 50 Greatest Sports Figures of the 20th Century (from his birth state of New York, which included Vince Lombardi, Sandy Koufax, Lou Gehrig, Sugar Ray Robinson, Jim Brown, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Pop Warner, Sid Luckman, Hank Greenberg, among other sports legends.) Honored with a street name, Abie Grossfeld Circle, in New Haven, Connecticut. Four Nissen Award winners (analogous to football's Heisman Trophy), which set a record of four recipients in 1980 and, as of 2015 has not been surpassed by any coach - achieved without the benefit of athletic scholarships.

**Happy birthday Abie!**