

Dance Skating Nationals
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
July 2021



Bob and Molly Hillery

Dance Skating Nationals, July 2021

Sunday July 25

We had breakfast at Bob Evans with Elizabeth and then set off around I-275 to join I-74 West. We drove via Indianapolis to Crawfordsville, where we left the expressway to find somewhere for a light lunch. First, we tried Starbucks, but their lobby was closed due to staff shortages. We found the same at McDonalds almost next door. A nearby breakfast/brunch place was open but – not entirely unexpectedly – was packed with a long waiting line. Our final stop was at a Cracker Barrel where we were able to get a table after about 15 minutes and had a soup and salad lunch.

We then picked up I-74 West again and drove to Bloomington, IL where we had a reservation at the Marriott next to Illinois State University. We were soon checked in and in our room by 4pm Central Time. I went for a two-mile walk around the deserted but otherwise quite pleasant campus and then we relaxed until dinner time. I had made a reservation at a restaurant called Epiphany Farm, which was about a ten-minute drive from the hotel.

It was a very good meal in pleasant – if unusual – surroundings. We couldn't decide whether the building had previously been a fire station or a five-bay car service center. Either way, we enjoyed our evening.

Monday July 26

We were up before 8 and went to a local Bob Evans for breakfast before once again picking up I-74 West. The countryside in western Illinois was a little more undulating and the various shades of green made for a very pleasant drive. We stopped in Iowa City for coffee and from there it was less than an hour to Cedar Rapids and the Marriott hotel. We checked in and I decided on a walk, despite the 93-degree heat. I intended to walk in a square a few blocks on a side but missed one turn which caused me to complete 5 ¼ miles before staggering back into the hotel.

By this time, Christopher, Cyndi and Sammy had arrived and were checking in at the skating venue. They had planned a very early dinner (5:30) as Sammy had a very early practice session on Tuesday morning. Consequently, Molly and I joined them at Chili's (right next to the hotel) for a drink and later we went to a nice Italian restaurant for our meal.

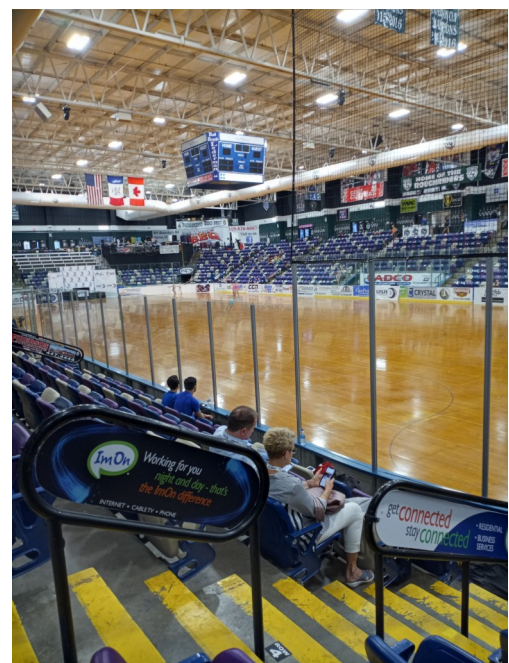
Tuesday July 27

Molly and I had breakfast coupons for the hotel buffet, so we went to eat there about 8:30. Shortly after that we were joined by Sammy and Cyndi who had returned from Sammy's practice. We chatted for a while before Sammy went to catch up on some sleep and then we returned to our room with the plan to join them for lunch later. I had time for time for a shorter walk before we met for lunch at a Mexican restaurant about two miles from the hotel.

We spent the afternoon, from 2:30 to 6, at the competition. Obviously, Sammy's actual skating time – including warm up and scoring for three dances – took up only about 20 minutes of those hours, but it was fun to watch the other skaters and admire not only their skill but their expensive-looking outfits.

Unfortunately, Sammy didn't make the cut for tomorrow's round so today was the end of her competition for this year. She hadn't expected to compete in the second round and didn't appear to be too disappointed.

Competition Vebue





One of a handful of male competitors



The podium—sadly not for Sammy this year



*Sammy
doing
her
thing*



Tonight, the five of us returned to Napolis, the restaurant where Molly and I had dined on Monday, and we had a very pleasant evening together.

Wednesday July 28

With the competition over for Sammy, we changed our plans to leave Cedar Rapids one day earlier – today. We are still planning to spend one night in Champaign, Illinois, and then have a final night in Louisville. The latter is pending availability to dine at our favorite restaurant there.

We met Cyndi, Christopher and Sammy for lunch at Panera and then we said our farewells as we left for Urbana, and they went to Chicago for a few days before flying home. It was an easy drive for us, and we arrived at the Courtyard about 5:30. We got a dinner reservation for tonight in Champaign and for tomorrow at Ruth's Chris in Louisville, so we are all set until we get home on Friday.

Tonight, we ate at Silver Creek restaurant about 5 miles from the hotel. We dined in a the "greenhouse" with great views to the outside garden and park area – and we also had a very good meal.

Thursday July 29

For the first time on this trip, we woke up to rainy skies. We had breakfast at a local Bob Evans and then set off for Louisville. We drove through light rain for a while but then the skies brightened and by the time we stopped for lunch on the Indianapolis ring road it was almost 90F and sunny. We arrived at our hotel in Louisville about 3:30 (back on Eastern time) and I went for a two-mile walk before we relaxed until dinner time. Tonight, we ate at one of our favorite restaurants anywhere – Ruth's Chris on the top of an Art Deco Frank Lloyd Wright tower overlooking the airport and the city in the distance. After a hesitant start with a new waitress, we enjoyed another good meal here.

Friday July 30

We checked out, had breakfast at Bob Evans and then drove directly home. Bridge work at the Ohio River in Cincinnati slowed us down but we were still home before 1pm after a very pleasant six-day vacation.

