

Suburban Life

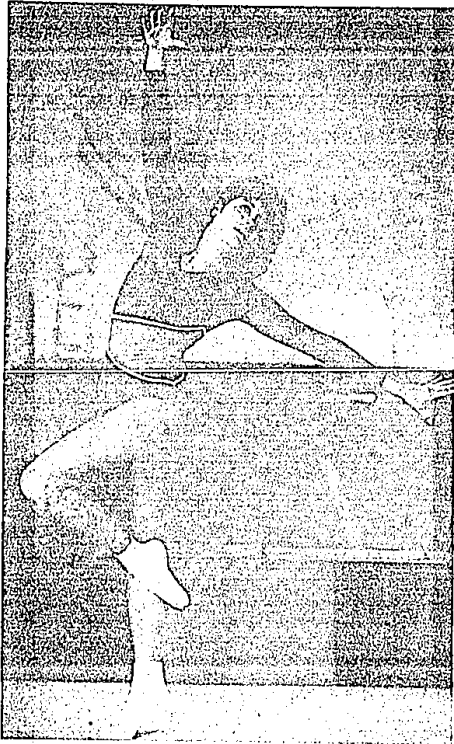
Lorraine McClellan editor/477-5450



Thursday, June 7, 1984 O&E

(F) 16

Ingrid Racka lived in Germany for two years a while back, so while she studied gymnastics there, she had an opportunity to compete on an international basis. This fall she'll be on Western Michigan University's team while she pursues a career in communications.



Gymnastics class of '84 Winning team scatters

By Lorraine McClellan
staff writer

If Dennis Spencer had a theme song for the week, it would probably be "Graduation Days are breaking up that old team of mine."

Spencer's lament is bittersweet. The old team has been a winning team for the coach at Farmington Gymnastics Center. Some members have been with him since he opened the gym four years ago and have been racking up medals and awards ever since. And he calls all of them his friends.

Yet, he says, "All of them have been pursued by colleges all during their last year of high school and all of them are getting full-ride scholarships. All of them took the grand tours on campuses all over the country. This is the pay off for all their hard work."

"I have five seniors on my team and five of them are going to the college of their choice; they've been able to choose the college and the gymnastics program and the coach they most want to work with."

"They are all good competitors. They are all highly motivated and they are all going to do well."

The gymnasts who are leaving the Farmington Gymnastics team to scatter from here to California after graduation are Ingrid Racka, Mary Kay Marshall, Cathy Heltert, Chris Wallace and Cindy Mazel.

RACKA AND Mazel are the only two of the award-winning gymnast graduates who will stay together. The two, who have been teammates for four years, will be roommates at Western Michigan University next fall.

Racka, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Racka of Farmington Hills, will graduate from Farmington High School after consistently placing in the top 10 in state competition.

Mazel, a former state champion and national competitor, graduates from Rockwood High School. For the past four years she traveled sometimes five times a week from her home near the Ohio border to work out with Spencer in Farmington.

Mary Kay Marshall, a former state champion gymnast who placed 6th in national competition, takes her diploma from Farmington High School. She chose California State University at Fullerton, because that school's gym team has been in national competition for the past nine years.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ken Marshall of Farmington Hills will be leaving home in mid-summer because training for the gym team starts Aug. 1.

Cathy Heltert, an All-State gymnast who took a second place in beam exercises in state competition, leaves Northville High School for Northern Michigan University. The daughter of Mr. and Mrs.



Mary Kay Marshall, a world class gymnast eligible to compete in the Olympics, leaves home in mid-summer to work out with the team at California State University at Fullerton, where she will study psychology.

John Heltert of Northville competed for Farmington Gymnastics Center as well as her high school team for the past four years. Wallace leaves Mercy High School for Ball State University in Ohio. She said she liked what she saw when she sat in on one of the school's gymnastic team workouts while she was taking a tour of the campus. The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wallace of Southfield says her forte is vaulting.

Staff photos by
Randy Borst

"THE BETTER known you are the more people you are going to have approach you with offers," Spencer said.

"Chris didn't have any exposure in high-school competition because Mercy doesn't have a team. Mary Kay has been watched by college recruiters for the last couple of years, at least, because she has been in so many competitions all around the country, and that recruiting never stops. It goes on all year around. So of course if you are competing with a club, the competition is more intense and the exposure is greater, than if you were only with a high-school team."

He added that the major money colleges are putting into women athletes now are in the fields of gymnastics, basketball and volleyball.

As Mary Kay Marshall was Spencer's most sought-after gymnast this year, he predicts Karen Phillips, going into her senior year at Farmington High School next fall, will be the most sought-after in the spring of '85.

And a few years after that, Spencer points to Alyson Newman, a student at Power Middle School, who is a Class 1 Junior State champion.

Farmington Gymnastics Center, now located at 24717 Crestview Court, will be moving, as well as broadening its base of operation this summer, in the same general area of Grand River and 10 Mile Road.

Spencer graduated from Farmington High School when the school took the state championship in gymnastics in 1966.

Chris Wallace tallied up a host of points for Farmington Gymnastics Center's team in vaulting. After graduation from Mercy High School, she'll be studying pre-med courses and on Ball State University's gymnastics team in Ohio.



Alyson Newman to her coach's candidate for taking a spot in the world of award-winning gymnasts. The Power Middle School student holds the Junior State Championship title.



Cathy Heltert, who took second in the state for beam exercises, will be scoring points for Northern Michigan University's gymnast team this fall where she will study computer science.