

NEIGHBOURS OF

OCTOBER 2020

Jumbo Gardens

Kathy Kangas –

Precision Accuracy - Champion Skydiver

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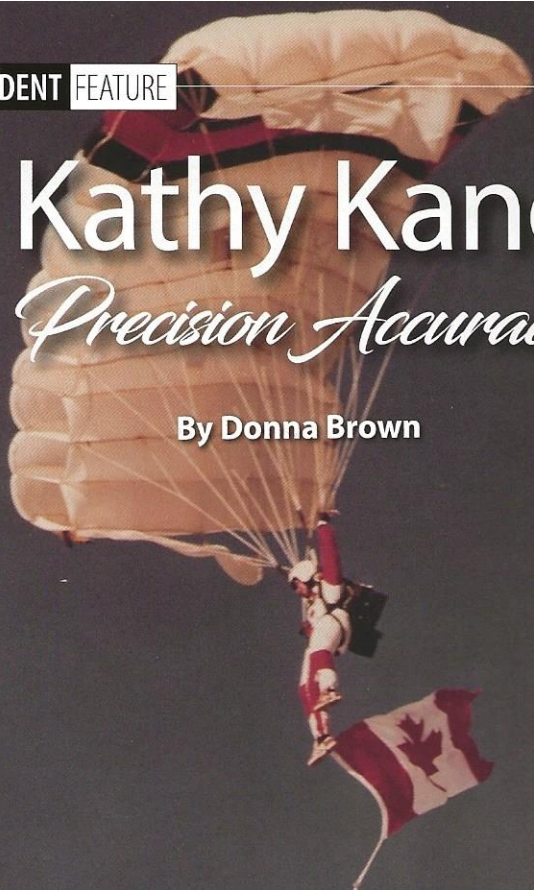
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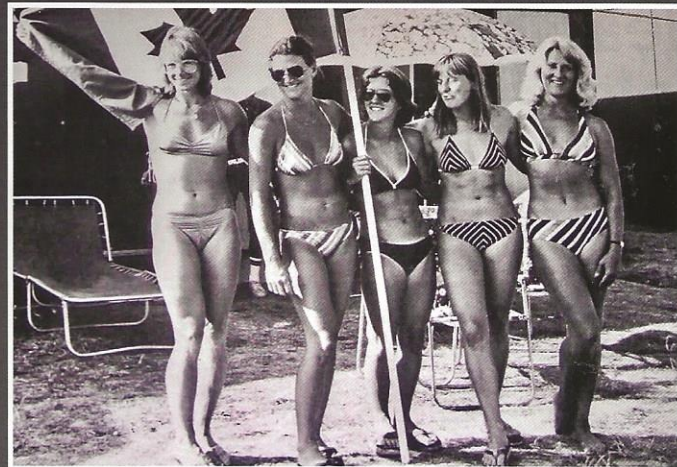
Kathy Kangas -

Precision Accuracy - Champion Skydiver

By Donna Brown



Big Thunder 1980 world cup of ski jumping



Canada's world silver medalist in team accuracy. From left to right: Bev Watson, Lisa Olsen, Eileen Vaughn, Brenda Blue, and Kathy Kangas - 1982 Czechoslovakia (Photo credit CanPara Nov/Dec 1982)

Kathy the youngest of four children, immigrated to Canada from Finland with her family when she was just three years old. She attended PACI High School, and it was here where she began a life-long career in sports earning 'Athlete of the Year Award' in 1962.

She continued her education at the University of Western Ontario in London, graduating with an Honours B.A. and then on to the University of Illinois to earn a Master of Science Degree in Exercise Physiology.

After completing her education, she returned to Port Arthur and landed a job as Assistant Director of Athletics at Lakehead University from 1968-1970.

In 1969 Kathy took what was to be the first of many parachute jumps, and went on to serve as a member of the National Skydiving Team from 1970 -1985.

If she wasn't busy enough already, Kathy served as Assistant Professor and Gymnastics Coach at New York State University from 1970 - 1972 and was the coach of U.S. Collegiate Gymnastics Champion, Kathy Gleason in 1971 at Penn State University.

In the 1970s while training for the Canadian National Parachute Championships in Fayetteville, North Carolina she met her former spouse Mike Keevil, (Sargent) U.S. Special Forces. "We had a lot of common interests," says Kathy. They were married in 1982.

During her lengthy career, Kathy earned a number of records and titles at the national and international level. Competing in 15 national championships, she placed in

the top five consistently, claiming the Canadian National Parachuting Accuracy title a total of four times: in 1972, 1973, 1982 and 1983.

At the World Invitational Parachuting Championships, held in Canton, China in 1981, Kathy earned a bronze medal in Women's Accuracy. She also represented Canada at eight world championships, a world record.

In 1982 Kathy and her teammates Brenda Blue, Lisa Olsen, Eileen Vaughn and Bev Watson represented Canada at the World Parachuting Championship in Czechoslovakia and took home the Silver Medal for Team Accuracy. This was a first of its kind for Canada, and Kathy was the top scorer on the team.

In 1984, Kathy became the first Canadian woman to reach 3,000 freefall parachute jumps, earning her the "Double Diamond Wings."

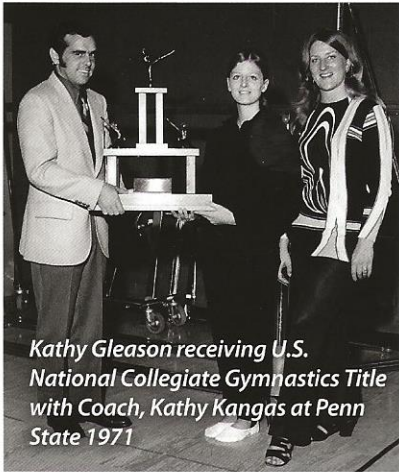
"I also worked at our family business 'Kangas Sauna' off and on from 1967 - 2000," says Kathy.

In 1987 Kathy moved back to Canada.

"In my mid 40's I was blessed with the birth of my son Zack," says Kathy.

"My Mother, son Zack (then 3), and I lived on Skyline Street. She wanted a summer and winter home in one, so this Spanish style home with a pool, hot tub and sauna did the trick."

"My hard-working, honest and generous Mother passed away shortly after I sold Kangas Sauna," says Kathy. She spent 3 1/2 years in the St. Joe's Hospital, during which



Kathy Gleason receiving U.S. National Collegiate Gymnastics Title with Coach, Kathy Kangas at Penn State 1971



World championships - Yugoslavia 1970



Kangas Sauna 25th anniversary - Mrs Kangas and daughter Kathy



Zack - One day old

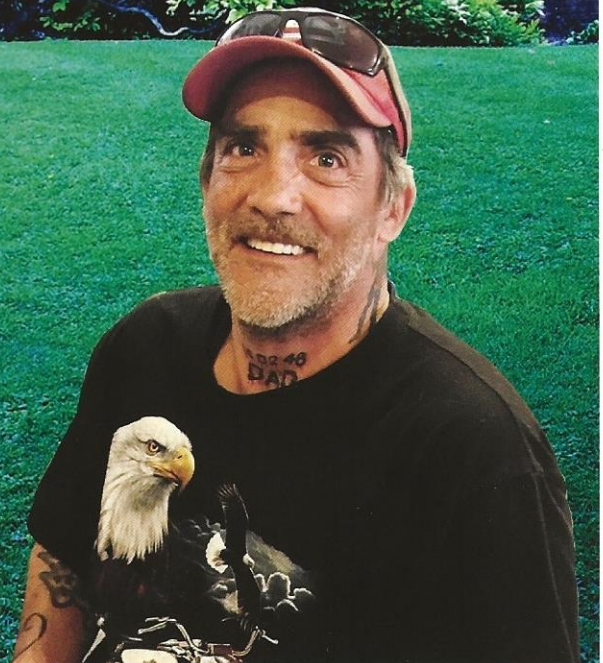
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Son Zack with Mummu (Lyyli Kangas)

time I visited her religiously twice a day fearing her discomfort and pain was not being attended to."

This was a very challenging time for Kathy juggling two jobs, Manager at the Nor'Wester Fitness Centre and Manager at Kangas Sauna, and raising a young son who needed a strong and loving Mother.

"After five years, I moved to Masters Street with partner Dave and son Zack, then 8 years old, first renting a house," says Kathy, "then a 'For Sale sign' came up on a home on the same street, which I ended up buying. The property is beautiful with a forest as a back yard," adds Kathy.

"Private and full of birds, squirrels, chipmunks, deer and even a skunk. 'Country in the city' The house, however, has needed a lot of work."

"My neighbours are great," says Kathy. "As a matter of fact, Bill Horde who was featured in Neighbours of Jumbo Gardens Magazine in August recently delivered my 'bowling money' to my door. This was from the Senior Bowling League which was cut short due to Covid-19, and which Bill and his lovely wife Rose lend a hand in running."

"Across the street are the Nuccis who delivered Bennett's bread to Kangas Sauna for years," says Kathy. "My son Zack, played with the Nuccis children, with an animated Dad competitively going against the kids in soccer on the front lawn."

"A few doors down are the Suttos. Don Sutton did the 'books' for Kangas Sauna for years while at Ernst and Young. We occasionally catch up on news at the mailbox," adds Kathy.

Across the street, Lois recently sold her home. "She was my son's daycare cook almost 30 years ago. The new owners are young with children and a dog."

"My next-door neighbours 'The Maijalas' have recently passed away," says Kathy, and their son Seppo was kind enough to help when heavy snowfalls covered my long driveway. His kindness is greatly appreciated. The home is now occupied by a quiet young man, Seppos nephew."



Mother's 80th birthday at Skyline home poolside

"On the other side are French-speaking tenants who listened to nice music in their backyard . . . weather permitting."

"Finally, I want to thank neighbour Nick Soulias who came to my rescue in 30-below weather when I was chopping ice on my roof. I had slid to the precipice about to fall on the neighbour's driveway," says Kathy. "Nick brought a rope and a hockey stick and pulled me up. He may have saved me from further injury to my battered body from 15 years of skydiving"

At the time of her retirement, Kathy also held the records for the most parachute jumps by a Canadian woman at 3,191, the most years on the national team with 15, and the Canadian Women's Accuracy record of five dead-centre jumps.

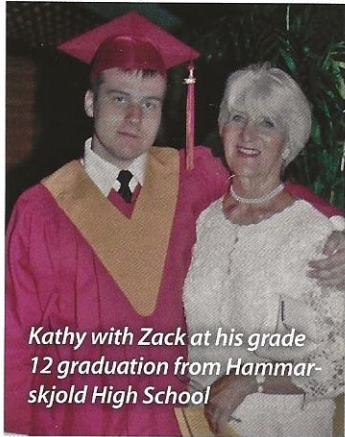
Kathy did not just limit her exceptional talents to the sport of skydiving. She was also very active as an all-round athlete excelling in such sports as baseball, track and field and gymnastics while growing up in Port Arthur and while attending university. In 1967, she was named the University of Western Ontario's Female Athlete of the Year.

Other honours bestowed upon Kathy have included being named Thunder Bay's Female Athlete of the Year for 1971, receiving an Outstanding Citizen's Award from the City of Thunder Bay in 1981 and the Ontario Sports Achievement Award in 1983.

On September 23rd, 1989 Kathy was inducted into the Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame.

Having given up skydiving at the age of 47, Kathy enjoys working out, 10-pin bowling, golfing at Emerald Green, volunteering for the Hall of Fame bingos and watercolour painting. She has also performed with local theatre group Frankly Scarlett Productions.

Kathy's done her share of travelling. "I have travelled



Kathy with Zack at his grade 12 graduation from Hammar-skjold High School



Family gathering at Masters Street on the back deck with Mother (Lyyli Kangas) just before her passing

the world," she recounts. "Twice back to Finland to visit my homeland, then with the Canadian National Parachute Team to France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, China, Hong Kong, Oklahoma, and then off to Sun Valley, Idaho for a Par-ski Championship."

She has lived in North Carolina, London Ontario, Chicago, Florida (Daytona Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Clearwater Beach), New York (Buffalo and Manhattan), Indiana, and Vancouver.

She has vacationed in Vegas, Dominican Republic, Cancun, Hawaii, California, Finland and Florida.

"After a lifetime of travelling, I feel safe and happy to stay home," she says.

Kathy has one brother Kal, 85, and the rest of her

siblings have passed. Zack bought a home on Juniper Drive and works at Lac Des Isles Palladium Mine drilling and dynamiting. "His two cats Storm and Simon, are my house guests every two weeks while he is at work, says Kathy." They are very affectionate, get into everything and like to curl up with me at night"

When I asked Kathy if she had a motto she lived by she replied "Live life to the fullest". That sums up her life perfectly!

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Do you know a neighbour who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbour to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! Contact us at donnabrown@bestversionmedia.com.