



St. Louis Tip Toppers TALL Club HISTORY

THE TALL TALE OF ST. LOUIS (THE HISTORY OF THE ST. LOUIS TIP TOPPERS)

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The concept of a tall club was developed by a taller-than-average Southern California gal named Kae Sumner, who ironically was the artist who drew the Seven Dwarves for Walt Disney Studios. In 1938, Kae approached a Los Angeles Times columnist with an idea for an article about the problems associated with being tall. In the context of the article, Kae invited other tall folks to contact her to discuss the problems that faced their small percentage of society.

On May 1, 1938, the first meeting of the first tall club ever known to exist was held in Kae's home. This group became known as the California Tip Toppers, and their first tall awareness success story was the development of the king sized bed.

Publicity was no stranger to this organization. As the club grew, its existence became known throughout the U.S., and in February 1941, Arthur Miller caught the "Tall Club" fever and founded the St. Louis Tip Toppers. The first meeting was held at the home of Frances Smentowski and was attended by six tall folks interested in forming a tall club. Ads were run in many neighborhood newspapers and by their second meeting, they had a total of **nineteen charter members**:

Jack Battles, 6' 9-1/2"
Lillian Betz, 6' 0"
Leonard Cole, 6' 4"
Mary Catherine (Kunkel) Deuthmann, 6' 1/2"
Marie (Kobermann) Hahn, 6' 1/2"
Bernard Harte, 6' 6"
Robert Heinson, 6' 5-3/4"
Mildred Jedick, 6' 1/4"
Art Kaune, 6' 6-3/4"
Arthur Miller, 6' 7"

Hildegard Richter, 6' 1/4"
 Frances (Smentowski) Blase, 6' 0"
 Dalton Trout, 6' 6-3/8"
 Al Tyrey, 6' 4-1/4"
 Rosemary (Boedeker) Tyrey, 6' 0"
 Francis Weiss, 6' 4-3/4"
 Lois (Bryan) Weiss, 6' 1/4"
 Marguerite Wenck, 6' 1/2"
 Doris (Hill) Wilson, 6' 0"

As the St. Louis Tip Toppers grew older and stronger, several notable events took place. They began producing a Club newsletter entitled "Tips On Toppers," which remains the title of the newsletter today. The Club chose **gold and black** as the official colors and "**Stardust**" as the official song. The first marriage between two members was on April 25, 1942, between Fran Weiss and Lois Bryan. Since this date, hundreds of marriages have taken place among St. Louis members. Our club's T-shirt slogan, "**Kiss Someone TALL, It's Worth The Climb**", was designed by Mark Rethemeyer in 1980, and is the best selling T-shirt in our club's history, as well as being one of the most widely recognized T-shirts in Tall Clubs International (TCI) today.

In July 1947, the St. Louis Tip Toppers attended the first National Convention of Tall Clubs. It was at this convention that the American Affiliation of Tall Clubs (AATC) was formed, with the St. Louis Tip Toppers as one of the organization's 15 charter members. In 1966, the AATC voted to change its name to Tall Clubs International (TCI), which is the name of the organization today.

During the years 1941-2001, the St. Louis Tip Toppers have held eleven national offices, sponsored three national conventions and our individual members have won a total of 45 national awards!

The St. Louis Tip Toppers held the following AATC/TCI offices:

1952 Executive Committee

Term of office: September 1951 - August 1952

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Marie (Kobermann) Hahn/Jeanette Stratton | President |
| Joan Siemer/Irene Kunnemann | Vice President |
| Evelyn (Scott) Harding | Corresponding Secretary |
| Joan Siemer | Recording Secretary |
| Jeanette Stratton/Geraldine Sudholt | Finance Officer |

Alternate Executive Club

| | | |
|------|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1982 | Ruth (Hermann) Urbantke | President |
| 1983 | Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer | President |
| 1985 | Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer | President |
| 1987 | Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer | President |
| 1988 | Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer | President |
| 1994 | Nancy Whitener | President |
| 1995 | Nancy Whitener | President |
| 1998 | Nancy Whitener | President |
| 1999 | Nancy Whitener | President |

1989 Executive Board

Term of office: September 1989 - August 1990

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer | President |
| Mark Rethemeyer | Vice President, Membership |
| Rita Maddock | Vice President, Publicity |

Ruth (Hermann) Urbantke
Nancy Whitener
Paul Herche
Susan (Chase) Ivey
Dan O'Neal

Finance Officer
Miss Tall International® Coordinator
Foreign Correspondent
Secretary
Editor

In addition to holding an annual "weekend" celebration with party themes ranging from "Discover America St. Louis Style" to "Send In The Clowns" and "Saturday Night Live," **the St. Louis Tip Toppers have sponsored the following AATC/TCI Conventions:**

1951 Convention: "St. Louis For Fun In '51"

Held at the Statler Hotel in St. Louis, MO, the convention took place July 12-15 with approximately 300 people in attendance. Marie (Kobermann) Hahn chaired this convention.

1973 Convention: "St. Louis Spree In '73"

Held at the Marriott Hotel in St. Louis, MO, the convention took place July 9-14 with approximately 200 people in attendance. Don Harris chaired this convention.

1986 Convention: "Missouri Magic"

Held at the Henry VIII Inn and Lodge in St. Louis, MO, the convention took place July 4-13 with 408 full and part-time attendees. Mark Rethemeyer chaired this convention.

At these and other conventions over the years, the St. Louis Tip Toppers have been proud to accept several awards and distinctions. At the national Queen's Pageant, the following St. Louis Tip Toppers queens were named **Miss Congeniality**:

| | |
|------|---------------------------------|
| 1975 | Terri (Tarr) Schweitzer, 6' 0" |
| 1976 | Ruth (Ruxlow) Green, 5' 11-1/2" |
| 1981 | Suzette (Rust) Allinger, 6' 0" |
| 1985 | Nancy Whitener, 6' 1-1/4" |
| 1995 | Edy (Little) Puers, 5'10-1/2" |

Also at the national Queen's Pageant, the following St. Louis Tip Toppers Queens advanced to the **"top five"** of the competition:

| | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1948 | Mary Ellen (Kurland) Schroeder, 6' 0" | 2nd Runner Up |
| 1951 | Claire (Froehlich) Purdy, 6' 0" | 4th Runner Up |
| 1952 | Rose Marie Kellenberger, 6' 0" | 3rd Runner Up |
| 1968 | Chris Finlay, 5' 11-1/2" | 1st Runner Up |
| 1973 | Mary Lou (Lawler) Farrow, 5' 11" | 1st Runner Up |
| 1981 | Suzette (Rust) Allinger, 6' 0" | 3rd Runner Up |
| 1983 | Mariellen (Parker) Jacob, 6' 1/2" | 2nd Runner Up |
| 1990 | Roberta (Holler) Mueller, 6' 1" | Miss Tall International® |
| 1992 | Margaret (Ryan) DeBonis, 5' 10" | 2nd Runner Up |
| 1993 | Carolyn (Ponciroli) Wolf, 5' 11-1/4" | 2nd Runner Up |
| 1995 | Edy (Little) Puers, 5' 10-1/2" | 1st Runner Up |
| 1997 | Jaynie (Cheney) Tatro, 5' 11-1/2" | 1st Runner Up |
| 1998 | Laura Shaw, 6' 2" | 3rd Runner Up |
| 2004 | Bethany Boogerd, 6' 1" | 1st Runner Up |

The St. Louis Tip Toppers received the following club convention awards:

| | | |
|------|---|----------------------------|
| 1985 | Publicity Award | Rita Maddock |
| 1986 | TCI Volleyball Champions: Mark Rethemeyer, Co-Captain; Ken Koehn, Co-Captain; Paul Fichtinger; Rick Gillette; Eric Hamilton; Ruth (Hermann) Urbantke; Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer; Nancy Whitener | |
| 1987 | Publicity Award | Rita Maddock |
| 1988 | Publicity Award | Rita Maddock |
| 1990 | Publicity Award | Roy Ivey |
| 1994 | Publicity Award | Kathy (Montgomery) Woltman |
| 1998 | Publicity Award | Don Schuh |
| 1999 | Publicity Award | Sue (Stewart) Schutz |

Individual members of the St. Louis Tip Toppers received the following Tall Clubs International awards:

1986 TCI Man Of The Year: Mark Rethemeyer

Mark has the double honor of being the first St. Louisan to receive this award as well as, to date, being the youngest TCI recipient.

1988 TCI Woman Of The Year: Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer

Debbie has the double honor of being the first St. Louisan to receive this award as well as, to date, being the youngest TCI recipient.

1989 TCI Woman Of The Year: Rita Maddock

Rita has the honor of being the second St. Louisan to receive this award.

1994 TCI Man Of The Year: John Ott

John has the honor of being the second St. Louisan to receive this award.

1987 TCI Certificate of Recognition: Rita Maddock

Rita received this award in recognition of her contribution to publicity as it pertained to advertising the TCI toll-free number.

1993 TCI Special Merit Award: Pat (Hofer) Ott

Pat was presented this honor for her many years of outstanding server as the official Miss Tall International® travel agent.

2000 TCI Woman Of The Year: Nancy Whitener

Nancy has the honor of being the third St. Louisan to receive this award.

TCI Merit Awards:

| | | | |
|------|----------------------------|------|----------------------------|
| 1974 | Don Harris | 1990 | Rebecca (Grups) Pelton |
| 1974 | Kathy (Fogler) Sorrell | 1991 | Patricia Hughes |
| 1976 | Ken Koehn | 1991 | Roberta (Holler) Mueller |
| 1978 | Vern Sandeen | 1992 | Roy Ivey |
| 1979 | Rita Maddock | 1992 | Margaret (Ryan) DeBonis |
| 1980 | Mark Rethemeyer | 1996 | Kathy (Montgomery) Woltman |
| 1981 | Ruth (Hermann) Urbantke | 1997 | Leigh (Spanberger) Schuh |
| 1982 | Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer | 1997 | Sue (Stewart) Schutz |
| 1984 | Dan O'Neal | 1998 | Carl Eisterhold |
| 1984 | Kelly (Fett) Smith | 1998 | Dean Braun |

1985 Jill (Emmons) Gansmann
 1985 John Ott
 1986 Rita Maddock
 1986 Nancy Whitener
 1987 Bill Hansen
 1988 Susan (Chase) Ivey
 1988 Patricia (Hofer) Ott

1999 Laura Shaw
 2000 Roberta (Holler) Mueller
 2001 P.J. Link
 2002 Liz Danter
 2002 Geralyn (Tonnie) Oldham

TCI Scholarship Winners:

These bright young students were not members at the time of their TCI Scholarship awards, but we look forward to welcoming them into the Tip Toppers when they meet the age requirements!

| | | | |
|------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1994 | John K. Tsai, 6'4" | Parkway Central High School | Northwest University Honors Program for Medical Education |
| 2001 | Nick Werner, 6'4" | Oakville High School | University of Notre Dame (Aerospace Engineering) |
| 2002 | Andrew W. Rhodes, 6'4" * | Lindbergh High School | University of Missouri-Columbia (Engineering undergraduate; law graduate) |

* Secondary scholarship awarded in 2002 with funds donated by Fred Heater in memory of his spouse, Sharon Heater.

The St. Louis Tip Toppers have received the following Proclamations over the years:

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| April 7, 1984 | Tall Day, St. Louis City and County |
| July 4-13, 1986 | Tall Awareness Days, St. Louis City and County |
| July 6-13, 1986 | Tall Awareness Week in the State of Missouri |
| May 13-15, 1988 | Tall Awareness Days, St. Louis City and County |
| May 5-7, 1989 | Tall Awareness Days, St. Louis City and County |
| May 4-6, 1990 | Tall Awareness Days, St. Louis County |
| May 5, 1990 | Miss Tall International® Day, St. Louis County |
| February 1991 | Tall Awareness Month in the State of Missouri |
| February 23, 1991 | Letter of congratulation from President George Bush on our 50th Anniversary celebration |
| May 1991 | Tall Awareness Month, St. Louis County |
| May 4, 1991 | Miss Tall International® Day, St. Louis County |
| February 24, 2001 | St. Louis Tip Toppers Day, City of St. Louis |
| February 18-24, 2001 | Tall Awareness Week, St. Louis County |

The St. Louis Tip Toppers created an "**Outstanding New Member**" award in 1992 to recognize new members who go beyond the call of duty to make a difference:

1992 Sue (Stewart) Schutz
 1993 Dan Venverloh, Jr.
 1994 Carmen & Steve Compas
 1995 Dean Braun
 1996 Jaynie (Cheney) Tatro
 1998 Deb Neubauer
 2001 Simone Williams

The St. Louis Tip Toppers amended the Constitution and Bylaws to include an "**Outstanding Member**" award in 2001 to recognize members in good standing for over 18 months who go beyond the call of duty to make a difference:

2001 Rich Raiskin
2003 Monica Vogel

The members of the St. Louis Tip Toppers, past and present, are very proud of those persons who have won national acclaim. They are also proud of those persons who have stepped in and have volunteered their time, energy and creativity to this organization. In particular, we would like to say a special thank you to the following **club presidents**:

| | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|------|----------------------------|
| 1941 | Arthur Miller | 1974 | Don Harris |
| 1942 | Bernard Kramer | 1975 | Vern Sandeen |
| 1943 | John Rohde | 1976 | Vern Sandeen |
| 1944 | Rosemary (Buffa) Birner | 1977 | Ken Koehn |
| 1945 | John Roberts | 1978 | Barb Oligschlaeger |
| 1946 | Jeanette Stratton | 1978 | Joan Graves |
| 1947 | Bill Randolph | 1979 | Vern Sandeen |
| 1948 | Arthur Miller | 1980 | Mark Rethemeyer |
| 1949 | Hermann Siener | 1981 | Mark Rethemeyer |
| 1950 | Ed Bolte | 1982 | Ruth (Hermann) Urbantke |
| 1951 | Bill Kaintz | 1983 | Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer |
| 1952 | John Combest | 1984 | Dan O'Neal |
| 1953 | Fran Weiss | 1985 | Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer |
| 1954 | Norval Harding | 1986 | Jill (Emmons) Gansmann |
| 1955 | George Barton | 1987 | Nancy Whitener |
| 1956 | Rosalie (Droppelman) Heuing | 1988 | John Ott |
| 1957 | Roy Gleiforst | 1989 | Nancy Whitener |
| 1958 | Jim Nation | 1990 | Dan O'Neal |
| 1959 | Bill Ahrens | 1991 | Nancy Whitener |
| 1960 | Bob Johnson | 1992 | Jerry DeBonis |
| 1961 | Leo Parker | 1993 | Nancy Whitener |
| 1962 | Dick Macy | 1994 | Leigh (Spanberger) Schuh |
| 1963 | Joe Yokly | 1995 | Nancy Whitener |
| 1964 | George Zonnis | 1996 | Sue (Stewart) Schutz |
| 1965 | Vern Sandeen | 1997 | Steve Compas |
| 1966 | Vern Sandeen | 1998 | Nancy Whitener |
| 1967 | Fred Burk | 1999 | Dean Braun |
| 1968 | John Gay | 2000 | Liz Danter |
| 1969 | John Gay | 2001 | Liz Danter |
| 1970 | Fred Burk | 2002 | Jerry DeBonis |
| 1971 | Jerry Bentrup | 2003 | Jerry DeBonis |
| 1972 | Bob Sorrell | 2004 | Nancy Whitener |
| 1973 | Rich Bentrup | 2005 | Steve Lubbes |

We would also like to recognize those women who have served as Miss Tall St. Louis:

| | | | |
|------|--------------------------------|------|----------------------------|
| 1947 | Mary (Froehlich) Powers | 1977 | Kate Christman |
| 1948 | Mary Ellen (Kurland) Schroeder | 1978 | Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer |
| 1949 | Doris (Abernathy) McDermott | 1979 | Barb (Tuley) Taliana |
| 1950 | Lucille Poderski | 1980 | Ruth (Hermann) Urbantke |
| 1951 | Clara (Froehlich) Purdy | 1981 | Suzette (Rust) Allinger |
| 1951 | Vera (Irwin) Gregory | 1982 | Barb Meyer |
| 1952 | Rose Marie Kellenberger | 1983 | Mariellen (Parker) Jacob |
| 1953 | No Queen | 1984 | Rita Maddock |

1954 Rosalie (Droppelman) Heuing
1955 Virginia (Franke) Barton
1956 Delores (Waters) Bender
1957 Jean Wildermuth
1958 Helen Dierkes
1959 Jane Willenkamp
1960 June (Ruth) Wise
1961 Kathy (Hannibal) Garamella
1962 Dottie (Goodson) Baker
1963 Mary Ellen (Boenninghausen) Morrison
1964 Kathy (Boehm) Ringe
1965 Rita (Schlitt) Ploeger
1966 Sue (Whipple) McMullin
1967 Susan (Young) Burk
1968 Chris Finlay
1969 Barb (Wunderle) Lienhart
1970 Nancy Seibel
1971 Linda Carpenter
1972 Karen (White) Wiesemann
1973 Mary Lou (Lawler) Farrow
1974 Mary Jean Murdock
1975 Terri (Tarr) Schweitzer
1976 Ruth (Ruxlow) Green

1985 Nancy Whitener
1986 Carla (Sokol) Gettemeier
1987 Mary (Guelker) Brewer
1988 Patricia Hughes
1989 Rebecca (Grups) Pelton
1990 Roberta (Holler) Mueller*
1990 Linda (Hill) Horgan
1991 Gloria (Eigelberger, Smith) Monroe
1992 Margaret (Ryan) DeBonis
1993 Carolyn (Ponciroli) Wolf
1994 Kathy Hempel
1995 Edy (Little) Puers
1996 Lynn (Frank) Kalkbrenner
1997 Jaynie (Cheney) Tatro
1998 Laura Shaw
1999 Amy Romich
2000 Jeannie Harty
2000 Deb Neubauer
2001 Andrea Sudbrock
2001 Kelly Smith
2002 *No Queen*
2003 Stacey L. Hood
2004 Bethany Boogerd

*(Crowned Miss Tall International®)

Compiled by Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer
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