

Four Decades of Arm Wrestling by Marty Soven

The 1970's were unusual times, a new corvette was \$7,500 dollars, rich people had car phones and most had land line dial phones, Elvis was gone. There was no CNN, MTV or ESPN on the scene.

Gene Camp who envisioned a future for arm-wrestling promoted the first of hundreds of events at the old Sunnside Gardens Arena. Sunnyside, NY. That promoted mostly boxing and Professional Wrestling. Arm Wrestling barely existed/what existed was mechanical carnival tests of strength. Wristwrestling was then called pulling. Opponents locked their strong arms in a hook position, there were no pegs or pads weaker hands were clasped together and they pulled until contact was made with the forearm or biceps of the clasped arms.

In 1977 Gene Camp while watching Wide World of Sports there was a brand-new televised event from Petaluma Ca. called World Wrist-Wrestling Championships at a local bar called Gilardi's in Petaluma, Cal. Dave Devoto a local newspaper columnist and Bill Soberanes, the founder, teamed up and promoted the towns first ever wrist wrestling championships with elbow pads with gripped hands above the official table and contestants clasped hands above and under the elbows. We understand that the Bar had been doing this since the early 1950's.

The next forty years Camp promoted tournaments in such venues as Madison Square Garden, Port Authority Bus Terminal, Intrepid Sea, Air, Space Museum, Empire State Building, Javits Center, Elks Club, All the Beaches in the Boroughs, Flushing Meadows Park plus many Festivals in each of the 5 NYC Boroughs and Long Island. The Events was called the New York Golden Arm Series. In addition to all the local and famous Bars in the City including, Cheap Shots, Village Pour House and Long Island and also the Rockaways in Queens. People were introduced to the sport at the Ninth Avenue Food festival and Columbus Ave Festival. Thousands were exposed to the sport In March of 2001 as an event was held at the Twin Towers Observatory. This event drew a large selection of contestants that came from as far away as Brazil, Russia and Switzerland. Unfortunately, and sadly, that same year on Sept 11. 2001 there was a terrorist attack on the Twin Towers.

The New York Arm Wrestling Association is now in its 40th year and features the premiere New York State Arm Wrestling Events called the Empire State Golden Arm Tournament of Champions which is the culmination of the NY Golden Arm Series and THE Main Event featuring The NYC Big Apple Grapple International and crowns the International KING and QUEEN of ARMS. Over forty years the titles of king and queen of arms was established and this attracted a 7-TIME Queen of Arms and World Champion Cynthia Yerby from Oklahoma. Plus, some top names in the male King of Arms Category such as Georgi Gelashvili from Republic of Georgia Marcio Barboza from Brazil and a long list of International and local names, including: Bobby Buttafuccho, Moe Baker, Allen Turner, Dan Mason, Paul Schmidt, Jimmy and Joe Venero, Jason

Vale, Jerry Cadorette, Sean Ringgold and ladies like Cynthia Yerby, Christine Schurich-Workoven, Ann Konovitch, Angela Annunziata, Jamie Fernandez, Joyce Boone, Karen Brisson and numerous others who have become a large part of today and yesterday's rising sport of modern Arm Wrestling and the 2017 NYAWA's 40th year Anniversary Celebration.

By Marty Soven New York Arm Wrestling Association 1977-2017