



# *Erna Wachtel*

**Brevet Judge  
U.S. Olympic Coach**



**HALL  
OF  
FAME**

**Inducted 2008**

# *Erna Wachtel*

## *Class of 2008*

### **Introduction**

Erna Wachtel was one of the first pioneers to enter the world of U.S. gymnastics. She came to the U.S. in 1926 with a background in Turner gymnastics, and she continued to learn and compete winning gold in numerous local and sectional AAU competitions.

After her competition days were over, she continued to serve our wonderful sport as a teacher/trainer, judge, and coach. Her contributions to the early development of women's gymnastics were numerous, and we should remember her with gratitude.

Erna Wachtel came to the United States in 1926 and was a pioneer in women's gymnastics in Illinois. As a gymnast, she won numerous AAU titles and competed into her 40's, representing the Lincoln Turners.

National AAU Championships: Silver-AA, (1941 & 1942).

She was named an Honorary Olympic Team member for 1944 by a select group of U.S. GHOF Inductees.

### **Service**

Erna served as the Central AAU Chairperson for woman's gymnastics in the 1950's while holding a committee post with the National AAU.

### **Coach**

Erna coached the U.S. Women's Gymnastic Olympic Team to a 9th place finish, Melbourne, Australia, (1956). The Melbourne team prepared for the Games by training at the Lincoln Turners in Chicago.

After the Games, Erna began conducting exhibitions and stirring up interest in women's gymnastics. "That is how gymnastics became a girl's event in Illinois," she was quoted as saying.

### **Judge**

Erna earned an international Brevet Judge's rating and remained active in training judges and conducting clinics long after her competition days.

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### **General**

From 1957 to 1973, Ms. Wachtel taught physical education at Lake Shore Park for the Chicago Park District. According to her obituary published in *Turner Topics*, "Among her students were pre-schoolers, budding gymnasts, adults interested in fitness, and grade school children from nearby Cathedral School who came there from their gym classes.

She worked part-time as a gymnastics specialist at the University of Illinois-Circle campus in Chicago for several years during this time period, also."

### **Family**

Erna Wachtel was a widow and left no surviving family.

### **Source**

Data and photos courtesy of Jerry Wright, author of *Gymnastic's Who's Who, 2005*.

Additional information provided by [www.turnertopics.com/](http://www.turnertopics.com/).

Introduction by Dr. Larry Banner, Web Manager

