

# THE TALL TALE OF ST. LOUIS

## (THE HISTORY OF THE ST. LOUIS TIP TOPPERS)

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	Finance Officer
Nancy Whitener	Miss Tall International® Coordinator
Paul Herche	Foreign Correspondent
Susan (Chase) Ivey	Secretary
Dan O'Neal	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	1999	Laura Shaw
1985	John Ott	2000	Roberta (Holler) Mueller
1986	Rita Maddock	2001	P.J. Link
1986	Nancy Whitener	2002	Liz Danter
1987	Bill Hansen	2002	Geralyn (Tonnies) Oldham
1988	Susan (Chase) Ivey	2010	Leigh (Spanberger) Schuh
1988	Patricia (Hofer) Ott	2010	Steve Lubbes

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 Ververloh, 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	1977	Ken Koehn
1942	Bernard Kramer	1978	Barb Oligschlaeger
1943	John Rohde	1978	Joan Graves
1944	Rosemary (Buffa) Birner	1979	Vern Sandeen
1945	John Roberts	1980	Mark Rethemeyer
1946	Jeanette Stratton	1981	Mark Rethemeyer
1947	Bill Randolph	1982	Ruth (Hermann) Urbantke
1948	Arthur Miller	1983	Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer

1949	Hermann Siener	1984	Dan O'Neal
1950	Ed Bolte	1985	Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer
1951	Bill Kaintz	1986	Jill (Emmons) Gansmann
1952	John Combest	1987	Nancy Whitener
1953	Fran Weiss	1988	John Ott
1954	Norval Harding	1989	Nancy Whitener
1955	George Barton	1990	Dan O'Neal
1956	Rosalie (Droppelman) Heuing	1991	Nancy Whitener
1957	Roy Gleiforst	1992	Jerry DeBonis
1958	Jim Nation	1993	Nancy Whitener
1959	Bill Ahrens	1994	Leigh (Spanberger) Schuh
1960	Bob Johnson	1995	Nancy Whitener
1961	Leo Parker	1996	Sue (Stewart) Schutz
1962	Dick Macy	1997	Steve Compas
1963	Joe Yokly	1998	Nancy Whitener
1964	George Zonnis	1999	Dean Braun
1965	Vern Sandeen	2000	Liz Danter
1966	Vern Sandeen	2001	Liz Danter
1967	Fred Burk	2002	Jerry DeBonis
1968	John Gay	2003	Jerry DeBonis
1969	John Gay	2004	Nancy Whitener
1970	Fred Burk	2005	Steve Lubbes
1971	Jerry Bentrup	2006	Rich Raiskin
1972	Bob Sorrell	2007	Colette Deeb
1973	Rich Bentrup	2008	Colette Deeb
1974	Don Harris	2009	Rich Raiskin
1975	Vern Sandeen	2010	Monica Vogel
1976	Vern Sandeen		

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

1947	Mary (Froehlich) Powers	<a href="#">1981</a>	Suzette (Rust) Allinger
1948	Mary Ellen (Kurland) Schroeder	<a href="#">1982</a>	Barb Meyer
<a href="#">1949</a>	Doris (Abernathy) McDermott	<a href="#">1983</a>	Mariellen (Parker) Jacob
1950	Lucille Poderski	<a href="#">1984</a>	Rita Maddock
1951	Clara (Froehlich) Purdy	<a href="#">1985</a>	Nancy Whitener
1951	Vera (Irwin) Gregory	<a href="#">1986</a>	Carla (Sokol) Gettemeier
1952	Rose Marie Kellenberger	<a href="#">1987</a>	Mary (Guelker) Brewer
1953	No Queen	<a href="#">1988</a>	Patricia Hughes
1954	Rosalie (Droppelman) Heuing	<a href="#">1989</a>	Rebecca (Grups) Pelton
1955	Virginia (Franke) Barton	<a href="#">1990</a>	Roberta (Holler) Mueller *
1956	Delores (Waters) Bender	1990	Linda (Hill) Horgan
1957	Jean Wildermuth	<a href="#">1991</a>	Gloria (Eigelberger, Smith) Monroe
1958	Helen Dierkes	<a href="#">1992</a>	Margaret (Ryan) DeBonis
1959	Jane Willenkamp	<a href="#">1993</a>	Carolyn (Ponciroli) Wolf
1960	June (Ruth) Wise	<a href="#">1994</a>	Kathy Hempel
1961	Kathy (Hannibal) Garamella	<a href="#">1995</a>	Edy (Little) Puers
1962	Dottie (Goodson) Baker	<a href="#">1996</a>	Lynn (Frank) Kalkbrenner
1963	Mary Ellen (Boenninghausen) Morrison	<a href="#">1997</a>	Jaynie (Cheney) Tatro

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  
[1977](#) Kate Christman  
[1978](#) Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer  
[1979](#) Barb (Tuley) Taliana  
[1980](#) Ruth (Hermann) Urbantke

[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  
2005 Bethany Boogerd  
2006 Amy Smith  
2007 *No Queen*  
2008 *No Queen*  
2009 *No Queen*  
2010 *No Queen*

\*(Crowned Miss Tall International®)

Compiled by Debbie (Herzog) Rethemeyer  
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