

Written by dwight normile

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In 1964 **Donna Strauss** began teaching physical education in the Allentown, Pennsylvania, school district. On the side she formed a modest gymnastics club with some of her high school students.

There was one problem, however. Neither Donna nor her husband, **Bill Strauss**, knew anything about gymnastics. Donna's principal at the time was

**Carroll Parks**

, who provided inspiration to the Strausses, so they named their gym after him.

The **Parkettes** are celebrating its 50th anniversary on June 23, 2018. They've come a long way from their first gym, which was on the second floor of a fire company. (Could you rewind my music? I couldn't hear it because of the siren.)

"It was very tiny," Donna recalls.

The Parkettes broke ground in March 2002, and they now have a 32,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art facility.

The Parkettes have produced five Olympians, 10 World Championship team members and 159 gymnasts who have received college scholarships. Donna said that **Kristen Maloney, Hope**

**Spivey**

**Jodi Yocum**

and

**Elizabeth Price**

are among the former gymnasts who plan to attend.

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"We just feel so fortunate that we've had such a wonderful group of gymnasts throughout the entire 50 years," Donna told IG. "We still both enjoy working with the gymnasts.

And what about retirement?

"We're taking it month by month," Donna said. "When we feel like we're ready to move on, that's when we're going to do it."

Read the complete story in the July/August 2018 issue of *International Gymnast*.

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