




*Scott
Hamilton*

‘I’M THE
LUCKIEST
ALMANY,
ALIVE’

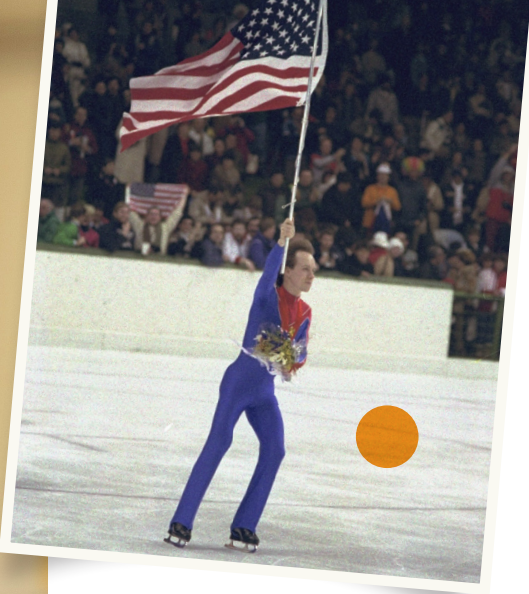


FORTY YEARS
AFTER WINNING
GOLD AT THE 1984
OLYMPICS, THE
SKATING LEGEND
LOOKS BACK ON
HIS ACHIEVEMENTS
AND CHALLENGES—
INCLUDING CANCER
AND THREE BENIGN
BRAIN TUMORS.

‘I’M BLESSED
BEYOND
MY WILDEST
IMAGINATION’

By **GILLIAN
TELLING**





WINNING OLYMPIC GOLD

“It was very intense,” Hamilton says of his triumph in Sarajevo at the 1984 Games (inset, right), which ended a 24-year gold medal drought for U.S. men in figure skating.

7

If Scott Hamilton were a gambling man, he'd never have bet on himself. “I’m the most unlikely person on the planet to have experienced *any* of this,” he says. The list of his accomplishments is remarkable: winning the first men’s figure skating gold medal in 24 years at the 1984 Winter Games, starting the hugely successful Stars on Ice figure skating tour, surviving cancer and three benign brain tumors, founding a cancer charity that’s touched countless lives. Then, of course, there’s falling in love with his wife, Tracie, and becoming a dad of four. He grins. “It’s all been kind of miraculous, really.” Hamilton, 65, who this month is celebrating the 40th anniversary of his gold-medal Olympic moment, is being modest, but he’s not wrong about the series of unfortunate events that have shaped his life’s course. Adopted as a baby by Ernest and Dorothy Hamilton and raised in Bowling Green, Ohio, he suddenly stopped growing at the age of 4. Doctors were unable to figure out why (years later Hamilton would learn that an undetected brain tumor

Life After the Olympics



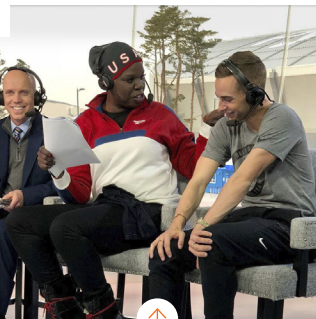
STARS ON ICE

"We worked really hard and got many of the greatest skaters in the world," says Hamilton (with Denis Petrov) of the show he founded in 1986.



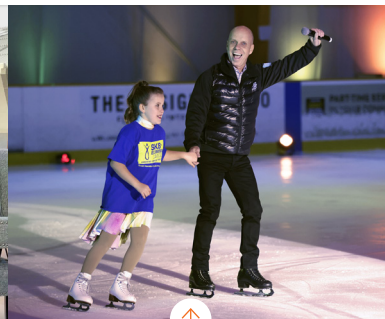
MOVIE CAMEOS

Hamilton spoofed his role as a skating commentator in the 2007 comedy *Blades of Glory* with Jon Heder and Will Ferrell.



BROADCASTING

Hamilton (in 2018 with Leslie Jones and Adam Rippon) was the voice of Olympic skating for more than 20 years.



CHARITY WORK

With his nonprofit CARES, "I could make a huge impact on the way people go through cancer," says Hamilton (in 2021 at a fundraiser).

was likely to blame), and the condition took its toll on everyone. "My parents were shattered, just exhausted emotionally, financially," says Hamilton, who required a feeding tube as a child to ensure he was getting enough nutrition. "A physician told them they needed a morning off once a week to rest and recharge their batteries." A new skating rink had just opened near their home, so Scott was enrolled in its Saturday-morning classes. "It was so exciting," says Hamilton. "All of a sudden I wasn't just this odd, sickly kid with the tube in my nose. Pretty soon I realized I could skate as well as the best athlete in my grade. It was the first taste of self-esteem I ever had. Soon I wanted to be on the ice all the time."

Out of nowhere, he started growing again, but he wasn't yet championship material. "I was like a last-place guy," he says. But his mother, Dorothy, maintained an unwavering belief in her son, telling neighbors, "We're going to the Olympics someday!" Hamilton recalls, "I'd look at her and be like, 'Based on what? I'm not that good!'" And then in 1976 the family received devastating news: Dorothy had

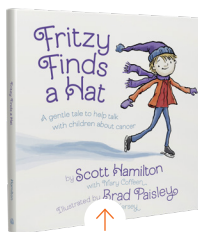
breast cancer. They were also out of money and could no longer fund his skating career. However, at the Nationals, Dorothy told her son she'd met a couple who would sponsor him so he wouldn't have to quit. It turned out to be the last competition Dorothy would see him skate in before her death in 1977. "She was the center of my universe. She meant everything to me," he says. "I took a walk the day she died and realized I had to honor her." He started taking training seriously. The next year he made the podium at Nationals, and he placed 11th at Worlds.

Hamilton's career blew up from there. Still small at just 5'3", he capped a four-year undefeated run with his win at the Sarajevo Olympics, where he earned worldwide fame and became notorious for incorporating a backflip into his exhibition routines. "I remember it all so vividly," he says of his Olympic victory four decades ago. "It just feels like it happened to someone else!"

After the Olympics he joined the Ice Capades for two years until a new owner decided he wanted only women in the show. So Hamilton helped launch a new ice skating tour: Stars on Ice. "We were like rock stars," he says. "Selling out arenas all over the country." The tour has performed more than 1,500 shows since 1986.

But during the 1997 tour, nagging abdominal pain landed Hamilton in the hospital, and he was diagnosed with testicular cancer. Surgery was successful, but his mental state was forever changed. "I realized life was precious," he says. "And I wanted to be an activist." He eventually launched Scott Hamilton CARES, a nonprofit focused on cancer research, and started The 4th Angel, which pairs newly diagnosed patients with survivors. "I wished I'd had someone who had been there, done that, who could speak to me about what to expect," he says. "I wanted to change people's experience with cancer."

His life changed again when he met Tracie



ACTIVIST AND AUTHOR

Hamilton's 2020 children's book, inspired by his own life, is about a skater looking for a hat for his mom to wear to her cancer treatments: "It's very personal."



HIS EMOTIONAL 1997 PEOPLE COVER

When Hamilton shared his testicular cancer diagnosis and treatment with *People*, he was characteristically optimistic: "My goal is to defeat this thing." But, he admitted, "mortality is something you think about."



LEFT PAGE: (STARS ON ICE) ROBERT F. BUJAK/YAR; (BLADES OF GLORY) EVERETT; (CHARITY) SCOTT HAMILTON/CARES FOUNDATION; RIGHT PAGE: FROM TOP: LATHRYN COSTELLO/COURTESY SCOTT HAMILTON/2



'IT'S NOT SO MUCH A VICTORY LAP. IT'S A RECOGNITION OF RISING TO THE OCCASION, OF TRYING TO MAKE THE BEST OF DIFFICULT SITUATIONS'

—ON HIS OLYMPIC ANNIVERSARY

Robinson, now 54, a nutritionist. Despite believing he'd never be a family man, the two wed in 2002 and soon welcomed sons Aidan, 20, and Maxx, 16. "I wasn't good at interpersonal relationships before that," he says. "I was all about the skating. I somehow felt unworthy of love, like I didn't have anything to offer someone else." But with Robinson, there was an undeniable spark. "My heart jumped. Something flipped," he says.

His wife also inspired a deeper relationship with God: "When you're skating in front of millions, you pray. When you're diagnosed with cancer, you pray. But when we started going to church together, it connected the dots for me. I knew all the things that had happened to me weren't accidental." That included adopting siblings Jean Paul, now 22, and Evelyne, 20, who were left orphaned after Haiti's 2010 earthquake, as well as the discovery of two pituitary gland tumors in his brain in 2004 and 2010. Both tumors were benign, and he recovered after treatment, but when he learned that he had another benign tumor in 2016, he decided to leave it untreated. "I'm going to wait and stay strong," he says, adding that he'll do targeted radiation when it's called for. "I'm totally at peace with not looking at it again unless I become symptomatic."

Plus, he has an ace up his sleeve: the knowledge that hard things have served him well. "I was unwanted as a baby, and I got great parents. I got sick, and I found skating. I lost my mother, and I found my identity in her," he says. "Why would I ever look at these difficult times as anything other than strengthening times? I'm blessed beyond my wildest imagination." ●

Family First

PROUD PARENTS

Hamilton and Tracie share four children: From left, Jean Paul, 22, is joining the Air Force; Maxx, 16, studies theology; Aidan, 20, is pursuing mixed martial arts; and Evelyne, 20, is deciding on colleges.



A DEVOTED MOM, A DOTING SON

"I loved her more than anyone on the planet," Hamilton says of his mother, Dorothy, who died of cancer when he was 18.

