HAVE YOU EVER OPENED a desk drawer and found some notes or maybe a book that has been long forgotten? Searching in vain for a new place to put it, you stuff it back in the same drawer to once again be found at some moment in time when you say to yourself again, “I might need this.”

Well, every time I get to clean up my office, I find piles of interesting tidbits that I think will make a good article or maybe a presentation... I move it to a new pile ...only to be discovered again the next time I decide to clean up. I am always amazed at the plethora of information that we all have right under our very noses.

Case in point: earlier this year, I was reading an article in USA Today about Bill Sands of the US Olympic Training Center, who has been a frequent speaker at PSA Conferences and Seminars. It seems that he was going through some files collected from the Stasi (East German Secret Police) and he found some drawings of a device to improve flexibility.

After some trial and error, he developed it and was amazed at the results. It got me thinking. What stuff do we have lying around the PSA office in files that haven’t seen the light of day in years and might have invaluable information? Not to stop there, I began to think about all the knowledge that has been passed down from coach to student regarding figures and how in a short time this information is going to be gone.

I started to think that it might make some good reading if the PSA started to research our history, and as we go along see if there are some older, forgotten techniques that could still be relevant today. Our first installment of our history is in this issue and it covers the inception of the PSA in 1938 up to World War II.

The interesting morsel that really caught my attention was a quote from an article written in Skating Magazine in 1938. It was the strong feeling of those present at the meeting that some very definite action should be taken to put an end to producing amateurs to turn professional for the purpose of skating in haphazard skating shows which failed and left them stranded as professionals without experience in teaching...

As Kent McDill writes in his article, “…hearkens back to a time when skaters were being drawn into the ‘professional’ ranks for reasons considered improper by the figure skating establishment.” After Tonya whacked Nancy, it wasn’t the show promoters we had to worry about but the ‘agents.’

Like sharks circling in for the kill, agents signed anyone and everyone. Televised specials by the dozen, professional competitions, and endorsements all made a select few wealthy. Even though record numbers of children began to skate, did anyone else get rich?

In order to save our “amateur” sport (and themselves), the ISU made the only decision it could to survive - cash prizes and the Grand Prix Series. Competitors could now be “professional” and this dysfunctional family known as the “skating industry,” stood by and counted the cash as our rinks filled, memberships soared, not by design but simply by being the right sport at the right time.

Now we swim among new prey: a global recession. Where are those agents now? Many have abandoned the industry and moved on, leaving those behind to try and pick up the pieces. Our top skaters who have been earning a good living as “amateurs” and spending large sums of money on training, choreography and costumes, suddenly are in jeopardy of losing the revenue required to compete as an elite skater.

The ISU this year is reducing the number of judges at four of its premier events, citing economic reasons. ISU is not killing our sport... it’s been on life support for a long time. As observed so long ago in 1938, we have allowed money to cloud our judgment. Skating has once again become about money...perhaps it always has and always will.