SEQUINS AND GOLD

Jef Billings '71 designs a champion's dress

If they gave medals for costume design, Jef Billings '71 would surely win the gold.

In fact, that was his design on the podium when 16-year-old Sarah Hughes accepted her gold medal in women's figure skating.

The lovely lavender dress Sarah wore to the women's long program finals wasn't the only Billings original in Salt Lake City. Those who watched the opening ceremonies saw Kristi Yamaguchi skating as the little girl skater who grew up, in a red skating dress by Jef. He also outfitted Yamaguchi, Katarina Witt, Kurt Browning, Scott Hamilton, Ilia Kulik, and Renee Roca and Gorsha Sur for the closing ceremonies, and then headed out to work the Stars on Ice Canada tour.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in speech and theatre from Oswego, where he was active in many theatre department productions, Billings went on to earn a Master's of Fine Arts at New York University. A protégé of the famed costume designer Bob Mackie, he has designed evening dresses for many Hollywood stars, from Cher to Kathy Bates.

Oswego's Distinguished Alumnus in 1992, Billings has visited campus many times to share his expertise with students.

The next time he visits classes, he can share another experience as well — seeing a dress he designed as the backdrop for an Olympic gold medal.

Peter LaFave '74 volunteers 'where the action was'

WHEN HE FOUND OUT HIS ASSIGNMENT as a volunteer Olympic bus driver wasn't going to be in Salt Lake City, Peter LaFave '74 was at first disappointed. Soon he found out, "I was where the action was," he says. He drove spectators to venues at Deer Valley, which was the site of the moguls and half-pipe, and Park City, where the women's and men's downhill ski events were held.

LaFave, a part-time bus driver in his native city of Oswego, was one of about 250 bus drivers at the Olympics, including five from Oswego.

LaFave put in long days, rising at 3 a.m. to be transported from his barracks in Evanston, Wyo., 80 miles from Salt Lake City and 50 miles from Park City.

Although the hours were grueling, LaFave managed to get a few days off to watch Olympic events, like the four-man bobsled.

As a teacher in Washington County two decades ago, LaFave attended the 1980 Olympics in Lake Placid. "It was very different," he says of the 1980 games. "Security was less and you could see many venues without a ticket." Not only were tickets required for everything at the Salt Lake City games, at every venue, spectators and their possessions were searched, as at airports. "So September 11 had a big impact out there," says LaFave.

The drivers got to the Olympics five days in advance, for training and orientation. During that time, LaFave was able to snap up one of the most coveted souvenirs of the games — a Roots Team USA Olympic beret.

"The store was virtually empty . . .