

"I don't know if I'm more honored or shocked," Cook said when told of his induction. "There's certainly a lot of great people in the Hall."

Cook, 64, has been somewhat of a sports nut for as long as he can remember. Ever since he played hockey on the harbor near his St. Paul street home on a boarded rink built by his dad, Cook has been involved in sports.

"We were always playing hockey on the wharf. And the older guys were really good to us young kids," says Cook. "Vern Goyer, he taught us how to play ... how to skate and keep our head up ... big Vern," says Cook.

While Cook got plenty of pointers from Goyer during hockey season it was Kelleher who took over in the summer.

Kelleher, who played minor pro baseball in the U.S. and Canada, was always willing to help out the younger kids like Cook during ball season.

"Between Vern and Al we had it pretty good," says Cook. "The older guys really took an interest

and liked to help us out."

While Cook participated on several teams as a youngster he says his real enjoyment came out of helping the young kids — boys and girls — get the most out of sports. His countless years of service to hockey and softball as coach, executive member, organizer, umpire and official has not gone unnoticed as evidenced by his Hall induction.

Cook loves kids. He has seven children and 14 grandchildren but over the years he has also played a part in the lives of hundreds of other youngsters through the various sports teams and leagues he has dedicated so much time to.

Cook says he got involved with the Belleville Minor Hockey Association because he liked teaching hockey.

"I probably enjoyed it and got more out of it than the kids," he says. "I always enjoyed working with the kids. Just the look on their face at the end of the year was how you got paid."

"The wins are just gravy. Watching a kid improve over the year," is the real pay off, says Cook.

In the mid 1960s Cook was instrumental in rejuvenating girls softball in the area.

Four teams were formed, mainly with girls who hadn't really played before, and before long the sport was thriving.

Out of the new girls softball league came girls hockey.

"The girls who played ball said 'Why not coach us in hockey?'. They asked me to get something organized, so with the help of Bob Dafoe and Ralph Boomhower we started it with two teams the first year," recalls Cook. "Ringette was big back then so we had to go to Stirling and Trenton just to get ice. It (girls hockey) just sort of grew from there."

To help pay for ice-time, Cook ran the Powder Puff hockey school and was overwhelmed by the response.

"We had over 60 girls show up,"

he says.

The school was a big hit and it made enough money each year to sponsor the league.

Cook says he has always remembered how important the leadership and guidance was he got as a youngster from the likes of Goyer and Kelleher.

By getting involved in community sports Cook was able to help the next generation of young athletes mature as well.

"There were a lot of guys back when I was a kid who probably wouldn't have got into sports if it wasn't for the older guys who were so good to us," says Cook. "I'll always remember that."

A retired public works road foreman, Cook retired from the BMHA last year.

But his interest in kids and sport certainly hasn't waned. In fact Cook says don't be surprised if he "gets back into it."

Editor's note: The second 1998 Hall of Fame inductee will be announced Aug. 26.

Cook, Bob

Takell
Apr 19/98
8
2007