

Syl Apps remembered as a generous father

By Annette Phillips
AMHERST ISLAND/For The Whig-Standard

SPORTS LEGEND AND MEMBER OF THE PROVINCIAL parliament Syl Apps is remembered by his children as a devoted father and grandfather who was happiest at Farnham, the Amherst Island home he bought for his wife, Molly.

"Farnham was both Mom and Dad's pride and joy," writes his daughter, Janet Grace, in an e-mail to *The Whig-Standard*. "It was, in fact, a gift from Dad to Mom. I think they were both happiest putting around the grounds of Farnham, tearing down old plaster walls and ceilings and making the normal discoveries you make in tackling the renovation of an old house."

SPENT SUMMERS IN MANSION

Grace, her husband Brian and children Carly, Richard, Andrew and Cameron are familiar to islanders, having spent summers and holidays in the historic mansion that nestles near the water's edge on Stella Bay. Though Mr Apps hadn't been well enough to visit Farnham since 1997, Grace says the house echoes with memories of happy family gatherings.

"I have wonderful stories of their early years on the island, tackling the Jubinski house (and its rogue cats!) and trying their hand at raising Charolais cattle," she writes. "I truly think Dad would have been happiest if he had chosen to be a farmer, but I also think he realized his shortcomings in that department!"

Mr Apps died on Christmas Eve at the age of 83. Because his children and grandchildren are scattered across the globe, funeral arrangements have been postponed until mid-January, when they can all gather in Kingston.

A FEAT TO BRING EVERYONE TOGETHER

"This is not as easy as you might assume," says Grace, who lives in Saipan, near Tokyo. "Family is also coming from Australia, Western Canada and the States - it has been a feat to bring everyone together."

"Dad has 17 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren - [it] makes for rather a large family contingent."

Mr Apps is survived by a brother, Ernie, who also owns a home on the Amherst Island waterfront, but lives in Ottawa. He was among Mr Apps' closest friends, a group that also included former poker buddies from Agincourt and the late Judge Alan Campbell.

"When you are 83, many of your closest friends have already passed on," says Grace. "It is hard to single out Dad's friends, as they were many and widespread. There were friends from his political career, those from his athletic career and more from our family home in Agincourt and cottage at Fenelon Falls."

While the world knows of his stellar career in hockey and his participation in track and field at the British Empire Games and the 1936 Olympics, few people are aware that Mr Apps also won a junior tennis trophy in the Paris-Galt area where he grew up. He was a member of Cataragui Golf Club, where he was a scratch golfer and an excellent curler.

'SPORTS A CHALLENGE'

"Sports were a challenge that he could always meet and come out first," his daughter says.

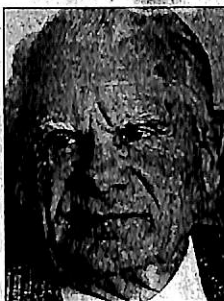
Grace grew up with hundreds of trophies lining the walls of their home and a father who encouraged his children to participate in many sports.

"Dad was an all-round athlete and expected sports to be a natural inclination for all of us," she says. "He never could figure out why I couldn't hit the golf ball straight down the fairway. It's a good thing the boys turned out to be good golfers."

Though his interest in sports never waned - Mr Apps always held season's hockey tickets - his ability to participate was erased when he was struck by a degenerative nerve disease more than a decade ago.

"The physicians who have cared for Dad over the years have never been able to put a name to the particular disorder that plagued him," Grace

TRIBUTE



Syl Apps, seen in a photo from 1986 (right). Below: The former Maple Leafs' captain holding the Stanley Cup.

File Photos



said. "Lou Gehrig's disease is perhaps the closest, although Dad did not experience all the symptoms."

"It was a gradual degeneration of the conducting nerves which caused the loss of the use of his legs and seriously affected eye-hand co-ordination and speech. Onset was probably about 15 years ago although there were some fleeting symptoms before that."

Bedridden for the past year, Mr Apps required full-time nursing care. He was able to communicate through the use of a Bliss board, his only method of communication for some time.

"Dad ... managed quite effectively to get his messages across," Grace relates. "He was always quick to let the kids know if he thought they needed a haircut."

"Although his co-ordination was poor, he has always managed ... to point to letters on the board and spell the words he needed to communicate."

WORLD WAS HIS FAMILY

Mr Apps' world was his family and his grandchildren his pride and joy, yet he always took time to help those less fortunate.

The Syl and Molly Apps wing at Kingston General Hospital is a testament to his good works which, for the most part, were far less publicly acclaimed.

"Charities were always being discussed in our household and there was a budget each year to cover these gifts," Grace says.

"Dad was involved with his church, Agincourt Baptist when we lived in the Toronto area and First Baptist in Kingston. The cancer society was always a beneficiary and Dad had a special interest in the Boys and Girls Club."

"Better than money, Dad spent years sitting on the boards of hospitals and fundraising for different causes."

"Whether it was a down-on-his-luck man in financial straits or a charity fund drive, Dad was always a good listener and a generous donor."

Funeral services for Syl Apps will be held on Jan. 16 at Kingston First Baptist Church. Mr Apps will be buried at Mountainview Cemetery in Cambridge on Jan. 18.