



GORDON ALCOTT

FROM 10 YEARS AGO

## Little NHL — past and future— as seen by Gordon Alcott

I well remember, on a cool afternoon in September, in the upstairs of the Old Town Hall, speaking to some 90 young boys, of a hockey league that I intended to organize for the Georgetown boys. That was in 1936.

I do not need to recount the enthusiastic reception of the first Little N.H.L. by the Georgetown district hockey fans. Indeed I might say we attracted thousands of people to the Georgetown Arena who up to that time were not in the least interested in hockey. We filled the Arena every Tuesday and Thursday nights and on Main Street, the whole topic of conversation was Little N.H.L. hockey.

In fact, wherever groups of people met, you could be sure the games of the night before were being discussed and in many cases with much heat!

The object of the Little N.H.L. is to provide organized hockey for Canadian boys and to teach good sportsmanship off and on the ice.

In order to encourage the boys in their general good deportment and in their school work, a "Good Behaviour" Contract was signed by the School Teacher, the Parent and by the player.

Every boy was taken to the Maple Leaf Gardens to see an N.H.L. game during the season. Some teams were taken into the dressing rooms to meet the N.H.L. players before a game.

I think one of the highlights, was a game played at Maple Leaf Gardens, prior to an N.H.L. game, between the Toronto Maple Leafs and the New York Americans. This is the only time in the history of the Maple Leaf Gardens that such a game has been played before the "big" game.

The two teams from the Georgetown Little N.H.L. were the Maple Leafs, sponsored by the Lions Club and the New York Americans of Glen Williams.

The final series of a most successful season was played between the Maple Leafs (Lions Club) and the Montreal Canadiens (Georgetown Legion).

The best of five series went six games with Bud James scoring the only goal of the game to win the Championship for the Maple Leafs.

Little N.H.L. then was organized in Copper Cliff and it soon spread rapidly throughout Northern Ontario.

Corn Smythe thought so highly of Little N.H.L. that he told me that I could have the Maple Leaf Gardens once a year from 12 noon to 12 midnight for Minor Hockey Tournaments.

Thus was born the Minor Tournaments that are so popular today. Indeed Georgetown is famous for its week-long tournament at Easter. Little N.H.L. is the granddaddy of all tournaments and are held at Easter in centres throughout Ontario.

In Copper Cliff the Farm Team System was started to include Junior A, (ages 8 and 9) American League (10 and 11), N.H.L. (12 and 13 years) and Little N.H.L. carried its organization into hamlets of 500 to 1,000 to cities of 500,000 to a million. There are now an estimated 50,000 boys playing Little N.H.L. hockey—far cry from the original 90 boys in Georgetown, 30 years ago!

Little N.H.L. has provided untold enjoyment for thousands of young hockey players down through those 30 years.

We are proud of the boys who have graduated from our Little N.H.L. to become stars in the N.H.L. such as Bob Goldham, Jos. Schertzel, Tod Sloan, George Armstrong, Tim Horton, Jerry Toppazzini, Sambo Bettio, Ken Hodge, Bob Pulford, Jack Stanfield, Fred Stanfield, John Brennanman, Vic Hadfield, Bryan Watson, Jim Roberts, Jerry Cheevers.

We are also proud of the thousands of young men who have played Little N.H.L. and have now become successful in the professional and business world.

I would like to pay tribute to the men who have acted on the Little N.H.L. executive for the past 30 years and to the coaches for their many hours of teaching young hockey players.

May Little N.H.L., the "Builders of Little Champions", continue to build on this firm foundation.

## What the past decade has brought and what lies ahead

By Rev. Len Self

Gordon Alcott died suddenly in April, 1974 after returning from a trip to Spain with his wife Jean. It was while in Madrid that he helped rescue several people from a hotel fire where he was staying. The tragedy of that happening was that it appeared that he inhaled a great deal of smoke gases, which affected his heart so that shortly after his return to Canada he died very suddenly in Erin Ontario. In effect, in death he gave his life for those even as he had given it to his fellow man throughout his life.

Before his death Gordon Alcott had planned this fortieth anniversary. He had had meetings and formed his committees. These committees are the organization in charge of this anniversary.

As a tribute Gordon Alcott, the community of Halton Hills dedicated their new arena in the summer of 1975 to serve the Georgetown area. It is called the Gordon Alcott Memorial Arena.

The following prayer of dedication was given by Rev. Len Self. May its message ever be true.

Oh Lord, our God, we thank thee on this day of dedication of this beautiful centre, for the life and work of Gordon Alcott. We thank thee

for his leadership among youth in Christian living and purposeful activity. He taught us life is a game to be played. It will have defeats, it will have victories. To really enjoy it we must play the rules with its disciplines and then our defeats also become victories and life has real purpose.

Dear God, cultivate within us today, for tomorrow's living, the many virtues Gordon lived and taught while he walked among us;

Dear Lord we give thee thanks today, for the youth of Halton Hills and all that will use this building for sport and recreation. Challenge them, we pray thee, with a vision of good citizenship, sportsmanship, education, and a real love for all fellow Canadians, so that they will become true leaders in our nation of tomorrow.

AMEN

During the years of the sixties and seventies an amazing thing has happened among minor hockey associations. Spring tournaments have sprung up all over the country patterned after Gordon Alcott's concept. Goderich Lions Pee-Wee and the Quebec Pee-Wee Winter Carnival Tournament were the first to start. Today, tournaments are held in every age

group from ages 6 to 21. However, there is one essential difference in all these tournaments from Little N.H.L. Tournaments. I refer to the matter of team selection. Every tournament, except Little N.H.L. cater only to all-star teams from communities. Little N.H.L. was started by G. Alcott for players who never made all-stars. His purpose was to form recreation house leagues in communities to keep all boys occupied in planned recreation. The tournament was to be an award to good players in house leagues. Either the winning house league team or in the case of small communities an all-star team of house league players travelled to the tournament. The emphasis was not on winning but practice patron. Although C.A.H.A. rules were basic to

introduced shorter games and rules to prevent, fighting, swearing and other ungentlemanly acts of players and coaches. Little N.H.L. has always been noted for tournaments without rough play.

It is interesting to note that Little N.H.L. in the seventies has grown substantially especially among rural villages and communities because of its stand on hockey for recreational purposes. The surprising fact is that Little N.H.L. has given more fun and hockey to more boys and produced its fair share of N.H.L. hockey greats such as Bobby Orr.

Years 1978 and later. The future of Little N.H.L. is in 1) Its good behaviour conducts, 2) its continuance with house leagues and the exclusion of all-stars, 3) Rigid

rules to control rough play. A "play a for fun" recreation Little N.H.L. should always be program.



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