

Bangay's heroics will be well remembered



Jim Thomas

He was my hockey hero. As far back as 60 years ago, Bob Bangay displayed those qualities of which hockey heroes are made.

I worshipped him. And so did thousands of others.

While yet a runny nosed kid, I cheered as captain Bangay guided the Markham 'Millionaires' to the OHA Jr. 'C' championship. The year was 1941.

Later, and then in my teens, I joined in the cheers as Bangay paced Markham to the OHA Intermediate 'B' finals in 1947.

Still later, and now a would-be journalist, I looked on with admiration as coach Bangay piloted Stouffville to the OHA Senior 'B' title in 1952.

And then, on Dec. 20, I and others like me, sat in silence, as words of praise and approval were spoken of the man who had meant so much to so many.

It was my hero's final farewell.

There were tears of sorrow and of joy. It was a moment to remember, our own mortality and how fleeting life is.

It was also a time to remember what Bob Bangay had contributed to his country and to Markham and Stouffville. And to his family.

As Rev. Lou Geense put it: "We are here to remember, to mourn and to celebrate the life of a devoted husband, father, grandfather and friend."

Robert George Bangay died peacefully at his Stouffville home, Dec. 17, in his 81st year.

While family was important — wife Dorothy, (Dodi); sister Hazel; sons Bobby and Blair; daughter Donna and grandchildren Shawna, Brenda, Afton, Corey, Jocelyn, Aaron, Daryl and Brett — it was his extended family that adopted him as their son, an individual to be honored, even revered.

Bob Bangay never envied the limelight. Down deep, he was a private person. Nevertheless, he earned spectator adulation through sheer brilliance and perseverance. His puck-juggling skills

knew no equal. Rev. Geense described him as "a never-give-up kind of guy."

Born in Colborne, Ont., Bob moved with his parents, a brother Nick and sister Hazel to Scarborough.

The Bangay brothers, Nick and Bob, entered the Markham hockey scene back in the '40s along with 'Bus' Sabiston, 'Ike' Harper, Vic Meharg, Jack Watson, Allan Bowdway, Austie Baker and Bob Lawrie. They won the Jr. 'C' title in '41. Seven years later, Markham advanced to the Intermediate 'B' finals. Bob and Nick Bangay were members of that team as well along with newcomers George and Fred Scott; Charlie Nesbitt, Jack Harper and Carl Sellers.

Bob Bangay saw service with the Canadian Army overseas during the Second World War, advancing to the rank of captain. It was while playing hockey out of a base camp in Newmarket that Bangay and Charlie Nesbitt first met. They became inseparable friends.

Later, Bob, along with George Stark, would test their mettle with North Sydney in the Cape Breton senior pro league. Sweeney Schriener, formerly of the Toronto Maple Leafs, was their coach.

In 1951, Tim O'Neill and Telf Rennie of the Clippers were looking for a hockey coach in Stouffville. It was Polly Minton, a graduate junior who suggested they approach Bob Bangay for the job. He eventually accepted.

In 1952, Stouffville captured the OHA Sr. B title, and was the smallest town in Ontario ever to do so. The following year, the Clippers advanced to the Ontario semi-finals, only to be beaten by Oshawa.

Later, he became a founding father of the Stouffville Minor Hockey Association and, in this role, seldom missed a game, especially contests involving sons Blair and Bobby. He was one of those first elected to the Markham-Stouffville's Hockey Hall of Fame.

Blair spoke of his father's courageous eight-year battle with cancer and his accented wish to remain at home.

"But his greatest passion was hockey," said Blair, a revelation that came as no surprise to those filling the Dixon-Garland Funeral Chapel in Markham.

He was the cornerstone of a sport that, for over a decade, "consumed" two communities.

Markham and Stouffville may never again experience its equal or his.



RECORDING A BIG ASSIST DURING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

Members of the Markham Islanders peewee AA hockey team got into the holiday spirit by collecting groceries and delivering over 20 bags recently to the Markham Fire Department's Unionville station. Here, team members posed with some members of the local detachment.

Waxers edge Newmarket Hurricanes, Spirit's streak ended by Thornhill

Mark Skeeles picked a good time to score his first Provincial Junior A Hockey League goal.

The first-year member of the Markham Waxers potted the game-winning goal with 4:33 remaining in regulation time to propel Markham to a 4-3 road win over the north conference-leading Newmarket Hurricanes last Thursday.

The victory improved the Waxers' third-place south conference record to 19-13-4-1.

Trailing 2-1 after one period, the Waxers received second-period goals from Michael Fish and Pat Poretta, on a power-play, to even the count at 3-3 entering the third period. Steve Nobili accounted for the other Markham goal.

Waxers' head coach Russ Herrington felt Skeeles, who has been utilized on the forward line and defence, was overdue in getting his first

JR. A ROUNDUP

junior A goal. "He's been playing well," said Herrington of Skeeles. "He's had chances the last five or six games to score, but he didn't capitalize. But tonight (Thursday) he crashed the net hard. It was nice to see."

"It was also nice to get the two points and get contributions throughout the lineup."

Herrington felt a big part of their club's success came in neutralizing the Hurricanes' forwards and to get the puck out of their own end.

The Waxers resume league play Friday when they host the St. Michael's Buzzers at 8 p.m. at Centennial Arena.

RATTLERS 5, SPIRIT 4

The Stouffville Spirit's five-game

unbeaten streak crashed Thursday night at the Stouffville Arena.

The Thornhill Rattlers scored the last two goals of the night to prevail 5-4.

The Rattlers crashed the Spirit net all night, harassing Spirit goalie Curtis Cribbie. Fans grew tired of the lack of calls by referee Ian Munro and let him know it. The Spirit bounced back from a 3-0 deficit to take a 4-3 lead after two periods. But led by ex-Spirit winger Jamie Minchellas' two goals and an assist, the Rattlers prevailed.

Mike Forgie had two of the Spirit goals, with Jordan Mabley and Austin Corredato getting the others.

The Spirit is playing in the four-day Newmarket Showcase tournament starting tomorrow in Newmarket and East Gwillimbury.

More than 100 college and major junior scouts are expected to attend the 28-team tourney.

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