

Beloved umpire won't let stroke call him out

BY JIM THOMAS
Correspondent

Strike three, you're out was a big part of Bob French's vernacular.

However, for this 69-year-old Stouffville fastball umpire, the "out call" is far from his mind.

The veteran official is battling back from a major stroke that partially paralysed one side and caused temporary loss of speech.

Heremains a patient in Markham Stouffville Hospital.

Cathy French, Bob's wife, praised emergency medical services for its quick response and hospital staff for their efficiency after her husband lapsed into a coma.

"The ambulance was there in 10 minutes," she said. "The EMS team was marvelous."

It was 6:15 a.m., June 2 when

French fell to the floor in the bedroom of their trailer park summer home at Cedar Beach.

Initially, they thought the fall was due to a missing leg brace. However, when he collapsed a second time, Mrs. French dialed 911.

"It's something really bad," she remembers her husband saying.

"When he went unconscious, I feared we'd lost him," she said.

In the past nine weeks, Mr. French's recovery, while slow, has been constant. He can now sit up, even take a few steps. He is receiving therapy.

The Toronto-born French began officiating after moving to Goodwood 30 years ago.

"Our son, Blake, was playing T-ball," Cathy recalled, "but there was no umpire. Bob agreed to help out.

The rest is history."

Since then, he has officiated across Ontario.

Following a move to Stouffville 18 years ago, French has been a familiar figure in town parks, sharing duties behind the plate or on the bases with companion official Al Piette.

"When he was needed, he was there," Mr. Piette said, "always with a big smile on his face."

For two seasons, he also coached a Stouffville rep team.

"Bob loved the game, especially back in Goodwood, where he was just one of the boys," Mr. Piette said.

Mrs. French said her husband gained the respect of teams by insisting on sportsmanlike conduct on and off the field.

"There was never any booing, only applause," she said, "and certainly no hassling of umpires."

"One of the most qualified officials around," Whitchurch-Stouffville Softball Association president June Doner said, "popular with players and fans."

An ornamental ball and glove holds an important place in hospital room 1142, a gift from Ms. Doner.

Cards, flowers and letters are arriving daily, Cathy said.

Trailer park friends gave him a DVD player.

The Frenches have three children and two grandchildren. On June 2 they would have celebrated their 37th wedding anniversary.

Instead, they spent the day together in hospital.



BOB FRENCH: Longtime Stouffville resident and umpire battling back from June 2 stroke.

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Request for Public Opinion on the Proposed Nursing Home Annual Licence Renewal of Bloomington Cove, Stouffville

In accordance with the *Nursing Homes Act*, public opinion is being requested prior to a final decision being made on the above.

If you have comments or opinions and wish to bring them to the attention of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, you may submit them by **September 4, 2007** to:

Director under the Nursing Homes Act
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Performance Improvement and Compliance Branch
Licensing, Education and Appeals
55 St. Clair Avenue West, 8th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M4V 2Y7
Phone: 416-327-7345 Fax: 416-327-7763

Please include the name of the nursing home and quote Project #095-08 on all written submissions.
The Director will consider all submissions before making a final decision.

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