

COLUMNS

When Ken Dryden visits, we remember his father

Growing up in northern Ontario during the 1960s, it was hard not to be a Toronto Maple Leafs fan.

There were only two Canadian teams in the Original Six, the Leafs being the lone representatives west of the Quebec border.

And believe it or not, kids, the Leafs were stellar back then, capturing four Stanley Cups during the decade. Look it up.

Life was good. Fans donned fedoras instead of paper bags. (No one wore team jerseys or painted their faces.) Harold Ballard acted logically.

The Montreal Canadiens were the enemy. And as the Leafs continued to go off the rails after that last cup win in 1967, it seemed the Habs were in continuous contention. They were easy to be evasive of.

Then I met Murray Dryden, a guy from Etobicoke who was giving a presentation at St. Mark's School in Stouffville in the early 1980s.

Murray and his wife Margaret created Sleeping Children Around the World in 1970.

The charity has raised more than \$40 million and provided 1.4 million bedkits for children in 34 developing countries. St. Mark's was all over it.

But the Whitchurch-Stouffville connection did not end there.

The Drydens owned three Christmas tree farms, including a property on McCowan Road near Ballantrae that hosted charity tree sale events. Sleeping Children benefitted further when the farms were sold for \$3.5 million in 1988.

Murray was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 1981. He died at 92 in 2004.

Both of the Drydens' sons, Dave and Ken, played goal in NHL. Both could be seen helping their dad at the tree lots.

Yes, that Ken Dryden, the guy who unbelievably earned six Stanley Cup rings and five Vezina trophies – during just



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

over seven years in the NHL.

Ken Dryden, a Toronto Liberal MP from 2004-11, returned to York Region Friday. He joined another ex-Canadian, Serge Savard, to address hundreds of youth hockey volunteers from across the south end of the province at the Ontario Minor Hockey Association awards dinner at the Sheraton Parkway in Richmond Hill.

They talked Team Canada 1972, in advance of a September speaking tour that will return players to the four Canadian cities the storied series against the Soviet Union was played in 44 years ago.

Ken Dryden said sure, there was pressure to win the series in that eighth game in Moscow. But he'd played in two Game 7s during that year's Stanley Cup playoffs. Still, he knew if he lost, he would public enemy No. 1 in Canada.

Ken Dryden made zero judgement on youth sports today when recalling playing his entire minor hockey career with the same club. There was time to be a student. Time to play baseball. No summer hockey.

Today? Concussions are the biggest issue facing all sports at all levels, he said. No excuses. Get on it.

Refreshing.
From a Canadian.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune. Follow him on Twitter @stouffeditor

Guard says bye to her corner

The 'mother' of Stouffville's largest 'family' will soon retire.

Sharon Norton, a school crossing guard for the past 28 years at the busy intersection of Stouffville's Main and Stouffer streets, will relinquish her lollipop sign at the end of this month. She and husband Larry plan to take up residence in Beaverton following the sale of their Stouffville home.

But not without regrets.

"Sometimes I found the work stressful, but overall, it's been enjoyable," she says. "Two bloodshot eyes will be visible when the time comes to go."

Not only those of a dedicated service provider but the eyes of dozens of children and parents. "I've already noticed a few children crying," she states, "we're very attached."

Sharon, 63, is a native of Richmond Hill, one of four in the family of Stan and Betty Ransom. She has two brothers, Dan of Richmond Hill; Bill of London and a sister, Betty in Whitby. She and husband Larry, a semi-retired plumber, have two sons, Shawn of Beaverton and Kyle in Stouffville.

A graduate of Uxbridge Secondary School, Sharon received her own elementary education at McConaghy Public School in Richmond Hill and Webb Public School in Uxbridge. Prior to her marriage in 1972 she worked at the Claremont Nursing Home and Stouffville's Brierbush Hospital, which was located one block east of Summitview.

The same house in Stouffville has been 'home' for 44 years.

When the crossing guard position became available, Sharon applied and was immediately hired.

"The distance factor and my love of children worked



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

out well in every way," she remembers. She's remained at the same site ever since.

"This was my place," she states with feelings of resolve.

She's now into her second generation of student protection.

"Kind of scary," she admits.

While her work day doesn't begin until 7:45 a.m., Sharon's an early riser, crawling out from under the covers as early as 5:30. Nor does she strictly abide by time limits as set out in her schedule.

"Usually the children who live the closest arrive the latest so I sometimes hang around a little longer than I should," she admits. "I'd never leave a child standing. How could I forgive myself if a boy or girl were injured because I wasn't there?"

During 28 years on the job only one accident occurred. Fortunately, she says, the child's injuries weren't serious. She remembers many close-calls, however, particularly before traffic signals were installed.

"Right and left turns can be hazardous," Sharon claims. Ignoring red lights are also common driving errors. "It's a crazy world out there."

As for the cold, Sharon says she always made sure to dress warmly. "I didn't mind climbing snowbanks," she says, "ice was the worst." She

suffered several falls.

Sharon has a fondness for pets, particularly dogs. Because of this, she always approaches her crosswalk duties with pockets filled with biscuits. Four-legged friends have come to expect these treats and so have their owners.

"How are you best known to the children?" she was asked.

"Most address me as Miss Sharon or just plain Sharon," she explains. "I dislike Mrs. Norton – it makes me feel old."

Parents have been wonderful, she says. "Unbelievably generous," is the way she describes how they annually showered her with gifts at Christmas and the end of June.

Will she seek a similar position after she and Larry become settled in Beaverton?

Sharon's definite. "I'm going to miss it," she says, "and I'll treasure some great memories. However, come June 30 I'm calling it a day. I need some time to myself."

For Miss Sharon, that time to herself has definitely been earned.

Howe and Ali

The dual positions of editor/photographer at a weekly newspaper like The Sun-Tribune, has its extra-curricular benefits. For me, two of these were photo assignments I'll never forget.

The first was a training bout between the late Muhammad Ali and Stouffville's Travis Sugden prior to Ali's match with Toronto's George Chuvalo.

The second was an autograph signing with the legendary Gordie Howe at Newmarket's Upper Canada Mall.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 65 years.