

A Whole of a Tale



"BOB'S LEGACY"

We had not been home from Australia for many days when I received a phone call to see if I would substitute in a 'Fun Bonspeil' at the Prince Albert Golf and Curling Club.

I debated accepting as I had not been curling for all of January, February and most of March. Also, at my age, the body clock had not yet fully adjusted from the 28 hour time we had spent travelling back to Canada. My wife said, "Oh go ahead. You will enjoy it." Being a dutiful husband – I went.

While greeting and joshing with my old curling buddies was great, and while the curling was lots of fun, if I had not gone I would have missed experiencing a great moment for me – meeting Bob's legacy.

I am not certain Bob would appreciate the attention I will give to this matter. He was not that kind of guy. Bob was quiet and reserved; he did what he did because that was just the kind of person he was – praise he would shy from.

Bob passed away in 2021. He curled regularly in the Prince Albert Senior Men's Curling League. That is where I met him. I curled against him and with him. We made a personal contact when I learned he had retired from Saskatchewan Power and had worked for the corporation in Regina where he had come to know my brother.

We shared lots of stories about Regina, my home town. I bragged that I was a tough guy from west end Regina – Bob would feign fear as I strutted my stuff.

But my memories of Bob include the man who contributed hours and hours of his time to the senior curlers' 'Learn to Curl Program.' It was a program where schools could send their students to the rink on Monday and Tuesday mornings and senior curlers would give lessons to the participating classes. It was fantastic to see complete novices step gingerly on the ice and within a few short hours of instruction play a full game.

Bob was always there. He would arrive well before the school kids got there, and he would diligently set out the brooms and sliders needed for all the sheets that were to be used. And then he would teach and teach. He was patient and committed. He often helped the most unsure, non confident novice to feel okay out on the ice.

Bob carried this teaching commitment to another novice with whom he had very strong attachment – his granddaughter.

At a very young age, when she was barely able to push the rock very far, she would arrive at the rink with her mother often at the end of one of Bob's games,

don her little curling shoes and join grandpa on the ice for very age appropriate lessons.

I marvelled as year after year the little girl progressed with Bob working patiently to make certain the skills were learned well. The love between granddaughter and grandpa was very evident for we who watched behind the glass.

The last few years I did not curl in the same leagues as Bob. As a result, I was not there to watch the granddaughter's complete progress.

That Saturday of the 'Fun Speil' when I stepped on the ice, I noticed a teenage girl skipping a team of adults on another sheet. I watched and smiled as this young teenager not only called the shots but made them as well.

Then one of her team mates crossed over to my sheet, and said hello. I did not recognize him immediately, but he pointed at his young skip and said, "Perhaps you don't recognize her. She is my daughter and Bob's granddaughter."

I hugged him and struggled to hold back tears!

What a Legacy Bob.

In memory of Bob Barton

Reviewing this story with Bob's family members, they suggested that Pat Bibby, a board member of the Prince Albert Golf and Curling Club, should be mentioned. Pat oversees the after school curling program where students of various ages are able to come, learn how to curl and enjoy games where they practice their lessons. Pat and her fellow volunteer coaches have perfected a curling curriculum that is most effective. That set of lessons is used by the senior curlers as they run their morning program for school classes.

Bob, as mentioned, was an avid volunteer with both the morning senior curling lessons and Pat's program after school hours.

Thank you Pat and all your colleagues for what you do, and for the major role you played in assisting Bob with his legacy.



MORLEY HARRISON

For comments or feedback contact
fmharrison@sasktel.net