

Famed figure skating coach Galbraith dies at 92

By Jake Courtepatte

The figure skating world lost one of their builders last week when coach Sheldon Galbraith passed away at his home in Newmarket last Tuesday.

The long-time Aurora resident was monumental in Canada's figure skating success during the mid-20th century, producing some of the nation's most celebrated champion skaters.

Born in Teulon, Manitoba, Galbraith moved to Palo Alto, California at a young age where he and his brother skated for the touring ice show 'Ice Follies.' He served in the U.S. Air Force in World War II before embarking on a coaching career in Ottawa in 1946.



It was there at the Minto Skating Club that he took over coaching Barbara Ann Scott, already a Canadian national champion. The two made history when Scott became the first, and to this day only, Canadian woman to win Olympic gold in ladies singles in 1948.

Moving to Toronto in the late '40s, his students also included pairs teams Frances Dafoe and Norris Bowden, and Barbara Wagner and Robert Paul, building his reputation as one of the top figure skating coaches in the world along the way.

Under the tutelage of Galbraith, his students were world champions in men, ladies, and pairs categories.

'He was a pioneer of the sport and has, as a part of his numerous accomplishments, the remarkable distinction of having coached six skaters who eventually were also inducted into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame,' said Mario Siciliano in a statement, President and CEO of the Hall of Fame. 'His passion for figure skating and leading edge techniques and innovations will forever mark his legacy in the world of figure skating.'

Galbraith holds the honour of helping to bring home Canada's first non-hockey Winter Olympic medals.

Honoured by Canada's Sports Hall of Fame in 1980, Galbraith became the first figure skating coach to be inducted. His accolades since have included the Skate Canada Hall of Fame, World Figure Skating Museum and Hall of Fame, and the Professional Skaters Association Coaches Hall of Fame, as well as a member of the Order of Canada in 1999.

The figure skating community took to Twitter to mourn the loss of one of their greats last week. The U.S. Figure Skating Association offered their sympathies, calling Galbraith 'one of Canada's great coaches.' International Figure Skating Magazine said of Galbraith 'he will be missed dearly by the community.'

Galbraith and his wife (also deceased) had five children together.