

Hall of Famers celebrate Class of 2016



By Jake Courtepatte

The best on snow and ice were lauded at the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame induction dinner on Wednesday night, a sold-out event for the third year in a row.

The Hall welcomed their third class of inductees at a special ceremony set in the heart of St. Andrew's College in Cole Hall.

A crowd of 280 family members, friends, and well-wishers were on hand to celebrate the induction of Mike Murphy, Mike Kitchen, Karen Stemmle, and Sheldon Galbraith into the sporting community's hallowed halls.

"This is the culmination of a year of work for many of our volunteers, who work tirelessly to ensure we not only select the worthy inductees, but also bring together people to publicly celebrate their accomplishments," said Ron Weese, Chair of the Hall's board of governors.

Stemmle, an accomplished skier who reached the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, and Murphy, whose hockey career brought him the Los Angeles Kings' captaincy in the late '70s, were inducted into the "Athlete" section of the Hall. Legendary figure skating instructor Galbraith and longtime NHL coach Kitchen were added as coaches.

It is only fitting that Mr. Murphy and Mr. Kitchen reach the Hall in the same class, having become close friends through both their hometown and hockey connections.

Adding to the luster of NHL lore was the master of ceremonies, Gord Stellick, who was general manager of the Toronto Maple Leafs in the late '80s. James Duthie, traditionally the host of the event, left the crowd with a playful video congratulating the inductees from his seat at TSN's "That's Hockey" alongside Jamie McLennan and Bob McKenzie.

Though Stellick compared his hosting to an awkward second choice for a date to prom, his self-deprecating banter about the Maple Leafs' early 90s struggles had the crowd in good spirits.

But among the NHL veterans was a surprise guest that stands out among any hockey crowd. Hockey Hall of Fame defenseman Bobby Orr, in town to watch Newmarket's Connor McDavid play the Toronto Maple Leafs the night prior, was a guest of Ms. Stemmle's table.

Mr. Murphy delivered some of the evening's best lines about the honoured guest, recalling the first time he interacted with the Boston great.

Sitting at a nearby bar after a game against the Bruins while with the Kings, a chance encounter with Orr, in which the veteran complimented his play, left the young Murphy awestruck.

A month or so later, Orr roughed up Mr. Murphy in a very physical rematch.

"I learned that what happens between the boards is different than what happens in the restaurant," said Mr. Murphy.

But perhaps the proudest moment of Mr. Murphy's career, conceded by his wife Yvonne in his tribute video, came during the

1979-80 season as a player with the Los Angeles Kings. Yvonne recalls watching her husband standing beside Gordie Howe during the season's All Star game, while Howe received a prolonged ovation from the crowd.

?I don't know if I have ever seen him prouder than at that moment.?

Spending parts of two seasons as head coach of the Kings upon retirement, it was with the Maple Leafs in the mid-90s that the careers of Mr. Murphy and Mr. Kitchen once again intertwined, as noted by Stellick.

At one time, the Maple Leafs coaching staff included a star-studded lineup of Mr. Murphy, Mr. Kitchen, Marc Crawford now of the Chicago Blackhawks, Joel Quenneville now of the St. Louis Blues, and the late Pat Burns.

It was Stellick who gave Mr. Kitchen his first NHL coaching job, as an assistant with the Maple Leafs, after returning to Aurora following his playing career and taking a coaching job with the AHL's Newmarket Saints.

Mr. Kitchen, who has won two Stanley Cup rings with the Chicago Blackhawks as an assistant coach in recent years, thanked his family and friends for supporting ?this crazy, wonderful ride? through his wife Jill.

?From the first time I had skates on until today, I have always loved the game of hockey,? said Mr. Kitchen in a written speech. ?As a kid I couldn't wait to get out of school and hit the arena or pond.?

?My dream was to play just one game: and here we are.?

A live fantasy auction during the dinner brought in \$14,000 for the organization, offering up once-in-a-lifetime trip packages including \$4,000 for a Floridian vacation and horseracing package as well as \$2,500 for a day ski trip with Ms. Stemmle and her brother Brian, also in the Hall.

The 2016 inductees will be enshrined for a full calendar year in wall displays at the new Hall of Fame exhibit at the SARC, officially opened to the public last weekend.

Next week, The Auroran will focus on the induction of Ms. Stemmle and Mr. Galbraith.