

Long-time Auroran Galbraith honoured as a figure skating icon



By Jake Courtepatte

A lifetime of accolades at the provincial and national level has landed Sheldon Galbraith initiation into local lore, as one of the newest members of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame.

Passing away just shy of 93 in April of last year, 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, President and CEO of the Hall of Fame, in a statement. '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. Scott won Olympic gold in 1948, while Wagner and Paul were the 1960 pairs champions in Squaw Valley.

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 family was surprised and delighted at the news that the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame is recognizing our father with his induction into the Hall,' said Jeannie Branston, the eldest daughter of Galbraith. 'It is an honour, and he was a resident who loved his community.'

Galbraith joins NHL coaches Mike Kitchen and Mike Murphy in the 'coaches' category of inductees in the 2016 ASHoF class. Olympic skier Karen Stemmler is the lone inductee into the 'athlete' category.

Held annually at St. Andrew's College, the ASHoF Induction dinner is one of the most spectacular nights of the year in the Aurora sports community. This year's dinner will be held on November 2.

More information can be found at www.aurorashof.ca.