

Aurora Sports Hall of Fame a family affair for Stemmler



By Jake Courtepatte

The Auroran touched last week upon two new inductee's into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's hallowed halls, longtime NHLers Mike Murphy and Mike Kitchen.

This week, Olympic skier Karen Stemmler, and Canadian figure skating legend Sheldon Galbraith, share the spotlight in rounding out the 2016 class of Aurora's most celebrated athletes and coaches.

It was only fitting that Gord Stellick stepped in as a late addition to emcee the induction dinner earlier this month, as a member of the Toronto Cricket, Skating, and Curling Club.

"There's a big plaque honouring (Mr. Galbraith)," said Stellick. "You talk about his legacy, the club is run by past Olympians Brian Orser and Tracy Wilson. So many past Olympians have skated there, that is an incredible legacy that he's had a big part in building."

Mr. Galbraith, who is inducted posthumously after passing away in April of last year, enters the Hall in the "coaches" category. It is the fifth time he has been inducted into a Hall of Fame, having previously entered Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, the Canadian Figure Skating Hall of Fame, the World Figure Skating Hall of Fame, and the Professional Skaters Association Hall of Fame.

"My dad always shied away from the limelight, but the induction into Aurora's Sports Hall of Fame is wonderful," said Jeannie Branston, Mr. Galbraith's daughter, in an induction speech. "It's a great honour, and I know he would have been very humbled and pleased by this recognition."

Mr. Galbraith, whose students have won medals at all levels of World Championships as well as the Olympic Games, was famed for utilizing new methods and technologies to teach his skaters, like trampolines and pulleys.

"I don't think it was mentioned tonight, but there was a little handheld viewer that was made for dad, that is now in the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame," said Ms. Branston.

Keeping with the hockey theme that was imposed for half of the inductee class, Ms. Branston also made sure to mention her father's involvement with the NHL.

"He worked with a number of hockey players," said Ms. Branston. "In particular, Frank Mahovlich, on skating and balance. They became great friends."

Stellick, who was also connected with Mr. Murphy and Mr. Kitchen through the NHL, was quick to mention that he was, in fact, also close with the fourth and final inductee, Ms. Stemmler.

"Karen, I didn't know you skied," joked Stellick. "I just thought you partied."

Ms. Stemmler, whose guests took up three full tables at the gala, had a bus with a backstory waiting outside of the St. Andrew's College hall for after the ceremony.

"My parents had this 'rockstar' bus that they would take down to Florida," said Ms. Stemmler. "When I found out months ago that I was being inducted, and I knew my parents couldn't be here, I thought 'oh my gosh I'm going to get the bus back.'"

After speaking with the new owner, Ms. Stemmler promptly bought back her parent's bus to celebrate her induction.

Ms. Stemmler's mother passed away six years ago, while her father passed away two years ago.

Skiing has always loomed large in the Stemmler family, with Ms. Stemmler pointing out that their parents met while skiing.

"It was their first date?my dad taught my mom how to ski. As many people mention, they are here because of their parents. And

because of that first date, this is why Brian and I are here.?

The second female to be inducted into the Hall, Ms. Stemmler is also the second Stemmler, following in the footsteps of her brother Brian who was inducted in 2013 as an alpine skier.

?I was talking to my brother about when he was inducted,? said Ms. Stemmler. ?He said, ?ya, I had one person with me here"?tonight we have three tables of ten! Stemmlers in the house!?

Perhaps one of the most memorable lines of the evening came from Brian, in the tribute video played to Ms. Stemmler prior to her official induction.

?Congratulations Karen,? said Brian. ?Now your pretty picture will be beside my ugly mug.?