

Daughter honoured by Stunden's induction into Hall of Fame



By Jeff Doner

When Norm Stunden first moved to Aurora in 1952, the community probably didn't know it was getting a figure that would become synonymous with the growth of sports in the growing town.

For all his achievements as a coach for women's softball and work within the community, Stunden will be posthumously inducted into the Sport Aurora Hall of Fame as part of their inaugural class on November 6.

"It is an amazing honour and I'm really thrilled," said his daughter, Terry Smith. "The only thing that I said could make it better was if he could have known about it, but it's exciting for my family too because we're all very proud of him."

Before moving to Aurora, Stunden was a gifted hockey player who laced up for the Markham Millionaires and the Stouffville Clippers in the early 1950s.

However, it was in 1960 that he would switch his focus to softball by starting a team with his friend, Russ Awde, called the Aurora Glenville Dairy.

As a pitcher and coach, Stunden would help guide his team to an Ontario Amateur Softball Association Southern Ontario Intermediate B Championship title in 1963. Two weeks later the Aurora Glenville Dairy team went on to win the All Ontario Amateur Softball Association Intermediate B Championship.

When the 1970s rolled around and his two daughters were old enough to play, Stunden took on the challenge of helping start a women's softball team called the Aurora Diggers.

"He had an amazing career in hockey, but it was when he put my sister and me in softball that he began coaching the Diggers," Smith said.

In fact, it was Stunden's years coaching a very successful Diggers team that has most likely earned him his spot in the Hall of Fame. In 1977, he coached the Diggers to a Provincial Women's Softball Juvenile B Championship win.

That was the first big championship Stunden won with the Diggers, but he continued to coach them right through until they became the Senior Diggers.

1983 was a big year for the Diggers as the senior team was crowned champions at both the St. Mary's Junior Intermediate tournament and at the North Bay Intermediate tournament.

They also won the both Provincial Women's Softball Association Intermediate Regional and Grand National championships and won the Metro Ladies Softball League playoff championship.

Their success throughout 1983 garnered them attention from various groups and public figures. The team also added a championship in 1990.

“Those girls stayed in touch with him his whole life,” Smith said. “He was a real mentor as a coach, but, yes, he was a great mentor to them all.”

After passing on the news that Stunden was going into the Hall of Fame, Terry said the team was ecstatic that their coach was being recognized.

“Everyone was thrilled,” she said. “A lot of the girls from the ball team, they wanted to nominate him. For me, my mother had clipped all the newspaper articles and we had a bunch of awards. I was able to make this nice timeline to show his contribution.”

Aside from his coaching, which apparently included a lot of superstitions over the years, Stunden also helped organize numerous fundraisers to help teams and also invigorate the town's baseball park.

Smith said it was his love for the game, his players and also his community that motivated him.

“He loved Aurora. He knew a lot of ball players and athletes here in Aurora,” she explained, adding that it was nice people like her dad were being recognized for their hard work.

“I think that this is going to be terrific because there are a lot of wonderful athletes in this town and a lot of sports teams. There are also a lot of people who volunteer their time to help support those groups and work tirelessly to help these teams and athletes. It's awesome now that we can recognize those people that are contributing to sport in Aurora.”