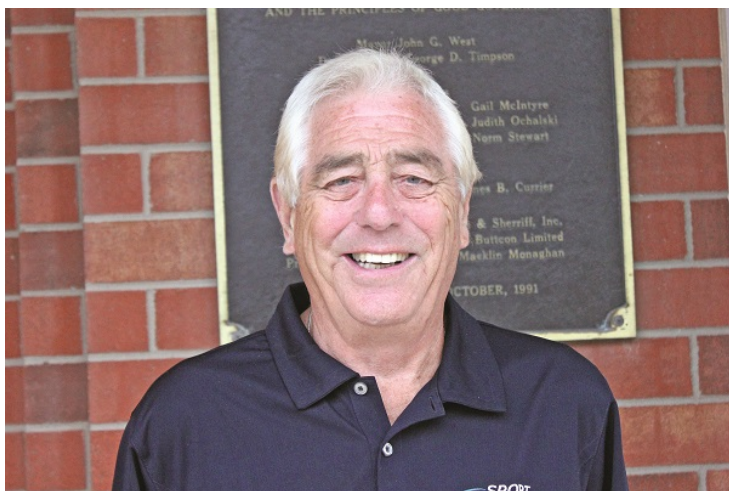


Hall of Fame inductee a champion for disabled athletes



By Jake Courtepatte

Alan Dean has been to Spain, New Zealand, Greece, South Korea, and South Africa, to name a few.

“I’ve had the most exciting life, I’ve travelled all over the world. I’ve been lucky to be able to do what I’ve done.”

His next trip is into the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, as one of three members inducted into the Class of 2015.

Mr. Dean has spent a lifetime as a champion in establishing sports organizations, as well as awareness, for the physically disabled.

“I arrived in Aurora on a Saturday?on the Monday, I joined the Aurora Soccer Club,” said Mr. Dean, who just recently celebrated fifty years as an Aurora resident.

He was soon the secretary of the club, rising to the rank of president shortly thereafter. It was August 6, 1974 when his athletic path was altered forever by an accident in a game, losing one of his legs from the threat of gangrene.

He recalls being a hit for the staff during his stay at Toronto Western Hospital.

“Most people that lose limbs are older people, with diabetes or something like a circulation problem. A young guy like me comes in, and I could do all the exercises the physio staff wanted me to do?I was an athlete, I was fit, I had just lost one of my legs.”

With the rest of his body fit and intact, Mr. Dean was able to push the limits of living with a disability. One year later, he was asked to go to a physiotherapist demonstration on abilities of people living with disabilities. There he met Dr. Robert Jackson, a pioneer in arthroscopic surgery and the Chair of the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association.

Mr. Dean recalls the doctor showing footage of the 1972 Paralympic Games in Heidelberg, Germany.

“We were all watching this video, and it started to get me excited again. I thought “wow, I could get back into this.”

The timing couldn’t have been better as well, as Mr. Dean says this was around the time when the world of sport and recreation began to look for opportunities for those with disabilities.

One year later, he was standing on the podium at the 1976 Ontario Games, with a couple of gold medals around his neck.

Moving quickly up the ladder of disabled sports pioneer, Mr. Dean was instrumental in the forming of the Ontario Amputee Sports Association later that year as well as the Canadian Amputee Sports Association in 1977. He had spells as president of both.

"I think these days, there's more of a focus on the disability and not the ability," said Mr. Dean. "You've got to push the boundaries to further your sport."

Locally, Mr. Dean has had his hands on a number of organizations within Aurora. He represents the Aurora Lawn Bowling Club to this day, having first taken up the sport on a trip to New Zealand with the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation.

He came home from his trip, and recalls the hospitality of the members of Aurora's club when he happened to stop by one day. "Next thing you know, I'm president of that," Mr. Dean said with a laugh.

He also sits on the board of Sport Aurora, sitting out on the nomination process this year with the knowledge that he might be inducted.

Mr. Dean joins tennis champion Ken Sinclair in the "Builders" category of the Hall, as well as volleyball star Mark Heese who is the sole 2015 inductee into the "Athletes" category.

Although he admits to being "overwhelmed" by the nomination, it is actually a case of déjà vu for the sporting pioneer, previously inducted into the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons Hall of Fame in 2010.

The induction dinner is to be held this November at St. Andrew's College for the first time. Mr. Dean's history with the school goes back a long way, swimming there in his early days following his disability.