



# 1111 Echoes

Winter 2001

A newsletter from the R. I. Reds Heritage Society

## Mark the July 28 Reunion on Your Calendar

On Sunday, July 28, we'll hold our second reunion at beautiful Goddard State Park in East Greenwich. 230 attended last year and we expect even more players and fans this year. Complete information will be in our spring/summer edition to come out in May.

## Saluting the Late 1940s

This and the next issue of 1111 Echoes are heavily devoted to the Reds' glorious wonder years in the late 1940s. We hope you enjoy these historical recounts. But you'll have to be patient. One major story is serialized into two parts.

## Website Design

The R. I. Reds Heritage Society has acquired an Internet domain name: [www.rireds.org](http://www.rireds.org). Now we need assistance in designing and building a website and advice on securing an inexpensive server.

For inquiries, please call  
Buster Clegg at 401-247-2666.

and Pete Demers of the Los Angeles Kings are regarded as tops in their field, both having spent more than 30 years in their profession.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention an incident in 1943 when Reds' forward Oscar Aubechon hit the boards with such force that he was knocked cold. My father was at his side within seconds. Oscar's face was turning blue and he was suffocating. There was panic among the players of both teams on the ice. My father realized that the player had swallowed his tongue. He pulled it from his throat and no doubt saved Oscar's life.

Dad treated many a player during his years as trainer with the Reds and I know many players still remember and appreciate his efforts in their behalf.

When Ed Giacomini broke in with the Reds as a rookie goaltender in 1959 he shared a secret with my father. As a boy Ed was badly burned in a fire and thought he might never play again. Coming to the Reds that year was a big break for him, but he feared if the team found out about his injuries he might be cut and sent home. My father treated Eddie before and after every practice and word never got out about the secret they shared. The story was told by Ed on a video special I saw recently called *Legends of Hockey*. The rest, of course, is history. Eddie played wonderfully not only for the Reds but later with the New York Rangers and

(continued on back page)

## George Army: The Art of Healing

When my father came to Providence as trainer for the Reds in the early depression years of the 1930s, I don't think it crossed his mind that he would be in the same job until he passed away. He died of lung cancer in 1969...nearly forty years later.

It was hard to imagine. Having put fifteen years of minor league baseball under his belt as a catcher with Rochester and Montreal in the International League, as well as Bridgeport in the Eastern League and Waterbury in the New England League, my dad would end up in a new job in a new sport.

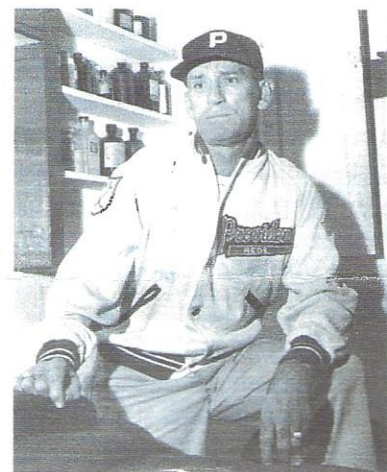
During his playing days it was customary for baseball teams to do barnstorm tours after each season was over. Major and minor league players would intermingle as a team in a tour of exhibition games. It was there that my father caught three of the greatest pitchers of all time — Walter Johnson, Lefty Grove and Carl Hubbell. When the Great Depression rocked the nation he was looking for work during baseball's off-season. An old battery mate and good friend of his was a major league pitcher for 12 years, Jean Dubuc, who was an ownership partner of the Reds who played in the Can-Am Hockey League. The Reds needed a trainer and Jean approached my father. Dad accepted and a new profession was born for him.

After joining the Reds he twice went back baseball during hockey's off-seasons as manager of New Bedford in the New England League in 1934 and Ottawa in the Can-Am League in 1938.

I can honestly say that nobody I've ever known took his job more seriously. Dad learned on his own. He read medical books, observed team doctors, and even learned how to take stitches to close wounds. He also studied, learned and applied new innovations in the treatment of injuries and soon became acknowledged as one of the finest trainers in hockey.

Dad was also a firm but kind teacher. He groomed two assistant trainers whose futures led them to the National Hockey League. Today, Tom Woodcock of the San Jose Sharks

By Tom Army



George Army

## The Relic Nobody Wanted *By Arnold Bailey*

This is the story of a battered old hockey stick that nobody wanted.

It's a story that began at a small-town public auction in northern Connecticut about 10 years ago. The name of the town is now lost in the past, because the location was just like so many other tiny places where pieces of the past are sold.

Being offered for sale this day was a barn-full of antiques, the remnants of estates from surrounding towns. Old furniture, sets of dishes, paintings, vintage tools. There were boxes of knickknacks, old magazines and glassware. And, standing unnoticed propped up against a dusty table, was a solitary old hockey stick.

That's just how it was described in the mimeographed auction list – simply: "old hockey stick."

There were a hundred or so prospective bidders on hand for the preview. Some carried reference books and price guides. A few used small magnifying glasses for closer inspection. Most seemed to be auction veterans, using the pre-bidding preview to identify what they wanted to bid on, and how much they wanted to bid.

As the preview time passed, the old hockey stick stood there ignored. Black tape was wrapped tightly around the stick's blade, forming a dull, rippled surface. Many strands of the same tape formed a knob of sorts on the other end of the shaft. The manufacturer's brand – "Northland Professional" – was stamped in large black script on the surface of the shaft, with a fuller explanation, "MADE BY NORTHLAND SKI MFG. CO., ST. PAUL, MINN," printed in smaller capital letters. Stamped in slightly larger capital letters was the stick's particular style – "LIE 6".

Written faintly below the stick's identity were eight letters and two numbers, to identify the player who once had been assigned it and used it: "MICHALUK 18." And written just as faintly were several small signatures, enough of them to cover almost all of one flat side of the stick's long shaft. Some were written in what appeared to be the ink of a ballpoint pen, others in pencil.

There are moments in most lives when the overriding need to remain calm somehow overcomes the impulse to jump up and down, yell and cheer, and exhibit other outward signs of great discovery. It has been written that prospectors during the Great Gold Rush in California more than a century ago felt similar emotions when their digging or their panning revealed glimmering nuggets or shimmering veins of riches. For those old prospectors, premature celebration often meant that someone else would jump their claim and take their treasures.

This wasn't gold, to be sure, just simple stick of wood in a dusty old barn awaiting its fate at the sound of hammer in an auctioneer's hand.

But as the names written on that stick were deciphered, the more gold-like this discovery became. There were signatures of 19 team members, shown in the photo to the right.

For anyone who had spent time in the old Rhode Island Auditorium in the late 1940s or 1950s, the names had very special

meaning – this battered old stick with black tape partially covering its wounds, this "Lie No. 6" wooden weapon of hockey's wars was signed by most of the members of a team once known as the Rhode Island Reds.

As the auction began, artifacts were brought to the podium seemingly at random. The auctioneer began his chanting review of the bidding in that machine-gun style chatter so typical of trained salesmen of things old. Some of the paintings attracted fairly high bids, a few selling for \$500 or more. So, too, the pieces of furniture. A few of the items were let go for \$20 or so, as the auctioneer promised that everything in the barn would be sold that day. I sat and waited, eyes focused on that old stick as if to shield it from harm... and from more widespread discovery.

More than 100 lots had been sold, when one of the auction's "runners," a member of the crew assigned to carry items to the auction block, nonchalantly dragged the old stick front and center to be sold.

The auctioneer suggested a starting bid of \$50. Everyone in the barn sat silent. The silence was the signal for the auctioneer to lower his sights, recommending an opening bid of \$25. Still no response.

Most who frequent auctions develop their own bidding strategies. Mine has been to sit and wait for someone else to start the bidding, preferring to take the measure of the competition before entering the fray.

Sticking to his stated "everything would be sold" promise, the auctioneer lowered his sights again, to \$10. The barn again echoed the silence. Finally, with a touch of disdain, the auctioneer pleaded for someone to take this old stick off the stage, and off his hands, for \$2. Wanting to appear helpful, I jumped at the chance and bid the two bucks. Then I peered around the room in

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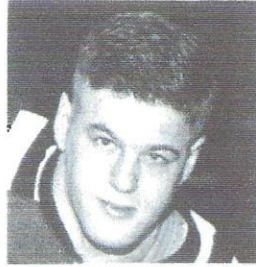
**Rhode Island Reds, 1947-48.** *Front row:* Terry Reardon (coach), Billy Arcand, Johnny Chad, Harvey Bennett, Ray LaPlante, Carl Liscombe and Ab Collings. *Middle Row:* Alan Stanley, Chuck Scherza, Jack Church, Jack Stoddard, Art Michaluk, Ed "Whitey" Prokop and Mike Karakas. *Back row:* George Army (trainer), Pete Kapusta, Harvey Fraser, Roger Bedard and Harry Taylor.

# Backchecking and Forechecking

“Backchecking and Forechecking” is a regular feature of *1111 Echoes*. It is intended to bring readers up-to-date on the “whereabouts and goings on” of former R.I. Reds players and associates. This edition features profiles of individuals who took a few minutes to fill out and return the questionnaire contained in previous editions. These updates are published as they are received and as space allows. If you have not already submitted yours, please complete and return the enclosed questionnaire so you can be in a future newsletter.

## Backchecking

**Boris “Bo” Elik** spent three productive years with the Reds from 1958-59 through 1960-61. His 26 goals and 27 assists helped the Reds to the Calder Cup playoffs in 1959-60. Bo was rookie of the year in the AHL with the Cleveland in 1956-57. That season he netted 40 goals and added 40 assists playing on the Barons GEM line with Jimmy Moore and Fred Glover.



## Forechecking

Bo and his wife Jackie have been married for 50 years, reside in Oshawa, Ontario, and have three sons and a daughter, plus eight wonderful grandchildren. Since hockey he's been a truck driver and laborer. His hobbies include golf and an occasional game of hockey with some old timers. *Old timers? Bo, you were 28 when you made rookie of the year!*

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**Aldo Guidolin** was one of the most effective and popular defensemen in Reds history. As a New York Ranger farmhand, he spent parts of four seasons in Providence and was a major factor in the team winning the Calder Cup in 1955-56. Aldo played 155 games with the Rangers and did tours of duty with Springfield, Baltimore and Cleveland in his 18 pro seasons.



Aldo and Phyllis, his wife of 47 years, live in Guelph, Ontario. They have one daughter. After his playing career Aldo spent 10 years as a scout for the Atlanta Flames, another 10 with Colorado as director of player personnel and coach, and has been in real estate sales for 20 years. His hobbies are woodworking, fishing and hunting moose and deer. *Aldo, nailed Rudolph or Bambi yet?*

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**Wayne Muloin** enjoyed a 15-year pro career spanning 1962-63 through 1976-77. He played five full seasons with the Reds and was prominent in helping the Reds reach the semi-finals in Calder Cup play in 1967-68. Known as a tough hitting defenseman, he later played in the NHL with Minnesota and Oakland and with WHA's Cleveland Crusaders.



Wayne and his wife Margaret live near Cleveland. He has four grown children, one who lives in Ohio and the remaining three spread out in Florida, California and Alberta. He also has a grandson. Since retiring he has been a construction worker. His hobbies include traveling, fishing and woodworking. Wayne's personal quote: *“There is no life after hockey ☺.”*

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**Bob Robertson** was another key on defense as the Reds finish first in regular season play and captured the Calder Cup in 1955-56. He was acquired the season before with Red Johansen when the QHL's Ottawa Senators folded in mid-season. A “stay-at-home” defenseman who handled the puck nicely, Bob played five productive full seasons with the Reds.



Bob and his wife Margaret have been married for 25 years and live in Woodbridge, Ontario. They have a son and two grandchildren. He served with the Sealtest Dairy Products as a manager in the company's sales and marketing department. His hobbies include golf, tennis and, of course, old timers hockey. *You guys will never quit. Good for you, Bob.*

## The Season of Destiny: 1948-49



Terry Reardon

Coming off a great regular season but disappointing playoff elimination, the Reds at the start of 1948-49 had high hopes to accomplish what they had not the year before... win the Calder Cup. All the pieces seemed to be in place. And the sequence of events that unfolded came in dramatic, story-like fashion.

The times were fascinating. World War II was over. People were looking for entertainment. And the Reds seemed to be the only show in town. Owner Lou Pieri and player-coach Terry Reardon had made some excellent trades and player acquisitions. Goaltending was strong, defense experienced, and the team was loaded with goal-scoring sharpshooters.

Every home game was packed with frenzied fans hungry for great hockey. They endured all sorts of weather—rain, sleet and snow—to fill the old R. I. Auditorium.

Miss Vivian entertained with organ music at intermissions and always accompanied the Reds on-ice entrance with her own special rendition of “Roll out the Barrel.” Ice cleaning was pre-Zamboni and required hand ice scraping, fire hose flooding to resurface, and a squeegee leveling by local “rink rats.”

Fans loved every minute of a Sunday night at the Arena. The games, the smoke and the chicken wire. It was an experience always climaxed at the end of each period by Jack Cleary’s public address alert, “Onennnnne... minute!”

The regular season was the best ever in Reds history. They played 68 games, won an amazing 44, tied 6, and lost only 18 — a winning percentage of almost 70 percent, one that easily captured for them the Eastern Division title.

The Reds completely overpowered their Eastern division rivals — the Washington Lions, Philadelphia Rockets, New Haven Ramblers, Springfield Indians and Hershey Bears, the team that finished second, an amazing 33 points behind the Reds.

In that era, a penalized team was required to play shorthanded a full two minutes, as opposed to today’s rule that allows the penalized player release from the box if his team is scored upon. The Reds were stacked with goal scorers that year. Their 347 regular season goals set an AHL record.

Consequently, the Reds power play sometimes pumped in two or even three goals during an opponent’s full, two-minute penalty. Terry Reardon’s strategy was to play up front his second line of Johnny Chad, Jack McGill and Eddie Kullman, and his two hardest shooters from the first line, Carl Liscombe and Roger Bedard on the points. The quintet was so productive during a two-minute advantage that rule was changed a few years later. Many attribute the switch to the 1948-49 Reds’ domination.

Even with such a successful season, there was trouble

looming on the Western Front. The Western Division had five powerful teams, all of whom finished over .500. The first-place St. Louis Flyers had nearly matched the Reds of the East by piling up 91 points. The Indianapolis Capitols finished second with 90 points and the Cleveland Barons third with 88.

The Pittsburgh Hornets, despite their 88 points, finished fourth because of two fewer victories than Cleveland. And the Buffalo Bisons, who with 74 points would have easily placed second in the East, ended last in the West.

During those late forties, the American Hockey League maintained an inexplicable playoff format. The top two teams — the Reds and St. Louis — were required to play in a first-round best-of-seven series. The result would eliminate one of the two best teams. Strange!

The number two finishers in each division would face each other in a best of five, as well as the third place finishers. The survivors of 2 and 3 then would meet in another best of five to advance to the Calder Cup championship against either Providence or St. Louis. Even stranger!

So, the scene was set for what turned out to be the most unpredictable, exciting and dramatic championship quest in the 51-year history of the Rhode Island Reds.

### *Series of the first-place Titans: Reds vs. St. Louis Flyers*

Tue., Mar. 22, 1949: The Reds jumped off to a fast start in the series, easily beating St. Louis 7-2 at the R. I. Auditorium before 5,953. Center Ray LaPlante led the charge with two goals as the locals took the series lead, 1-0.

Thrs., Mar. 24: In a much closer game, the Reds shut out the Flyers 2-0 on goals by LaPlante and hard-shooting winger Roger Bedard as goaltender Harvey Bennett blanked the visitors before 6,366 in Providence to take a series lead, 2-0. That same day Reds left-winger Carl Liscombe was voted the AHL’s MVP for 1948-49.

Sun., Mar. 27: The series switched to St. Louis where Lloyd Doran flipped home a 15-foot backhander at 15:54 of overtime to give the Flyers a 2-1, hard fought victory with 10,445 looking on. Paul Gladu also scored for St. Louis and Bedard for the Reds.

Tue., Mar. 29: St. Louis tied the series at 2-2. The Reds took an early first-period two-goal lead but counters by Hec Pozzo, Doran, Pop Backor, Gladu and Barry Sullivan sealed the Reds fate in a 5-3 loss before 9,021 St. Louis rooters.

Thrs., Mar. 31: The series returned to Providence where game 5 would turn out to be perhaps the most spine tingling in Reds history. A nervous crowd of 6,622 watched St. Louis take a two-goal lead in the opening stanza, only to see Terry



Lou Pieri

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## The Season of Destiny: 1948-49 (continued from insert)

Reardon, the Reds fiery player-coach, narrow the margin by one at 15:37 of the first. Reardon, known as a natural leader during his NHL days, pulled the Reds even with his second goal at 12:16 of the second, followed by LaPlante's at 17:18 to give the Reds a 3-2 lead after two.

Now for the near impossible. In the third period defenseman Vic Gregg tied it for St. Louis at 15:04, sending the game into overtime. At that time the first 10 minutes were not sudden death. A full ten had to be played. Barry Sullivan, who later played with the Reds, put the Flyers ahead 4-3 on a nifty goal at 8:24 in that full overtime period. The picture looked bleak as the Reds

pounded away in the St. Louis end, trying desperately to tie the score. With the clock ticking down and less than a minute remaining the locals stormed the Flyers end, but goalie Red Almas seemed unbeatable. Suddenly, Jackie Hamilton, the Reds crafty forward, found defenseman Danny Summers open, fed him a nifty pass, and somehow Summers fired a shot past Almas into the net with 11 seconds left to tie the score, 4-4.

Now, in sudden death overtime, the play was ferocious. Continuous attacks up and down the ice by both clubs were thwarted at each end by the Flyers goaltender Almas and Bennett of the Reds. Then it happened. Reardon, who had scored only two goals during the regular season, took a well-aimed pass from Summers, went in partially alone on Almas, faked a shot, then slipped the puck into the St. Louis net to give the Reds a 5-4 sudden-death victory at 28:30 in overtime. Reardon's three-goal

hat trick earned the Reds a series lead of 3 games to 2.

Sun., Apr. 3: Game 6 was played back at the St. Louis Arena before 15,331, the largest crowd ever recorded for an AHL game. Outclassed and out-played, perhaps weary from the emotionally draining game of three days before, the Reds went down to the Flyers 3-1. Summers scored the only Reds goal while Gregg, Doran and Pozzo countered for St. Louis, who tied the series 3-3 and sent it back to Providence for the decider.

Tue., Apr. 5: This was it. The game that would decide which team would go to the Calder Cup finals. Excited fans crowded the Auditorium hours before. Game time. In all, 7,450, a record

for Providence, sat in on Game 7. Once again it was Reardon who provided the initial punch. With Chuck Scherza and Bobby Paul assisting, Terry gave the home team a lead at 17:29 in the first. Gregg tied for St. Louis in the second, scoring at 11:45.



**Terry gets there first:** Player-coach Terry Reardon fires a first period goal against Red Almas in the seventh and deciding game against St. Louis. The Reds went on to win the contest, 3-2.

In the third period Hamilton gave the Reds a short-lived 2-1 lead, only to have Sullivan tie it again less than 90 seconds later (8:55). It was down to the final 10 minutes of regulation when Eddie Kullman, a crafty winger obtained from the New York Rangers, took passes from Hamilton and Billy Arcand and fired a 12-foot shot into the left corner of the net past a surprised goalie Almas. Backed by the lion-hearted work of goalie Bennett the rest of the way, the Reds prevailed 3-2 to take this amazing series, 4 games to 3.

***Then the Calder Cup Finals: The Reds vs. the Hershey Bears...***(To be continued in the next edition of *1111 Echoes.*)



### In Memorium John Sleaver

We were all saddened to learn of the recent death of one of ours, John Sleaver. John, 67, died after a long illness at Fawcett Memorial Hospital near his home in St. Lucy, Florida, on November 19. He was a dear friend to all who knew him.

John spent 14 years in professional hockey and played with the Reds for six years before ending his career here in Providence. He was known as a hard-working center and a deft playmaker for his wingers. His love for the game continued as he served as a respected official in both youth and high school hockey for many years here in Rhode

Island where he made his home until moving to Florida a few years ago.

John leaves his wife of 46 years, Marlene, two daughters, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He was a Charter Member of the R. I. Reds Heritage Society and a member of the Deep Creek (Fla.) River Lions Club. Before moving to Florida, John was a member of the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Smithfield, RI.

## Duffy and Scherza Honored with "Tops 2001-02 Award"

Charles "Chuck" Scherza and George Patrick Duffy, both of Pawtucket, received the Rhode Island Reds Heritage Society's "Tops 2001-2002 Award" at the Providence Civic Center on Friday, September 28. The award, the first in an annual series, is named



Chuck Scherza

in memory of Zellio Toppazzini, voted "Player of the Century" by the society last year. Criteria include longtime service with the Reds, goodwill representation for the team and civic contributions to the Rhode Island community. The ceremony was held at the first intermission of a National Hockey League exhibition game between the Boston Bruins and New Jersey Devils, attended by over 6,000 spectators.

Scherza, 77, spent 10 seasons as a forward with the Reds (1945 through 1955) and was a key factor in the team's Calder Cup Championship in the American Hockey League in 1948-49. In his playing career he amassed 649 games (2<sup>nd</sup> all-time), 139 goals (6<sup>th</sup>), 297 assists (4<sup>th</sup>) and 436 points (4<sup>th</sup>). Later, as an official in youth hockey, he was a highly regarded teacher of sportsmanship and clean play.

Duffy was a longtime team publicist and "Voice of the R. I. Reds" on radio. He is also recognized for continuing to volunteer his valuable time and talents, even today at age 81, to teach and coach youth sports. Family and friends of both recipients attended the event as guests of Ross Brooks, former Reds goalie and promoter of the Bruins-New Jersey game.



George Patrick Duffy

### The Relic Nobody Wanted (continued from page 2)

one of those hidden, motionless gestures like a turtle peering with from the safety of its shell.

The auctioneer's hammer came down, he smirked the word "Sold!" and I suddenly owned an old hockey stick bearing tape and 19 signatures. I paid my \$2, trying to look as if my only motivation had been to do the auctioneer and the other bidders a favor by allowing their evening to continue.

Later, with the stick safely in my office study, the detective work began. The quest, of course, was to verify the signatures, and then determine which Reds team had signed this stick. The verification was fairly simple, comparing the signatures to those that I knew to be authentic on old photos and programs.

Completing the provenance, the history of this old stick proved to be more time consuming. The method evolved into simple process of elimination.

The key to the stick's origin turned out to be the signature of Harry Taylor. A center with some scoring ability, Taylor had played only one season with the Reds, in 1947-48 when he scored 24 goals and added 39 assists for 63 points. A check through vintage American Hockey League guides then compiled annually by Jim Hendy, Ken McKenzie and others revealed that every other player whose name was on that stick also had played for

the Reds that season. Some, like Scherza, Bennett and Army spent many seasons with the Reds.

The Reds of '47-'48 had been powerhouse. They won the AHL East with a 41-23-4 record, amassing 86 points in the process. Liscombe was the league's scoring leader with 50 goals and 68 assists for 118 points. Fraser was third among the top scorers with 45-52-97. Chad and Prokop added 41 goals each. Defenseman Allan Stanley scored 41 points, including 32 assists, and racked up 81 penalty minutes. It was the year that two of the team's forwards also found themselves taking a turn or two in goal - Scherza for one game, and Stoddard for three. Defenseman Michaluk, whose stick turned out to be an auction prize, had 16 points and 32 penalty minutes after being acquired from Pittsburgh during the season.

But 1947-48 had ended all too suddenly for the Reds when they lost in the first round of the playoffs to Cleveland, the eventual Calder Cup champions that year.

The old stick showed the beating it took during some of those victories and, perhaps, that season-ending defeat. But the best was yet to come the very next season... 1948-49.

*Editor's Note: Arnold Bailey is a founder of the R. I. Reds Heritage Society, Vice President of Development for the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, and writes a weekly sports collectibles column for The Providence Journal.*

### Art of Healing (continued from page 1)

Detroit. Today he is an honored member of the NHL's Hall of Fame. I can assure you, Ed, that my dad never revealed the secret, not even to our family. It was all news to me when I saw that tape recently. Imagine ... after all these years! My father was a loyal employee to the owner, general manager, coach and players. He could project a gruff exterior but he really was a warm guy who would give you the shirt of his back. And he was forthright. You always knew where you stood with George Army.

I don't think there's a month that goes by without his name

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being brought up in hockey circles. It's been 33 years since his death, but it just seems like yesterday. He created a wonderful legacy for our family and we are proud and grateful to you, Dad!

*Editor's Note: Tom Army was a baseball pitcher and hockey captain at Providence College in the early 1950s. He then served in the Reds' publicity department and later became Vice President of Marketing for the Providence Gas Company. Tom is one of the founders of the R. I. Reds Heritage Society.*

### Next Issue

The next issue of *1111 Echoes* will come out in May. It will include details and a reservation form for the July 28<sup>th</sup> reunion at Goddard State Park. It will also have more "Backchecking and Forechecking" profiles, including Gil Mayer and Howie Menard, plus the conclusion of "The Season of Destiny: 1948-49."