



1111 Echoes

Spring 2002

A newsletter from the R. I. Reds Heritage Society

Progress on the Museum Exhibit

The museum exhibit we have mentioned as part of the Society's mission statement has an update. George Sage, who purchased the Reds from the Pieri family in 1969, has donated \$15,000 to the (Rhode Island) Heritage Harbor Museum located in Providence. George has designated his gift to be used specifically for the establishment of a permanent Reds' exhibit within the museum.

Soon on the Internet:

www.rireds.org

By fall 2002 the R. I. Reds Heritage Society hopes to have its own Internet website. Patrick Pieri, grandson of longtime Reds owner Lou Pieri, is donating his time and talents to assist the Society with this project. The site eventually will contain loads of information on the organization, its goals, membership and updates on activities.

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

Reds Heritage Society's Second Annual Reunion

The R. I. Reds Heritage Society has planned a repeat performance of last summer's first annual reunion attended by 230 former fans, ex-players, team executives and employees and their family members. Those who attended enjoyed a fabulous cookout, music, spirits, raffles, prizes and reminiscing with old friends and players. To join the fun this year mark your calendar and mail the enclosed reservation form...only \$25 per person for a full day of fun; children 6-12 \$10; under 6 free.

The Date: Sunday, July 28, 2002

Time: 12 noon 'til dusk

Location:



Scenic Goddard State Park
Historic Carousel Building
Warwick, RI

**Join us for fine food, friendship and fun on
Sunday, July 28th!**

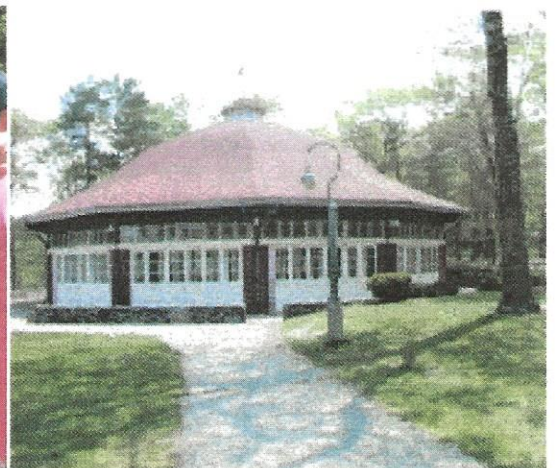
Inside



Smiles . . . Everywhere



Outside



Who might be at this year's Reds' reunion?

Last year's R. I. Reds Heritage Society's first reunion drew 230 persons, including many old and new fans of the Reds. Over two-dozen former players, team employees, executives and their family members enjoyed an afternoon filled with meeting old friends, enjoying a magnificent barbecue and, of course, story telling. The weather also cooperated perfectly. The day was warm, sunny and offered a pleasant cool breeze coming off Narragansett Bay.

At last year's reunion . . .

"The Gang's All Here":

Front row, from left: Lou Pieri, Bob Robertson, Buzz Deschamps, Al Bentley, Ross Brooks, Stan Baluik, Serge Boudreault, Gil Mayer, Wayne Muloin, George Sage and George Patrick Duffy.

Back row: Harvey Bennett, Don McKenney, Jack McGeough, Peter Demers, Chuck Scherza, Buster Clegg, Ray Clearwater, Ferny Flaman, Bo Elik, Bobby Leduc, Dan Poliziani and Ray Ross.



Many former Reds will attend our second reunion at Goddard State Park on July 28. Who knows? You might meet many of the following members:

Former Players

| | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Stan Baluik | Pat Egan |
| Jimmy Bartlett | Bo Elik |
| Bob Beckett | Ferny Flaman |
| Harvey Bennett | Marty Gateman |
| Al Bentley | Eddie Giacomini |
| Serge Boudreault | Tony Goegan |
| Johnny Bower | Aldo Guidolin |
| Ross Brooks | Ivan Irwin |
| Ray Clearwater | Eddie Kachur |
| Bruce Cline | George Keeling |
| Dave Creighton | Adam Keller |
| Ray Cyr | Paul Larivee |
| Buzzy Deschamps | Bob Leduc |

| |
|----------------|
| Ed MacQueen |
| Howie Menard |
| Moe Mantha |
| Gil Mayer |
| Jack McGeough |
| Don McKenney |
| Harry Pidhirny |
| Dan Poliziani |
| Bob Robertson |
| Ray Ross |
| Chuck Scherza |
| Allan Soares |
| Billy Warwick |

Former Executives and Employees

| |
|----------------------|
| Tom Army |
| Bill Castro |
| Larry Catone |
| Vin Cimini |
| Buster Clegg |
| George Patrick Duffy |
| Peter Demers |
| George German |
| Mike Gilbert |
| Eddie Ellsworth |
| Jon Lappin |

| |
|------------------------|
| Lucille (Pieri) Martin |
| Frank McClarnon |
| Tom McDonough |
| Mike Pappas |
| Bob Paquette |
| Bob Paquette, Jr. |
| Louis A. Pieri |
| George Sage |
| Bob Tiernan |
| Tom Woodcock |

Spouses and Children

| |
|--------------------|
| Frances Branigan |
| Barry Crawford |
| Doreen McAvoy |
| Kelly McAvoy |
| Lance Reardon |
| Mike Reardon |
| Marlene Sleaver |
| Shirley Toppazzini |

Search for More Former Reds Players

To date 68 former Reds players, spouses, children, executives and employees are enrolled in the Society. They are listed above. We would like to include more. If anyone knows the whereabouts of an ex-player or employee, please call. You Canadian friends up north could really help. Thanks!

Vintage Rhode Island Reds Film

Old time Reds' game film is rare. We need these relics to be part of the museum setting the Society has planned. There must be some tucked away in someone's attic. Please help us find these prize artifacts.

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 do so you can be featured in a future newsletter.

Backchecking

Al Bentley was a phenom goalie in Rhode Island interscholastic league annals, backstopping North Providence high school in its 1940 heydays. So impressive was his work that Reds owner Lou Pieri signed him as backup to Harvey Bennett. Al spent parts of three seasons in that important role. Al also played pro with Portland in the PCHL and Muncie in the IHL.



Forechecking

Today, Al and his wife Nancy have a daughter and two grandchildren. A versatile athlete, he also played pro baseball in the Boston Red Sox and Cleveland Indians farm systems and once was a PGA head golf pro. In the summer months he resides in Barrington, RI, and in winter enjoys West Palm Beach, Florida, where he has worked golf courses the past 15 years. *Tough duty Al, since your hobby is playing golf!*

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Buzz Deschamps played only a few games with the Reds — 13 to be exact — back in the 1965-66 season. But he was colorful. Who can ever forget the night he left the bench with skates on, ran into the stands, and tried to choke a constant heckler, “Larry from Lincoln.” Buzzy, a very personable guy, enjoyed a number of outstanding pro seasons, his best in 1963-64 when with Long Island he led the Eastern League with 57 goals.



Buzz and his wife Trudy have been married 31 years and have five children and 4 grandchildren. Their son Brooks is married to Bobby Leduc’s daughter, Michelle. Buzz was president of Sherwood USA (hockey sticks) for 18 years and today is senior vice president of sales and marketing for Rebellion Inc., a Swedish skate manufacturer. He also plays some old timers hockey. *Watch out you hecklers.*

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Howie Menard spent 14 seasons in pro hockey. He was a talented, hard-working, journeyman center who made stops in 12 different cities, including parts of two seasons in Providence, which he claims is “the best place I ever played.” His best pro year was with Baltimore in ’73-74 when he scored career high 42 goals. Popular with both teammates and fans, Howie’s career totals are 264 goals, 457 assists and 721 points.



Howie and his wife Pat live in Courtice, Ontario. Married 42 years, they have three daughters and three grandchildren. He currently is a liquor representative for Corby Distilleries Ltd, of Oshawa. When he has free time Howie likes fishing, golfing and hunting. His most popular pastime, though, comes each Friday when he sips a few suds with Ed Litzengerger and, you guessed it, “Bo” Elik. *TGIF!*

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Harry Pidhirny has lifetime stats that will knock you over. In 19 pro seasons, spent mostly with Eddie Shore’s Springfield and Syracuse clubs, he amassed 390 goals, 470 assists and 860 points. Unfortunately, the Reds caught Harry near the end of his career in 1962-63. That season he joined a veteran team, chipped in 13 goals and 22 assists and helped player-coach Ferny Flaman’s club win the AHL’s Eastern Division title.



Harry also proved to be an accomplished penalty killer during his one-year Providence stint. He also served in that capacity many years for Eddie Shore. He and his wife of 53 years, June, reside in Pickering, Ontario, near Toronto. The couple has three children (a son and two daughters) and five grandsons. He has worked in auto sales and loves to golf. *Pid, if you hit the hole like you always hit the net, all bets are off! And... no Mulligans.*

The Season of Destiny: 1948-49 (conclusion)

The seventh-game victory over St. Louis, a 3-2 seat squirmier, moved the Reds into the finals against Hershey. The Bears had surprisingly advanced to the finals by going undefeated in two best-of-three series in which they whitewashed both Indianapolis and Cleveland, 2 games to 0.

Though the Reds had enjoyed a 33-point spread over the second-place Bears during the regular season, the Hershey club was buoyed by its playoff successes and was determined to give the highly favored Reds the fight of their lives in the best-of-seven finals.

The Calder Cup Finals: Reds vs. Hershey Bears

Thrs., Apr. 7: In what *Providence Journal* hockey writer Mike Thomas described as “the dullest playoff tilt ever witnessed,” the Reds, perhaps both physically and mentally exhausted by the St. Louis series, dropped the opener in Providence, 6-1. Rollie McLenahan, Mark Marquess, Frank Mario, Sam Bettio, Gordie Bruce and Herb Cain each scored in a heavy bombardment of shots on Reds goalie Harvey Bennett. The game drew 7,251.

Sat., Apr. 9: “Back in form,” as the *Journal* reported, the Reds regained their composure in the second game of the series with a 5-3 victory. The crowd of 6,259 at the Auditorium watched the line of Eddie Kullman, Jack McGill and Jackie Hamilton chip in two goals (by Kullman and Hamilton) and the trio of Carl Liscombe, Harvey Fraser and Roger Bedard do likewise (by Liscombe and Fraser). Center Ray LaPlante added the fifth. The series was now tied 1 to 1 and was on its way to Hershey for two crucial tilts.



The Reds “Whooping it up” in the locker room after winning their grueling seven-game, semi-final series against the St. Louis Flyers, four games to three. *Front row:* equipment manager Joe White, Danny Summers, player-coach Terry Reardon, Harvey Bennett, Billy Arcand, Bob Paul and locker room attendant Norm Schneider. *Middle row:* Carl Liscombe, Chuck Scherza, Ray LaPlante, Jackie Hamilton, Jack Stoddard, Jack McGill and Roger Bedard. *Back row:* Pete Kapusta, Eddie Kullman, Moe Morris, Harvey Fraser and trainer George Army. *Missing:* Art Michaluk, Johnny Chad and Al Bentley.

(continued next page)

The Reds First Night on TV *By Les Keats*



TV goal: John Sleaver is seen scoring a goal against Buffalo Bisons' goalie Ed Chadwick in the first ever televised game for the Reds.

Wednesday, October 11, 1967, was the opening game of the season. Not only that, but it was the first Reds' game ever to be televised. Buster Clegg, the team's general manager, and I had wanted to get a game on television for a long time. The Reds had just come off three disappointing seasons. Fan interest had dropped. It seemed like the perfect time to put the team on television to help rebuild interest. Reds' owner Lou Pieri and WJAR-TV (TV 10) agreed to do the first game of the 1967-68 season.

The station assigned me to produce and direct the telecast. Not too big a surprise, as none of the other directors knew anything about hockey. We had done many basketball games, but only one hockey game; that was Brown vs. Providence College to show off the new Meehan Auditorium.

This was a fairly new experience for the whole television crew. Every building offers different challenges and the Rhode Island Auditorium was no exception. We parked our remote truck in the back and started to setup. In the 60s all the equipment was very heavy. The bulky camera cable had to be run from the truck to the press box and down to ice level. The cameras, extremely difficult to carry, had to be lugged—two cameras up the rickety stairs to the press box and one to the northwest corner.

The ice level camera would be used for close-ups at the west-end goal. The problem was the darned “chicken wire.” It was impossible to shoot through it without seeing the pattern of the mesh. So, we proceeded to cut a large portion of fencing out of the corner (I think we had permission) and wired in a piece of Plexiglas. That solved the problem. I also had a microphone strung from the press box to the scorer's table, so we could hear the referee call penalties. This seemed like great technical advancement at the time.

The one area that didn't worry me was the announcers. Jack Comley was doing the play-by-play and Buster was the color man.

(continued on back page)

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

Sun., Apr. 10: Overnight train rides to Hershey brought the Reds and Bears together for game #3. The outcome was dismal for the Reds, who seemingly could not get untracked. Bears' goals by Arnie Kullman, center Phil Maloney, Jerry Brown and Kullman again gave Hershey a comfortable 4-0 lead after two periods. The game, played before a partisan Hershey crowd of 6,557, ended in a 5-2 Reds loss and provided the Bears with a 2-1 series lead.

Tue., Apr. 12: Dangly Jack Stoddard, a right wing, gave the Reds an early first period lead, only to have his score equalized by Hershey's Gordie Bruce later in the period. Then the Bears' prized rookie Phil Maloney scored in the second and again at 7:19 of the third to give the hometowners a 3-1 lead. Somehow finding new fire, the Reds bounced back at 7:56 in the third on a goal by Harvey Fraser, cutting the deficit to one. A spirited finish saw the Reds deliver a barrage of quality shots on Hershey's Gordie "Red" Henry, but the Bears' net minder turned away every shot as his team took a commanding 3-1 series lead.

The mood back in Providence was glum. How could this be happening to our mighty Rhode Island Reds who had dominated the AHL during the regular season? Despite their unaccustomed underdog situation, Carl Liscombe, a veteran Reds' leader who had scored 55 regular season goals and was voted the league's MVP, told Eddie Ellsworth of the front office, "Don't worry Eddie, we'll win the next three." That declaration would necessitate a victory in Providence, then another in Hershey, and finally an improbable "team hat trick" in a deciding game #7 back on Auditorium ice.

Thrs., Apr. 14: True to his word, Carl Liscombe got the Reds off to an early lead, only to have Jerry Brown tie it later in the

first period. In the second, Freddy Hunt gave the Bears a 2-1 lead, but Johnny Chad evened things up near the end of the second stanza. A goal by Hunt at 5:46 in the third once again gave Hershey the lead, but Eddie Kullman's wrist shot at 12:53 tied the game at 3-3 and sent it into overtime. The first 10-minute overtime went scoreless, so sudden death took over. Play was fast and furious for both teams, up and down the ice at a frantic pace. Then an improbable event occurred. The Reds' Harvey Fraser broke up a pass at the Hershey blue line and the puck slipped loose into the Hershey end. A race for the disc ensued between Bears' goalie Gordie Henry and the Reds' Roger Bedard. The two collided, both falling the ice. While Bedard began to slide uncontrollably toward the Hershey goal, Fraser alertly picked up the puck and fired it into the open net, just a second before his teammate slid into the crease. That winning goal gave the Reds a 4-3 triumph at 4:48 in sudden death. Had Bedard entered the crease before the puck, the score would have been nullified. "With that dramatic goal the R. I. Auditorium crowd of 6,003 went wild!" the *Providence Journal* reported.

Sat., April 16: Now it was back to Hershey for game #6, with the Bears still one victory away from the Calder Cup title and the Reds one loss away from elimination. The game was a classic example of outstanding goaltending and close checking by both teams. After a scoreless first period, Eddie Kullman gave the Reds a 1-0 lead on a nifty goal set up by Johnny Chad and Jack McGill. Early in the third period, Chad raced for a loose puck, got possession and slipped it past goalie "Red" Henry for a 2-0 Reds lead. That two-goal cushion was short lived, though, as the Bears' star rookie, Phil Maloney, scored 90 seconds later to cut the Hershey deficit to one. For both teams and the 8,116 attending the encounter, the tension was nearly unbearable over the last 15 minutes. In the final minute, with the Reds desperately clinging to their slim lead, Hershey pulled its goaltender in favor of an extra skater and bombarded the Reds net with shots. But Harvey Bennett was up to the task and made several brilliant saves to preserve a 2-1 victory and tie the series at 3-3.

Sun., Apr. 17: Now it was for all the marbles. The Reds had come back from a seemingly impossible position. The Auditorium was packed with 7,556 fans, an all-time record in Providence. This bitterly fought series had come down to game #7 and three 20-minute periods of hockey to declare a Calder Cup champion. Both teams had traveled overnight by train from Hershey and were weary from the schedule and tension created by the situation. But when the Reds came out for warm-ups they displayed a new air of confidence. Once the puck was dropped it was apparent they were not to be denied. Two goals by Jack McGill and one each by Johnny Chad and Art Michaluk in the first period gave the Reds a commanding 4-0 lead after one. Though Hershey tallied two in the second and pulled their goalie once again the last minute of the game, the Reds defended staunchly in front of their goal and the game ended as a 4-2 triumph. The Calder Cup belonged to Providence for the first time since 1939-40.



Things Were Way Up in the Air as the Reds, down 3 games to 1 and facing elimination, took on Hershey in the fifth game of the Calder Cup finals. A rebound from the pads of goalie Harvey Bennett bounces high. Other players reacting: Hershey's Gordie Bruce (8), Arnie Kullman (9) and Jerry Brown, and Billy Arcand (4) and Moe Morris, both of the Reds.

Two Tickets to Pittsburgh

When Gil and Marielle Mayer made their annual "snow bird" trip to Florida they had to briefly interrupt their warm and comfortable holiday away from the chills of Lincoln, RI. But for the former R. I. Reds goalie and his wife, the interruption was a highly pleasant one.

Courtesy of the National Hockey League's Pittsburgh Penguins, the Mayers were flown to the Steel City for a 50th anniversary reunion honoring the Pittsburgh Hornets' 1951-52 Calder Cup triumph, the city's first ever hockey championship. Gil, of course, was the team's backbone that successful season, and many others, with his spectacular goaltending.

During his 14 year AHL career "The Needle," as he was known, won five Hap Holmes trophies with the Hornets for lowest goals against average, a record that still stands today. He also ranks second all-time with 41 shutouts.

Ironically, it was the R. I. Reds who were defeated by the Hornets, 4 games to 2, in that memorable playoff. Though he did not have the lowest AHL goals-against record that season, Gil had a terrific year, posting a 2.55 average and recording 5 shutouts. In the playoffs he sparked the team with 2.18 GAA and a shutout to lead the Hornets to the Calder Cup.

So on Thursday, February 28, Gil and Marielle were flown from West Palm Beach, picked up by limousine at the airport in Pittsburgh, and driven to their home for the next three days, the Marriott City Center. That evening they enjoyed a VIP welcome reception at the hotel, joined by former '51-52 teammates that included Rudy Migay, Andy Barbe and Rev. Ray Hannigan, who today is a Catholic priest. "It was fantastic seeing those guys after all these years," Gil says. "Recalling old stories was great fun!"

The following day, the honorees enjoyed dinner at the Steelhead Grille, hosted by Tom Rooney, president of the Penguins, former American Hockey League president Jack Riley

Next Issue

The next issue of *IIII Echoes* will come out in September or October 2002. It will include a review and pictures of the 2nd annual reunion. Also look forward to more Forechecking and Backchecking, an announcement of the Society's selection(s) for the "Tops 2002" award and the introduction of our 2nd annual commemorative ornament.

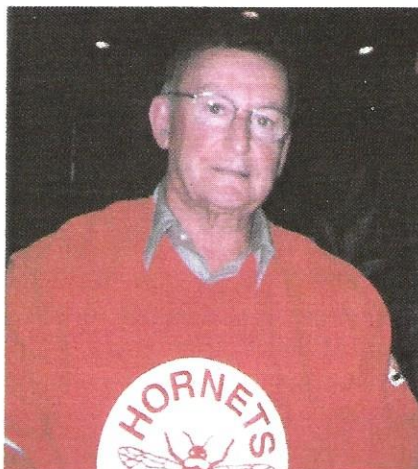


R. I. Reds Heritage Society

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Gil Mayer sports a replica jersey of the Pittsburgh Hornets given to him at the 50th anniversary celebration of the team winning its first AHL Calder Cup in 1951-52. On the jersey's back is 0, the number he wore with the Hornets.

who handles the team's alumni relations and Cindy Himes, director of public relations. After dinner the group moved on to an AHL game between the Wilkes-Barre Penguins and Cleveland Barons and took part in a pre-game ceremony honoring the championship team.

On Saturday Gil and Marielle, along with other guests, attended the NHL game between the Pittsburgh Penguins and Detroit Red Wings visited with Mario Lemeux, player-owner of the team, who was sitting out an injury. "Mario Lemeux not only is a great hockey player but he's a wonderful man, too," the couple agrees.

Sunday the Mayers were again picked up by limo and driven to the airport where they 9:15am flight back home to sunny Florida. As part of follow-up letter to the couple, Mr. Rooney paid the ultimate tribute:

"Over the years I have heard many times from our older fans that although we may have enjoyed Les Binkley, Greg Millan, Tom Barasso, or even the current 'Moose' John Hedberg, that, in fact, the greatest goalie in Pittsburgh history was Gil Mayer."

Without a doubt Gil would have been a NHL starting goaltender had he been born a few years later. He was the top reserve goaltender for the Toronto Maple Leafs in the early 1950s, which meant he cooled his heels in Pittsburgh waiting for the rare time when the Leafs' starter, Turk Broda, couldn't go. He did manage to get into 9 NHL games, including a six-game stint in 1955-56.

In the AHL he won three first team All-Star awards and two second team selections. He also had six seasons playing 50 or more games. Gil also starred with Hershey, Cleveland and, of course, Providence.

The Reds First Night on TV *(continued from insert)*

Both guys were close friends and professionals. We started the telecast with the induction ceremonies to the Reds Hall of Fame (Bun Cook, Gabby Sherwood and Harvey Bennett). Unfortunately, the Reds lost to the Buffalo Bisons 5-3. Even though the Reds lost the opener, they went on to get into the playoffs for the first time in 3 years.

But the most important thing to me was that the TV coverage went smoothly. The telecast was well received and on the way out I stopped at a concession stand for a 30-cent hot dog, a 15-cent coke and the large box of popcorn for 35 cents to take home to my wife. All in all, it was a great night for TV.

Editor's Note: Les Keats was an executive producer and director at WJAR-TV, Channel 10, for many years. He also was a Reds' season ticket holder and served as the team's correspondent for "The Hockey News." Les is a Charter Member of the R.I. Reds Heritage Society.