



# 1111 ECHOES

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND REDS HERITAGE SOCIETY

WINTER 2016

## Members: Not Renewed Yet?

Don't let this copy of *1111 Echoes* become your last!

This issue of *1111 Echoes* begins the Reds Heritage Society's 16th season in existence.

If you have received another membership form in this mailing, you must renew now in order to remain on our membership rolls for 2015-16. Your membership dues are \$25 (USA) – or only 40 cents a week.

**Please act by the February 29, 2016 deadline.**

After that – unfortunately – your name will be removed from our database if we have not received your membership renewal.

Paid-up members will continue to receive three newsletters annually, plus exclusive invitations to our 16th Annual Reunion and other special events throughout the membership year.

To check your membership status, please call Buster Clegg at 401-247-2666.

We sincerely thank you for your support.



*A DC-3, much like the one used by the Reds in the 1960s, motors through the air.*

## The DC-3 The Reds' Ageless 'Flying Machine'

**By Buster Clegg  
R. I. Reds Heritage Society  
President**

One evening recently I was clicking through TV channels provided by Cox Communications, looking for something interesting rather than watching the prime time “junk” offered by network television. During my search, I luckily landed on the Smithsonian Channel, whose historic presentation that night was “Planes that Changed the World.” The

title intrigued me so I settled into watching the show.

Ironically, the very first plane featured in the documentary program was the DC-3, first manufactured in 1936. It was the same type aircraft I had selected for Reds air travel in the late 1960s to carry us from point A to point B in the American Hockey League. Mel Chapman was the owner and pilot of our DC-3 rental plane. He was like a Damon Runyon character

**Continued on Page 8**

# Why Not?

## The Don McKenney Reds' Story

**By Arnold Bailey**  
**Vice President**  
**R. I. Reds Heritage Society**

**D**on McKenney had spent the 1967-68 season with the NHL expansion St. Louis Blues, and rehabbing from an injury with Kansas City of the Central Professional League. Both were a long way from his former team in Boston and his family in Braintree.

So when a phone call came from Providence coach Dave Creighton, asking how he'd like to play for the Reds, "It sounded pretty good," McKenney recalls, adding: "So I asked myself, 'Why not?'" There had been other calls, too, to set up the deal, mostly between Reds GM Buster Clegg and Blues coach Scotty Bowman.

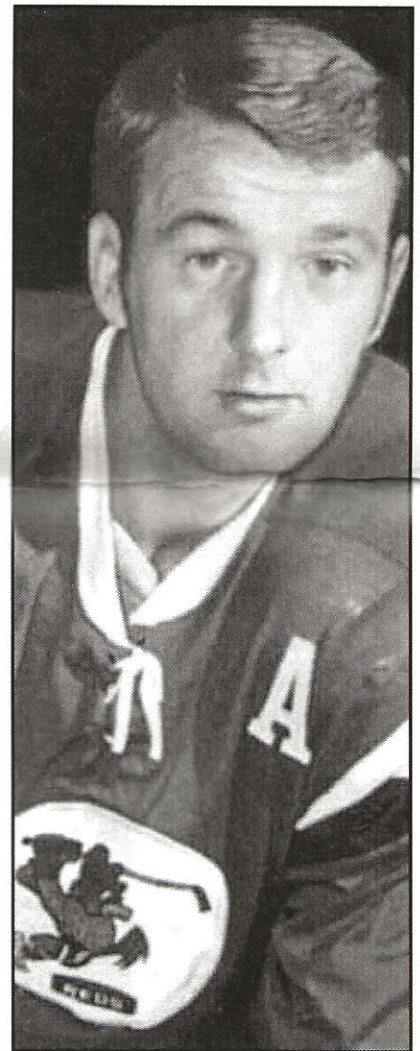
So, at the age of 34, and after 798 NHL games and 237 goals, mostly with the Bruins, McKenney found himself in Providence. It was a homecoming, of sorts, reuniting him, his wife, Margaret, and their three children (son Scot and daughters Valerie and Deborah) in the Boston suburbs.

The homecoming proved to be a great move, for both McKenney and

the Reds. During his first season in Providence, McKenney led the Reds in scoring by a wide margin, his 74 points (26 goals and 48 assists) tied for 7th in the entire AHL. The closest to him on the Reds' scoring sheet was one his linemates, Yves Locas (a team-leading 30 goals and 27 assists for 57 points). They'd each score 4 more goals in the playoffs as the Reds beat Baltimore in the opening round only to lose to Quebec in the semi-finals.

For McKenney, his Reds output was reminiscent of his 9 years with the Bruins. He scored 20 or more goals in a season seven times for Boston (a high of 32 in 1958-59). That was in the golden age of the NHL's "Original Six" teams when 20 goals were a true accomplishment. His rookie trading card - number 35 in the historic 1954-55 Topps set - mentions his fast start with Boston - 5 goals in his first 6 games.

McKenney played tough, consistent, smart and clean. It was a style that won him the Lady Byng Trophy in 1960, the NHL's symbol of good sportsmanship combined



*Don McKenney wearing the Reds colors, featuring the infamous "Slapshot Rooster" logo.*

**Continued on Page 3**



**1111 ECHOES is published by the**  
**Rhode Island Reds Heritage Society**

14 Hillside Avenue, Suite 1111  
 Barrington, RI 02806  
 401-247-2666  
 www.rireds.org

*President: Buster Clegg; Vice President: Arnold Bailey; Secretary: Bill O'Connor;*  
*Treasurer: Bill Connell; 1111 Echoes Editor: Mike Bailey; Photographer: Dan Aurillo;*  
*Board of Directors: Mike Bailey, Dick Bartlett, Vin Cimini, Jim Clegg,*  
*Mal Goldenberg, Roger Gladu, George Landes, Andre Mayer,*  
*Tom McDonough, Chris Orton, Rick Scherza,*  
*Bob Spaziano, Len Tessier*

**Continued from Page 2**

with a high-standard of play. Alex Delvecchio won it the year before, and Red Kelly the following year. Both are in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

When McKenney moved up to the Bruins in 1954 he was the youngest player in the NHL. Ironically, the player he replaced at center in Boston was the same Dave Creighton who, 14 years later as coach of the Reds, would welcome him to Providence.

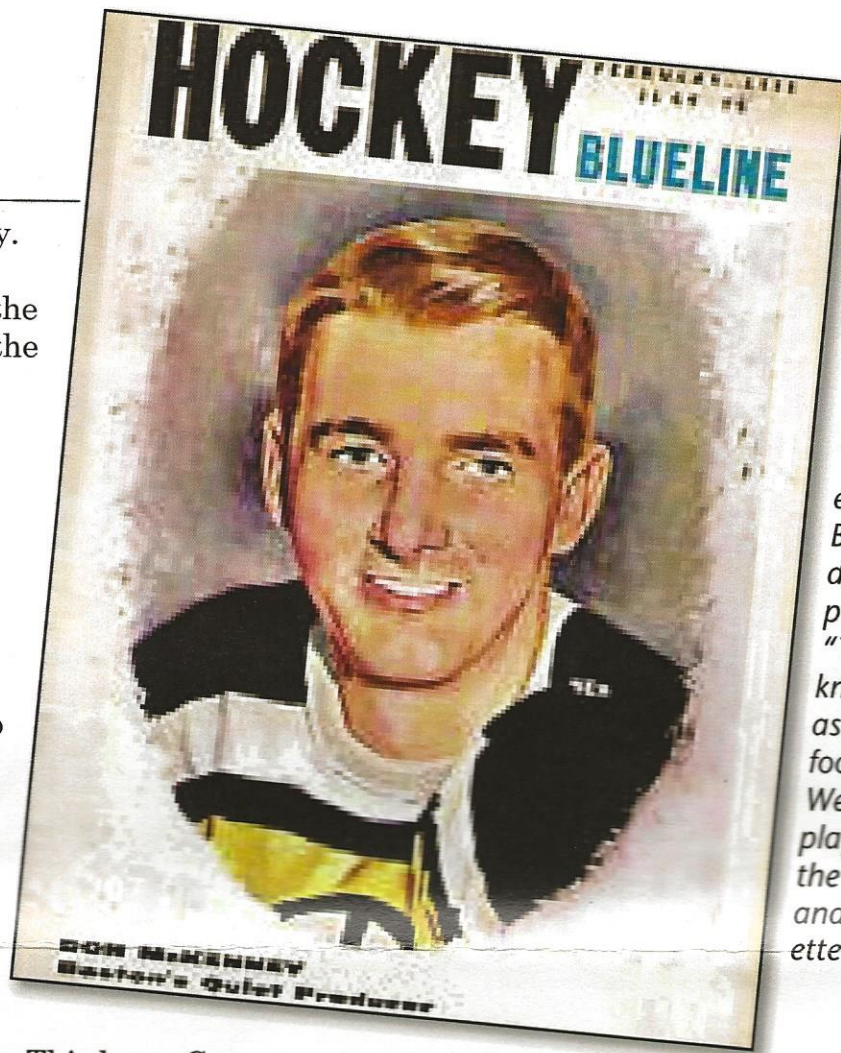
Even at the tender age of 20, McKenney's impressive game almost earned him the Calder Trophy as the league's top rookie. He was second to Ed Litzenberger who split the season between Montreal and Chicago. Third was Canadiens' goalie Jacques Plante, so McKenney was traveling in fast company early on.

During his years in the NHL, McKenney was among the league's top 20 scorers seven times, with four of those in the top 10. He played in seven All-Star games. And he was durable, playing in 266 straight games over one span. His reward was an alternate captain's "A" on his Bruins' shirt, then moving up to captain succeeding Ferny Flaman.

He was traded to the Rangers for Dean Prentice in February 1963, then packaged with Andy Bathgate in a multi-player deal with Toronto. The trade brought him a Stanley Cup, as he and Bathgate played key roles in the Maple Leafs' third straight crown.

Then there was a brief stint with Detroit and a Calder Cup championship season with Pittsburgh in the AHL.

McKenney's was a career with many highlights. In 1959, he and the Bruins played a series of 23 games in a 10-city, 7-nation European barnstorming series, a groundbreaking trip that helped



*One of the nicest images of ex-Reds center Don McKenney is this cover of the February 1958 issue of Hockey Blue Line magazine. The image of McKenney as the Boston Bruins "Quiet Producer" was from a painting by DeWitt "Tex" Coulter, better known to sports fans as an All-American football player at West Point who later played pro ball with the New York Giants and Montreal Alouettes*

re-focus the game globally. Also with the Bruins, he centered lines that included such local heroes as Jerry Toppazzini (whose brother Zellio was the Reds Player of the Century) and Willie O'Ree, the first black to play in the NHL.

When his playing days were over, he joined Flaman as assistant hockey coach at Northeastern University, then succeeded his former teammate as head coach. He's also in the university's Hall of Fame and a coach's award in his honor is given annually for dedication to the hockey program. He also operated hockey schools with Doug Mohns, a close friend and teammate since their OHA days with the Barrie Flyers. And he's been a scout for the Colorado Avalanche.

McKenney played part of one more season with the Reds before retiring. But he established a special bond with the AHL's former Providence entry. He and his wife Margaret ("Margie") are both natives of Smiths Falls, Ontario, and have resided in Norton, Mass., since 2001. They have been among the most devoted supporters of the R.I. Reds Heritage Society since its founding 16 years ago.



*Ex-PC star goaltender and former US Gold Medal Olympian Sara DeCosta-Hayes, center, instructs members of the Sting, which comprising some of the finest young female players from throughout Rhode Island.*



*Warwick girls test their puck handling and shooting skills.*



*Members of the Barrington Co-op Girls Hockey team after the Jan. 3 Skills Test at the Alex & Ani Outdoor Rink in Providence.*

# Developing Future Stars

## Local Youth and High School Players Test AHL Skills

In only the second event of its kind ever held in Rhode Island, the American Hockey League's "Skills Test" was presented to four local youth hockey and high school organizations in January.

"This is a major step forward in telling young players that the genesis of their sport in Rhode Island began with the Rhode Island Reds of the professional Canadian-Hockey League back in 1926-27," said Mal Goldenberg, a society director and coordinator of the tests. "Last year we ran only one event as a test and it was so well received we went with four this year."

Organized by the Rhode Island Reds Heritage Society with the cooperation of the American Hockey League, two boys' teams and two girls' teams were able to test the AHL's comprehensive skills challenge at the Alex & Ani Outdoor Rink in Providence in January.

The AHL skills were scheduled as follows:

- Sunday, Jan. 3: Barrington High Girls, 8-10 a.m.

- Saturday, Jan. 9: Sara De-Costa's "Sting" Girls, 8-10 a.m.



*The Under-12 teams of the RI Sting pose with representatives of the RI Reds Heritage Society, which organized the AHL Skills Test.*

- Sunday, Jan. 24: Barrington High Boys, 8-10 a.m.

- Saturday, January 30: Warwick Jr. Boys, 8-10 a.m.

The skills test was generously provided by the AHL to the Reds society in both video and diagram formats.

According to the AHL only one other group, from Connecticut, has ever requested the league's model.

The Alex & Ani facility donated the ice time.

"Our objective is to introduce

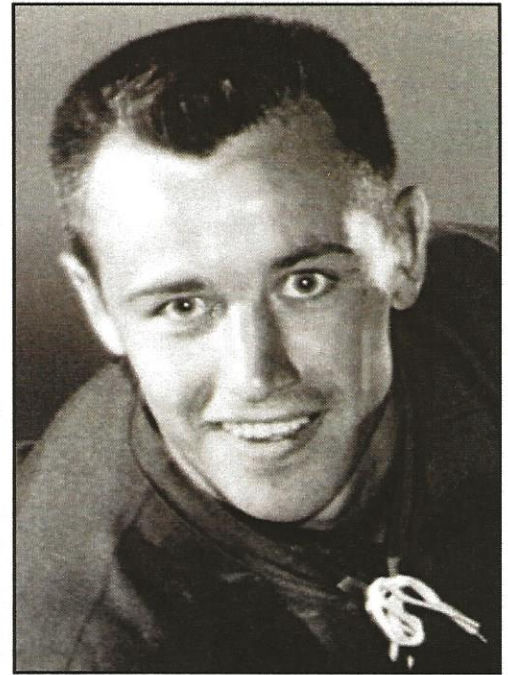
to young hockey players the required series of skills expected at the pro hockey level," said Buster Clegg, president of the 700-member Heritage Society "In a highly competitive format, we hope kids will recognize their strengths and their weaknesses so they can improve their performances in order to reach their next level of competition. We thank both the AHL and the Alex & Ani outdoor rink for their kind contributions to this unusual opportunity."



Ralph Keller



Bruce Landon



Bruce Cline

## Three More Reds Elected to AHL Hall

**I**nduction of the Class of 2016 into the American Hockey League Hall of Fame brings to 17 the number of former R.I. Reds among the 45 honored members..

Among the 2016 inductees with Reds connections are Bruce Cline, a right wing who spent three seasons with Providence in the 1950s; Ralph Keller, a defenseman who began his AHL career with the Reds in 1957; and Bruce Landon, honored as a team executive but who also played with the Providence team as a young goalie in 1976-77.

The fourth 2016 inductee is Jean-Francois Labbe, a goalie with 6 teams in 10 (1993-1003 AHL seasons.)

Previous inductees with Reds connections were (alphabetically):

■ Harvey Bennett: goalie with Reds for 12 seasons, 1947-59, inducted in 2012.

■ Johnny Bower: goalie with

Reds for 2 seasons during long AHL (11 seasons) and NHL (15 seasons) career (2006).

■ Joe Crozier: inducted as coach but played 3 games with Reds as a defenseman in 1958-59 (2012).

■ Bun Cook: also inducted as a coach, but played wing with Reds for six seasons in late '30s and early '40s (2007).

■ Steve Kraftcheck: defenseman who played final 2 of his 13 AHL seasons with Reds, 1962 to '64 (2008).

■ Willie Marshall: center who spent 3 of his 20 AHL seasons with Reds, 1962-66, (2006).

■ Gil Mayer: goalie who played final 2 seasons of 14-year AHL career with Reds, 1961-63 (2007).

■ Marcel Paille: goalie who played 8 of his 15 AHL seasons with Reds, mostly in 1960s and early '70s (2010).

■ Bob Perreault: goalie who played his rookie season in AHL

with Reds in 1951, then played for 4 Calder Cup champions (2014).

■ Harry Pidhirny: forward who played the 1962-63 season with Reds during 17-year AHL career (2011).

■ Louis A. R. Pieri: owner of Reds and R.I. Auditorium (2009).

■ Bill Sweeney: center who played AHL rookie season with Reds in 1957-58, the first of his 12 AHL seasons (2010).

■ Zellio Toppazzini: right wing, the Reds "player of the century" (2012).

■ Larry Wilson: long-time player and coach who was the Reds' head coach for 2 seasons in 1970-72 (2011).

In addition, an 18th honoree, wing Mitch Lamoureux, who was inducted in 2011, spent two seasons in Providence, but with that city's P-Bruins in the mid-1990s, long after the Reds reign had ended.

# Bruce Cline & 'Le Gros Bill'

Originally, what was planned was an article describing how it had felt for a young hockey player in Canada to be a roommate of future Hall of Famer Jean Beliveau and one of hockey's greatest players.

That young player was Bruce Cline. Six years before he would become the AHL's top rookie in his first season with the 1955-56 Calder Cup champion R.I. Reds, Cline had been a teammate – and roommate – of Beliveau in Quebec at the Junior-A level, later nicknamed “Le Gros Bill,” a legendary French hero from the past.

Now, some fans would joke that a more timely approach might be to wonder how it felt for Beliveau to have roomed with Bruce Cline.

The reason, of course, is Cline's recent induction into the American Hockey League Hall of Fame, joining three others – including two more with connections to the storied Reds franchise – among the elite in that hockey shrine's Class of 2016.

Cline had talked about his early friendship with Beliveau when he returned to Rhode Island, once again, for last summer's annual reunion of the R.I. Reds Heritage Society.

“It was in Quebec in Junior A back in 1950 when I was only 18,” Cline recalled during the Reds reunion weekend in August. “I roomed with Beliveau and Gordie Haworth (a young center) when we were playing with the Quebec Citadelles.

“You could tell even then that Beliveau would become a great player, and he did become one of the greatest of all time. He had something like 60 goals (the record book shows 61 goals in 46 games). And you could also tell that he was a great



*Bruce Cline*



*Jean Beliveau*

person, too.”

Cline's other teammates on that 1950-51 Quebec Citadelles team included a 17-year-old left wing named Camille Henry and a goaltender named Marcel Paille, also 17. Cline and Henry would become teammates again on the R.I. Reds 1955-56 Calder Cup championship team, the latter leading the AHL in scoring with 50 goals. And Paille would join Cline with the Reds two seasons later in 1957-58.

Beliveau, of course, would begin his long career with the Montreal Canadiens for two games later in that 1950-51 season. His Hall of Fame journey would eventually include 19 star-studded seasons with Montreal, during which he played 1,125 regular season games and scored 507 goals. His playoff record features 79 goals in 162 games and 10 Stanley Cup wins (plus 7 more as a team executive).

Cline's AHL Hall of Fame career includes 13 seasons during which he was one of the league's greatest scorers.

With Providence, Springfield, Hershey and Buffalo, he scored 321 goals – including eight 20-goal seasons – and added 452 assists for 773 points in 823 regular-season games. His post-season record was even better – 58 points in 89 Calder Cup games.

Especially impressive are Cline's four seasons with Springfield which included three consecutive championship seasons and two all-star selections.

Cline has been active in the R.I. Reds Heritage Society since the organization's founding 16 years ago, as well as a similar organization formed six years ago to honor the Springfield Indians.

# The Reds' Ageless 'Flying Machine'

## Continued from Page 1

– friendly, carefree, sometimes boastful and often in a financial squeeze. He also enjoyed sipping and drinking more than his share of spirits.

Chappy's DC-3 gem was manufactured somewhere between 1936 and 1956 – the production years of the plane that truly changed the world. It was inexpensive to manufacture, comfortable for commercial passengers and versatile for military use. Seating ranged from 21 to 32, its cruise speed 207 mph, and it had a range of 1,500 miles. And yes. The DC-3 had the greatest safety record among all airlines. Even today aircraft historians credit its lasting effect on the airline industry and conversion for military use in World War II. Our friendly pilot claimed he flew about 50 missions for the military.

Chappy owned his own DC-3 when we first interfaced with him in the late 1960s. By then hockey had abandoned train travel because of cost and relied on either bus or commercial airlines (which also was very expensive). In our discussions

Chappy produced cost estimates which were very favorable to alternatives. So I drew up a major travel plan for our 1966-67 AHL schedule that included four or five DC-3 assignments.

Our pilot turned out to be a true character – both a skilled pilot and fun-loving story teller and risk taker. He boasted about jail time he served in Cuba after Fidel Castro took over the country from the Batista regime during the Cuban Revolution in the late 1950's. Chappy never would tell us what cargo Castro discovered hidden in his DC-3 that cost him time in the clink. He proudly told of a book written about Cuba that mentioned him as “a jovial short, balding, middle-aged drunken pilot with a rosy red nose to prove it.”

Chappy liked to tell of his Christmas season assignment that transported in his DC-3 about 15-20 real live reindeer from wherever to the town of North Pole, NY, an upper-state tourist park started in 1949. The park is billed as the oldest theme park in the United States and features Santa at the North Pole with live reindeer and a traditional Christmas theme. In

order to transport the reindeer Chappy had to remove all passenger seating, just as the military did to transport American paratroopers or equipment and supplies behind enemy lines during WWII. “Cleaning up reindeer droppings is not much fun,” he once quipped.

Our relationship with Chappy started out great. Although the DC-3 sometimes encountered bumpiness in unsettled weather we always made our destinations safe and sound. Despite the noisy dron of its two powerful propeller motors – one mounted on each wing - our players quickly accepted Chappy and his DC-3 as a blessed break from having to take longer bus trips which were tiring and boring. As an example, a bus trip to Hershey then took at least 7 hours, whereas our DC-3 delivered us in less than three hours.

Trips flown by our heralded pilot (later fired by yours truly) and his replacement at the controls sometimes could be very eventful. Coming to mind there were three very unusual episodes. You'll get the rest of the story in our next 1111 Echoes, due for release in early May.

## 16th Annual Reunion Scheduled for August 5-7

Please mark on your calendars August 5, 6 & 7, 2016 and reserve those dates to help us celebrate our 16th – that's right sixteenth – annual reunion sponsored by the R. I. Reds Heritage Society. Your reservation form will arrive with our next

newsletter, scheduled for mailing in early May.

A highlight will be the release of the first-ever Reds' hockey card collection, featuring a salute to our 1955-56 team – the last to win the Calder Cup. For player-members, expect some-

time in April a special mailing outlining the weekend's activity. Be assured, too, that our “Host a Hockey Hero” program will be available again this year.

Hope to see all of you at our 16th! Let's really “Roll out the Barrel” in 2016.