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ECHOES

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND REDS HERITAGE SOCIETY

SPRING 2022



Two events - Hall of Fame Enshrinement and the Reds Heritage Society Reunion - will take place at the iconic Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet.

THE GRAND FINALE

Final Formal Reunion Scheduled for August 19-21

By Andre Mayer
Heritage Society President

It's been 22 years since we started this tradition and two years since we saw you last. And it's been too long. Hope you feel the same.

The Rhode Island Reds Heritage Society is looking forward to getting together for what will be our final formal reunion this Aug. 19-21, and we have a number of special programs and events lined up to make it the most memorable.

Once again, we've scheduled our regular **Friday "Meet & Greet"** for our early bird arrivals. And, in place of our traditional Dinner/Dance event, you'll be invited to attend Saturday's **2022 Enshrinement Celebration & Dinner** of the RI Hockey Hall of Fame at the iconic Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet.

The enshrinement will give us all a chance to pay tribute to Society



Buster Clegg, founder of the RI Reds Heritage Society and recipient of the RI Hockey Hall of Fame's Malcolm Greene Chase Award.

founder Buster Clegg, recipient of the HOF's Malcolm Greene Chase Award for "lifetime contributions to hockey."

The occasion will also mark the first event we produce with the HOF as we begin to blend with that organization and continue our mission of preserving and celebrating the legacy of the Reds in the years to come.

That effort has already begun, with the installation of the HOF downtown Providence displays and interactive "Wall of Fame" at the Dunkin' Donuts Center. Our next objective is building a museum to pay perpetual tribute to the Reds and Rhode Island hockey.

Our **Sunday Reunion** will once again be staged from 12-4 p.m., also at historic Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet. It promises to be a special day made even more special by having you with us.

Please save the dates and watch for a separate mailing that will include details and reservation forms.

Cartoon Memories: The Player of the Century

The 1955-56 American Hockey League season was the circuit's 20th. The Reds had finished dead last the year before – nearly 20 points out of the playoffs. But this year, things changed. Dramatically.

The Cleveland Barons had upset the defending champion Pittsburgh Hornets in the playoff semis, but facing the Reds in the

finals was another matter. The Barons had finished a whopping 33 points behind the Reds over the regular season.

Kirk Reinert, the sports cartoonist of the Cleveland Plain Dealer and counterpart to the Providence Journal's Frank Lanning, knew the Barons' predicament. Their task was

daunting.

Reinert's cartoon tribute to Camille Henry, Johnny Bower, and Zellio Toppazzini on the eve of Game 3 in Cleveland prophesied the ending. The Reds pounded the home team that night, and two days later, the Reds swept and Zellio kissed the Cup on Barons' ice.



P-Bruins Pay Tribute to Tom Army

There was a point when everyone knew Tom Army as simply the son of legendary Reds' trainer, George Army. Then Tom made a name for himself as an outstanding hockey talent and captain of the Providence College Friars hockey team.

Tom Army joined the Reds' publicity office in the mid-1950s, after starring as a high-scoring forward at PC. He served the Reds in several front office public relations capacities, including color analyst for the team's radio broadcasts, backing up the legendary play-by-play announcer George Patrick Duffy.

As a dad, Tom and his lovely wife, Betty, raised an army of bright and talented children and grandchildren, many of them extraordinary hockey talents in their own right. And to help them along the way, he pioneered the East Providence Youth Hockey Association, which spawned several generations of incredible players.

Twenty-two years ago, Tom was one of the key friends Buster Clegg recruited to help create the RI Reds Heritage Society, which has meant and done so much towards preserving and showcasing the legacy and achievements of this storied hockey franchise.

Tom was the 2004-2005 recipient of the Tops Award, the Society's highest honor.

On Feb. 25 of this year, the Providence Bruins honored Tom with a scoreboard slideshow and an on-ice ceremony in before-game ceremonies for his contributions to RI hockey. It celebrated his 28 years of service as official scorer and supervisor of off-ice officials for the P-Bruins.

It was an honor well deserved and worthy of the standing ovation he received.



The Providence Bruins paid tribute to Tom Army with a slide show (above) and presentation (below).



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Rhode Island Reds Heritage Society

PO Box 504
Lincoln, RI 02865
www.rireds.org
401-230-5905

President: Andre Mayer
Vice President: Tom McDonough
Secretary: Bill O'Connor
Treasurer: Bill Connell
Director of Operations: Reba Golden
1111 Echoes Editor: Mike Bailey

Board of Directors:
Mike Bailey, Vin Cimini,
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The Calder Cup That Almost Was

By Bill Connell
Heritage Society Treasurer

Reds fans of a certain age fondly recall the epic run to a championship that the team had during the 1955-56 campaign. The club ended the regular season riding an 8-game winning streak, finishing 45-17-2, before sweeping the Cleveland Barons in four games to win the Calder Cup.

Younger Reds fans who frequented the Providence Civic Center note the 1973-74 season as one of the more significant ones in franchise history.

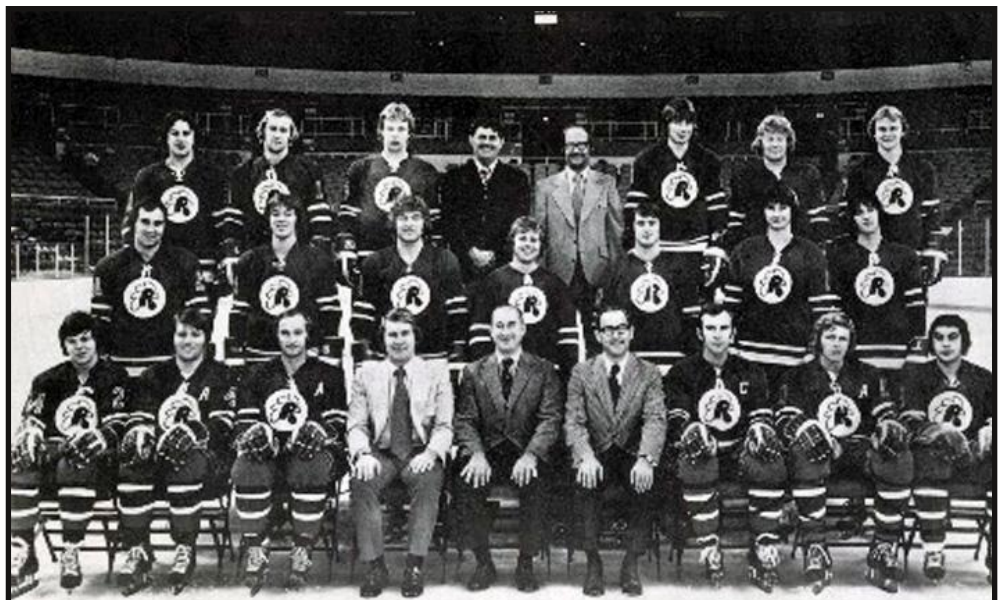
The Reds finished a very respectable 38-26-12 to take second place in the Northern Division of the AHL behind the Rochester Americans who were coached by Don Cherry. The team went 26-8-2 at home in their second season downtown. Highlights from that year include a 12-2 drubbing of Rochester on Dec. 23, 1973. That was the high watermark for goals that season.

The Reds scored 11 goals twice: 11-3, also against Rochester, and 11-4 against the Boston Braves. Both games were played at home. The high mark for goals on the road came at Springfield in October with a 10-6 thrashing of the Kings, coached by Zello Toppazzini's brother, Jerry. That win came on the heels of 10-6 hammering of the Jacksonville Barons three nights earlier in Providence – accounting for an amazing 20-goal output in two games! The club finished the regular season with a whopping 330 goals and averaged just over 4300 spectators per game.

The prolific scoring was led by Rick



Above, Zello Toppazzini kisses the Calder Cup after the 1955-56 Reds swept the Cleveland Barons. Below, the 1973-74 Reds made a run at the Cup. The "Civic Center Era" team proved to be a scoring powerhouse.



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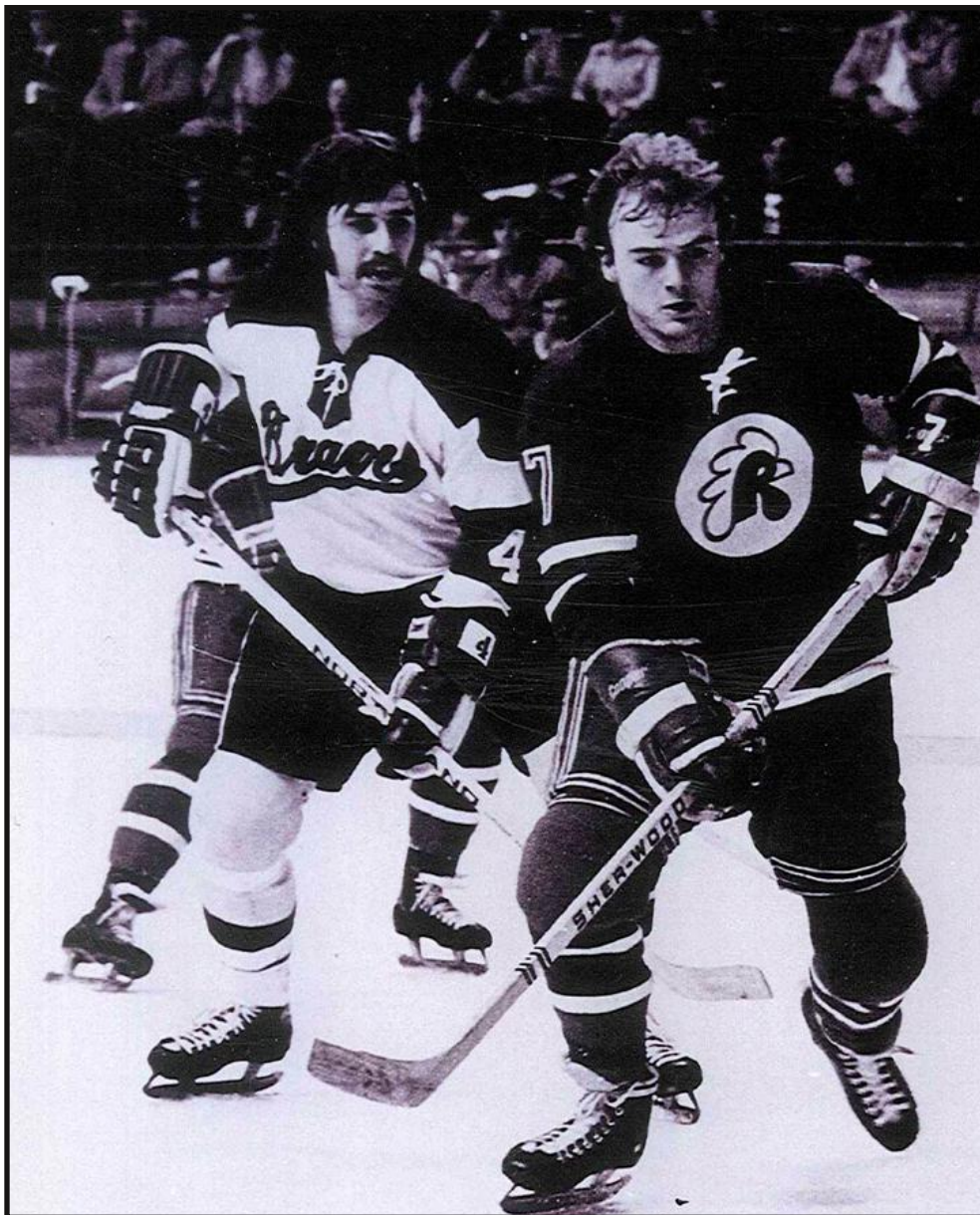
Middleton, who captured the AHL's "Rookie of the Year" award. In just 63 games. "Nifty" scored 36 goals and 48 assists for 84 points, adding 15 more in 15 playoff games.

The tandem of Pierre Laganiere, Jerry Teeple, and Doug Horbul each also eclipsed the 30-goal mark that season. Fan-favorite John Bednarksi amassed 222 penalty minutes to lead the team, playing in all 76 regular season games.

Providence battled the talented Nova Scotia Voyageurs in the first round of the Calder Cup playoffs enroute to 4-2 series win against the Montreal affiliate, including an 8-0 whitewash in the deciding 6th game on home ice.

They then dispatched the New Haven Nighthawks in a 4- game sweep.

Next up would be the Southern Division Champion Hershey Bears, who beat the Reds in a tightly contested series, 4 games to 1. All five games were decided by one goal with four going to overtime. Former Reds, Ralph Keller and Steve Andrascik,



Rick Middleton captured the AHL's "Rookie of the Year" award in the 1973-74 season

were on the Bears' roster that spring.

Looking back, the 1973-74 Reds was a formidable team and if they had gotten a few bounces in overtime that May, the Society would have had the pleasure of commemorating a

championship from the "Civic Center Era."

That would have been quite a thrill for those of us who have the majority of our Reds' memories from the six seasons the club played downtown.

Our Rhode Island Reds Heritage Society Salutes TOM McDONOUGH

For the first time since the Heritage Society staged our annual reunions in 2000, Tom McDonough has been at the podium. This year, “my legs ain’t what they used to be,” he will tell you, so Tom will be seated in the audience taking in the festivities unencumbered for the first time by all of the detail and worry that comes with being the master of ceremonies.

If you don’t know the roots of Tom’s relationship with the Reds, he was the team’s stick boy between 1952 and 1957. A star hockey player at nearby St. Raphael Academy, his 2 goals in 9 seconds was the state schoolboy record for many years. However, he will tell you that the real highlight of his hockey journey was his time behind the Reds bench.

He was called “Red” then. There are little or any traces of that color on his head these days but plenty in his rosy cheeks. What has remained is his enthusiasm for the game and a sharp memory that recalls all of the detail of his years working with and making life-long friendships with the likes of Zellio Toppazzini, Ray Ross, Camille Henry, Johnny Bower and Harvey Bennett, to name a few. Indelible are his first-hand memories of the 1956 Calder Cup season.

He expertly learned how to tape sticks and shave the blades just like the players wanted. Whether it was the lie #4 of Buck Davies or the straight up lie #9 of Ray Powell, he became proficient. Even coating some with baby powder to keep pucks from sticking to the blades.

He recalls one night in Springfield when he lost all the sticks on the way back to the dressing room when an on- and off-ice brawl delayed the game and how the Reds’ great trainer, George Army, was more concerned about Tom’s safety than the sticks.



Tom with his Reunion assistants: grandchildren Tom and Emma.

On some Sundays, he would meet the team at the railway station after their Saturday night games to pick up the equipment and help get it prepared for the traditional 8 pm start that night.

When the team was away and injured players stayed behind, he took advantage of the ice time with them. He was always proud to be given permission to wear coach Jack Crawford’s team jacket at public

skating sessions and be envied by the guys...and the girls, we bet.

He says he will never forget the kindness of the players and the front office towards him...the occasional French lessons the players sometimes helped him with...and the real love of the game exhibited by players like Chuck Scherza, Ivan Irwin and so many others.

Memories and lessons for a lifetime.



The Boston Olympics Made Future Reds Stars

The Boston Olympics was a successful hockey team in the EAHL/EHL in Boston during the 1940s. The 'Pics, as the team was locally known, was founded and run by Walter Brown, who coached the USA to its first IIHF World hockey title in 1933, became President of the IIHF, and later owned the Boston Bruins and founded the Boston Celtics along with Reds owner, Lou Pieri.

In order to secure talent for his club, Brown worked out an agreement whereby the Olympics became the farm club of the Boston Bruins. The arrangement was magic for both sides.

The 'Pics was composed mostly of Canadian and young New England hockey talent and they won five league titles in 12 seasons, including four in a row from 1944 to 1947, playing their home games in the Boston Garden. The team's first title in 1940 was captured behind the goaltending of Harvey Bennett.

In fact, Harvey was just one of a number of future stars who would play for the Olympics before their time in the NHL and with our RI Reds.

Most notably, Fernie Flaman, Ivan Irwin, Roger Bedard, Allan Stanley, Norm Calladine, Bill Folk and Jack McGill were among the players who would eventually star with the Reds.

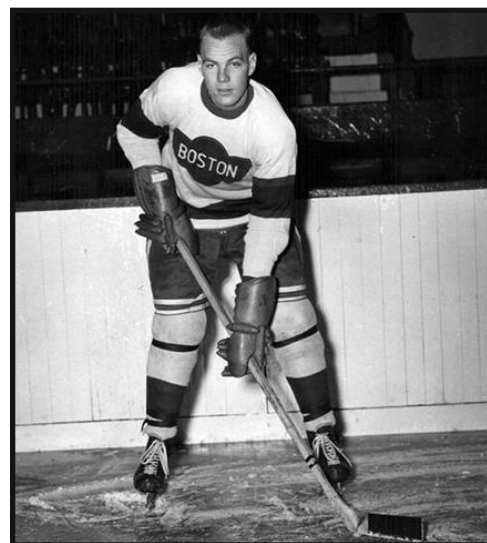
Coaching the team through its most successful years was US Hockey and Reds Hall of Famer, Hago Harrington,



Above, the 1940 Boston Olympics. Right, like many future Reds, Ivan Irwin played for the Olympics.

the Reds' scoring star during their first decade of play in the late 20's and 30's.

Not to be overlooked, among the players who skated and showcased their talents with the Olympics in the 1940's were some of Rhode Island's very best amateur players, including Ralph Warburton, Dick Rondeau, Bill Thayer, Gus Galipeau, Don Mellor, Gerry Kilmartin, Swede Erickson and Butch Reynolds.



Did You Know?

Mike Karakas

Did You Know...The great Mike Karakas played all or parts of seven seasons with our Reds, helping lead them to the Calder Cup in 1940. In 1935, while playing with the Chicago Blackhawks, the US Hockey Hall of Famer became the first NHL player to ever appear on a Wheaties box. It was the eve of the 4th Winter Olympics and Mike was joined on the cover with basketball star, Bob Kessler; figure skater, Kit Klein; and Alf Engen, the world's greatest all-around skier.

Just before leaving for Europe, Avery Brundage, President of the International Olympic Committee and a zealous supporter of amateurism, ousted Engen from the Games because Alf had accepted corn flakes for appearing on the box.

Wow!



Zellio Toppazzini

Did You Know... We all know now that our hockey heroes in the mid century made peanuts compared to today's players. Even the game's biggest stars took summer jobs to make ends meet.

Pierre Brillant was an electrician. George Army parked cars at Narragansett Racetrack. Gil Mayer sold carpeting and Andy Branigan sold cars. Ross Brooks ran a swim & tennis club. Others stayed fit working manual labor as carpenters, masons and landscapers. The charming and handsome Zellio Toppazzini worked a variety of jobs in the off-season.

One year he worked as a haberdasher, turning in his uniform for a suit and tie while selling men's clothing in Providence. How times have changed.



Allan Stanley

Did You Know...Allan was a fan favorite with the Reds, playing three seasons from 1947 to 1949, before a 21-year Hall of Fame NHL career with the Rangers, Blackhawks, Bruins, Maple Leafs and Flyers. A solid stay-at-home defender, the 7-time NHL All Star played with Zellio Toppazzini and Steve Kraftcheck in New York in 1951, where he was unceremoniously nicknamed "snowshoes" by some Rangers fans, which totally belied his staunch defensive play. After retirement, the 6'2" Stanley acquired and operated the Beehive Golf Course on Sturgeon Lake in Peterborough, Ontario. Like most hockey players, Allan had a natural golf swing and game gained from his hockey training. Fore!

