



1111 ECHOES

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND REDS HERITAGE SOCIETY

WINTER 2023

Your Support is Crucial

Join Our Exciting New Initiatives

By Andre Mayer
Heritage Society President

Over the past 22 years, the financial support and active engagement of former players, team staff, and you - professional hockey's most passionate fans - have kept the exciting moments and memory of the RI Reds alive and lasting.

Many individuals and businesses continue to contribute to our mission at all levels. We could not be more grateful for your generous and needed support.

You are the core of our RI Reds Heritage Society.

While our annual Reunions will be no more, **our work continues**. Our volunteer Board and contributing



researchers, writers and artists are working harder than ever to keep the history of the Reds and their players fresh, revealing and always entertaining.

We are so happy to have you with us

on this nostalgic journey.

Among our many new initiatives this year, we plan on:

- 1) Producing more **Newsletters**
- 2) Building a new and more **Modern Website** with more history, and more audio and video features.
- 3) Collaborating on publishing a comprehensive **New Book** chronicling the illustrious history of the RI Reds, and
- 4) Funding the creation of a **Reds Feature Showcase** in the planned RI Hockey Hall of Fame Museum.

Please join our circle of supporters by donating today.

Your contributions will insure that our mutual mission continues with our promise that the best is yet to come. And thank you for being an important part of our unique hockey family.

Please Accept my 2023 Contribution to Support the Work & Mission of the RI Reds Heritage Society

() \$25 () \$50 () \$75 () \$100 \$ _____

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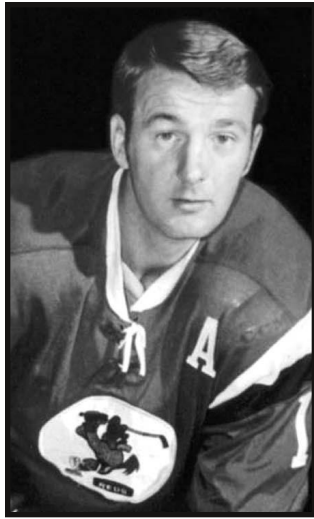
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RI Reds Heritage Society, P.O. Box 504. Lincoln, RI 02865, USA

Remembering Don McKenney

Don McKenney sadly left us this past Dec 19th at age 88. While he played only two seasons (1969 & 1970) with our Reds, he



became a beloved and lifelong friend of the RI hockey community. He and his lovely wife, Marge, were regular attendees at our annual reunions. In 1954, he joined the Boston Bruins as the youngest

player in the NHL and led the B's in scoring 4 times while also capturing the Lady Byng and then becoming team captain. We will sadly miss this great friend and one of the kindest, most gentlemanly players the game has ever known. years.



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Reds Owner George Sage, center, announces the partnership with the Rangers in 1971. With him, left to right, are Emile Francis, Larry Wilson, Tom Pucci, and Dave Creighton.

Reds' Last Ride with the Rangers

When the RI Reds were formed in 1926, the Montreal Canadiens provided the players that skated for them for their first 10 years. It was great success for both organizations.

Over the following decades, Reds management developed similar agreements with a number of other NHL teams, among them the Bruins, Blues, Blackhawks and Leafs. Perhaps the most noteworthy were those with the NY Rangers, who provided much of the nucleus for the Reds' historic 1955-56 campaign, regarded as the greatest in major minor league history.

For many of the years that followed, the Reds were primarily an independent – unaffiliated with any NHL team – and fortunate to secure the services of players on loan to help them build a competitive team each season. That changed dramatically after George Sage bought the Reds in 1969 and the team signed an agreement with the California Seals.

The dividends were immediate with the Reds capturing the AHL's Eastern Division title the next year.

In the Spring of 1971, the new Providence Civic Center was under construction and the Reds were preparing for their 52nd and final season at the iconic RI Auditorium.

On May 27, Sage welcomed Rangers' GM, Emile Francis, to Providence to sign a 5-year contract with the Broadway Blueshirts and breathe fresh new life into the franchise, which they did.

Among the exciting new Ranger faces we cheered for over the next five seasons were favorites Bert Wilson, Nick Polano. Gerry Teeple, Tommy Williams, Billy Knibbs, and, of course, Rick Middleton.

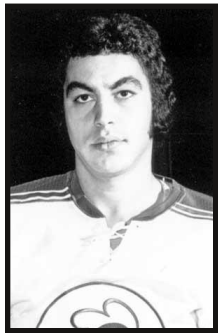
By the end of the contract, Sage had sold the team and the Reds would play just one more season here in Providence before skating off in the sunset. But for those five years with the Rangers farmhands in tow, it was a helluva final ride.

THE BRAWL

There Was No Christmas Spirit when the Reds Hosted the Amerks in 1973

By Wayne Forrest
Heritage Society Board of Directors

It was December 23, 1973. Christmas was nearing and the Providence Civic Center, the new home for the Reds, was just one year old and all aglow. The home team would be facing a longtime foe – the Rochester Americans. But on this night there would be no goodwill towards men as the new barn would soon be anointed with a taste of old time hockey.

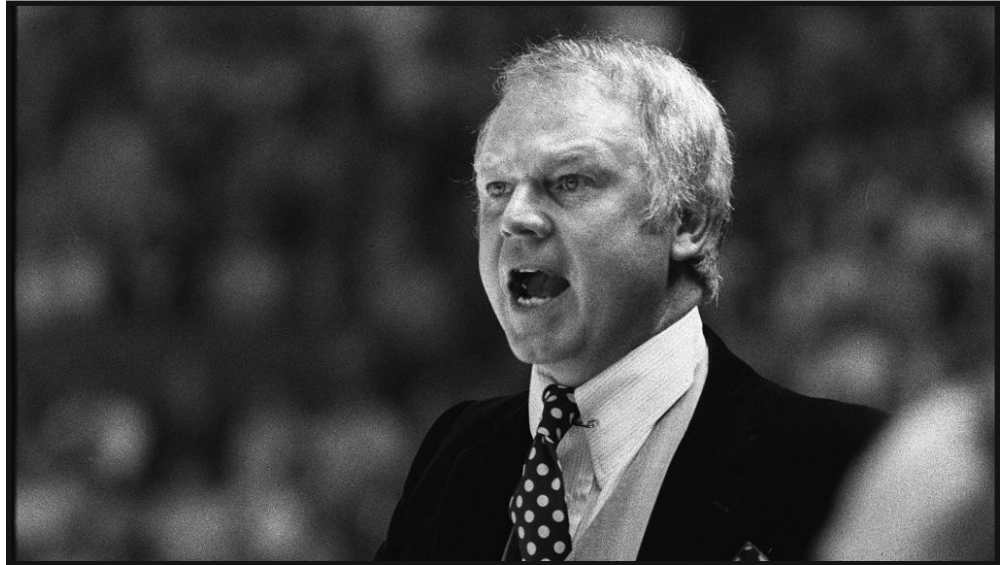


Andre Peloffy

Andre Peloffy traded punches with Amerks' defenseman Francois Ouimet...and the fuse was lit. As the pair headed to the penalty box, the Reds' Bert Wilson started a beef with the Amerks' Art Stratton. Not one to pass up a chance to brawl, perennial hockey pugilist John Wensink vaulted over the boards to go after Wilson and the Reds instinctively cowboyed up to defend their on-ice mates.

Former Reds center-turned-linesman John Sleaver had his hands full with one-on-one donnybrooks all over the ice. Highlighting the free-for-all was Amerks' goalie Lynn Zimmerman menacingly swinging his goalie stick samurai style while attempting to take a slice out of

After spotting the visitors an opening tally, Providence reeled off seven straight goals and took an 8-2 lead into the third period. With the Reds up 10-2 and 10 minutes to go in the game, forward



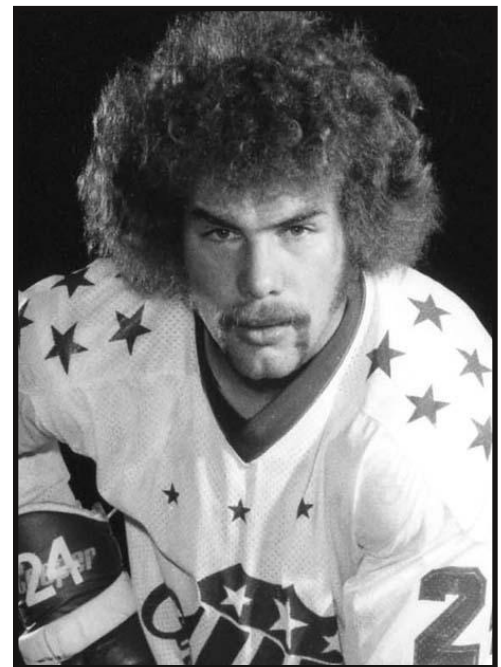
Rochester Coach Don Cherry.

defenseman Ron Fogel. Even Reds coach John Muckler got into the fray, demonstratively jawing with Rochester Coach Don Cherry, alleging he purposely ordered Wensink to join the melee.

When order was restored 40 minutes later, referee Steve Dowling had meted out 97 penalty minutes to the Reds and 68 to Rochester (215 total PIMs for the game) and four players from each team were ejected. Oh, and the Reds won the game, 12-2.

Fogel, Zimmerman, and Wensink each received \$100 match penalty fines for their shenanigans, while \$50 fines were imposed on 29 players for a total of \$3,125 in levies. Not even Muckler and Reds' trainer Rocky Batley escaped the AHL's wrath. They were both fined \$500 for leaving the bench. Cherry, too, was \$500 lighter in his wallet for not keeping his Amerks under control.

They don't make hockey games like that anymore.



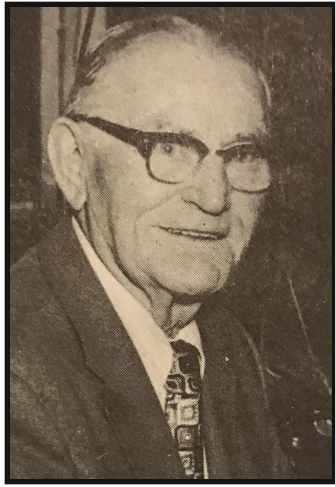
John Wensink is best remembered for his time with the Boston Bruins, where he teamed with Terry O'Reilly and Stan Jonathan as the team's enforcers.

Did You Know?

They Called Him Cleartone

His name was Jack Cleary, the affable public announcing (PA) voice of the RI Reds for 41 years.

From his perch in the press box gondola high above the rink, he made the evening's announcements to the throngs, mostly regulars, who gathered for each game.



Jack Cleary

From his mundane notifications of coming events like Ice Capades, All-Star Wrestling, and Roller Derby to his joyous announcements of the player names and the time of their goals or the villains heading to the penalty box, he was, indeed, the voice of the Auditorium and the Reds.

However, his most iconic announcement, delivered with unbridled purpose three times a game, came at the end of each period of play. We would come to mimic it during our

own games on local ponds or playing street hockey. You can hear it in your head as clear as day even today – “OOOOOOOOOne Minute!”

Jack was inducted into the Reds Hall of Fame in 1971. He is now long passed but his iconic alert to the closing minute of each period of play will live forever for those of us privileged to have heard it.

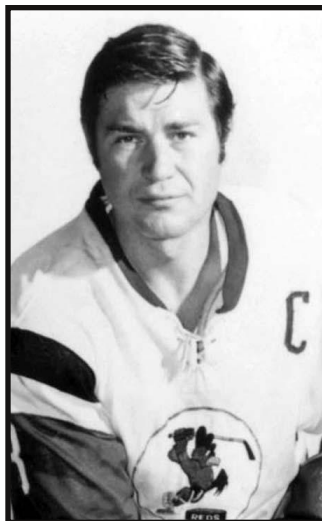
The Kellers Were a Hockey Family

Adam Keller played solid defense for the Reds for five seasons (1967-71) and served as team captain for three of those campaigns.

His older brother, Ralph, starred on the Roosters blueline in 1958.

The Kellers also had an older brother, Wendolyn, who never made it to the upper minors. Wendy had two hockey-playing sons, Pat and Lee.

Lee Keller made it to the AHL in 1980 with, of all places, the Binghamton Dusters, the team that acquired the Reds franchise in 1977.



Adam Keller

A Stand-Up Canadian

Johnny Crawford, former Boston Bruins hockey great who later coached in the AHL and sat at the helm of our Reds during their historic 1955-56 Calder Cup run, was always ready with humorous one-liners.

One night after his team was trounced 9-1, Crawford was asked by a writer what the turning point of the game was. Crawford quipped, “When they played the National Anthem.”

Crawford also had a few succinct words on Hall of Fame

defensemen Doug

Harvey's affection for his liquor: “Actually, he drinks only twice a year: When the circus is in town and when it isn't.”



John Crawford: He preferred to be called Johnny, though the media called him Jack.

No Liscombe for Liscombe in 1948

In 1948, the Reds' Carl Liscombe became the AHL's first MVP. It was the league's plan to name the award after the winner after each season so it had now become the Carl Liscombe Award.

The following year, he was named MVP once again but failed to recapture the trophy in his own name because, in the meantime, the AHL had permanently re-named it the Les Cunningham Award, which it is still called today.

By the way, Carl had previously played eight seasons with the Detroit Red Wings, winning the Stanley Cup with them in 1943. He was the last surviving member of that Red Wings team when he passed in 2004.



Carl Liscombe