



1111 ECHOES

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND REDS HERITAGE SOCIETY

WINTER 2026

The Legend of Iron Mike Karakas

By Vin Cimini
Reds Heritage Society Vice President

Mike Karakas first trained as a goaltender on the ice in a lot near the Spruce Mine of Eveleth, MN, where he and other sons of the Oliver Iron Mining Co. fought their neighborhood hockey battles. Yes, his "Iron Mike" moniker was born in Eveleth, but his reputation was forged by his brilliant play in the pros.

He played hockey at Eveleth High School, and later, while attending Eveleth Junior College, he joined the Rangers, an amateur club, which won the state championship in 1931.

Karakas soon attracted the attention of a scout for the minor league American Hockey Association's Chicago Shamrocks, where he was used as a backup goalie in his first year and as the team's lone man in the net the next season, when he was named as the league's most valuable goalie that season.

After trying out with the Detroit Red Wings, Mike played two more seasons in the AHA. He joined the Chicago Blackhawks at the start of the 1935 season and became the league's first American-born and -trained goaltender. He dazzled in his pro debut, posting a sparkling 1.92 goals against average with nine shutouts over the team's 48-game schedule on his way to the NHL's Calder Trophy as the circuit's rookie of the year.

In 1938, Mike backstopped the Hawks to a Stanley Cup victory, recording two shutouts during the eight playoff games. He began the 1939-40 season with the Blackhawks before being loaned to the Montreal Canadiens and then to the Providence Reds. It would become a landmark event in Reds' history.

Iron Mike was a brick wall for the Reds and coach Bun Cook over the final 22 regular-season and playoff games of the 1940 International-American Hockey League season, leading the Reds to the coveted Calder Cup.

In the Spring of 1940, the Hawks sold Mike's contract to the Reds' owner, Lou Pieri, and he starred with them over the next two seasons. He was named team captain and led the league in wins in 1941. Pieri traded Mike back to the Hawks in 1944 for players and \$10,000 cash. His brilliant



Mike Karakas ranks third-highest in games played (257) and minutes played (15,630), and fourth-highest in number of wins (103) in Reds' history.

play continued as he took the Hawks all the way to the Stanley Cup finals, only to lose to the Montreal Canadiens.

The following season, Mike shared the league leadership in shutouts with four and was named an NHL All-Star. After the 1946 season, Mike returned to the Reds, where he finished his professional career.

In 1973, Mike was enshrined in the charter class of the US Hockey Hall of Fame. It is a fitting tribute that the Hall of Fame is located in Mike's hometown of Eveleth – on land donated by United States Steel, which had started life as the Oliver Iron Mining Co.

RIGA honors Baluik's golf career

By Wayne Forrest
Reds Heritage Society President

I once asked Stan Baluik, if he could help me with my golf game. He said, "Wayne, I am a golf pro; not a magician." I have a feeling Stan used that line more than a few times and undoubtedly elicited the same laugh from other hackers – like me – who wished they could swing a golf club like Stan.

When it came to golf, the former Rhode Island Reds' center was a natural. To honor that talent and the national success Stan achieved in the U.S. and Canada, the Rhode Island Golf Association (RIGA) and Kirkbrae Country Club in Lincoln, RI, where he has served as the club pro for some 40-plus years, paid a very well-deserved tribute to Stan prior to his 90th birthday last October.

Stan's run began at age 16 when he won the Ontario Junior Open in 1951. He continued to advance his skills to win the Vermont Open in 1965, the



Stan holds the Rhode Island Open trophy he captured in 1971. He repeated his victory at the tournament in 1975.

year after he retired from hockey and two years after becoming the club pro at Kirkbrae. Stan took home trophies in 1971 and 1975 by winning the Rhode Island Open, and in 2005, Stan was honored as New England PGA Professional of the Year.

And let's not forget Stan's five



Former Reds and long-time friends (left to right) Bob Leduc, Stan Baluik, and Ross Brooks met up again in June 2025 and are still going strong.

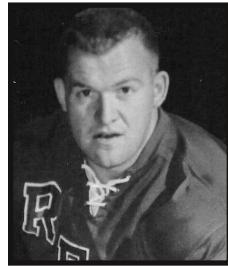
legendary seasons with the Reds. Most notably, he centered the B-Line between Jim Bartlett and Pierre Brilliant for three seasons from 1961 to 1964. During that time, they combined for 264 goals and 347 assists and were the top three scorers on the Reds for two of those years.

To hear more of the accolades bestowed upon Stan and his own anecdotes of his time at Kirkbrae, view the RIGA's salute to Stan on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffRF3gVkJM0.

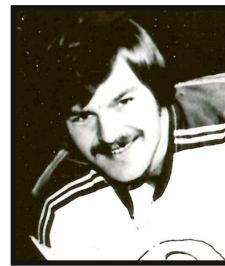
Reds Family Mourns Two Losses

The Reds Heritage Society recently lost two more family members. Ambidextrous right wing and center Gerry Ouellette passed away on October 6th at age 86 and defenseman Joe Zanussi left us on July 11, 2025, at the age of 77.

Born in Grand Falls, New Brunswick, Gerry starred with the Kingston (Ontario) Frontenacs of the Eastern Professional Hockey League in the 1959-60 season. His 35 goals were second on the team and 77 points were third best. The Boston Bruins took notice of the 21-year-old and brought him to the big time the following season. Gerry split his time between Kingston and Boston, netting five goals in 34 games with the Bruins. During the 1961-62 season, he helped both the Frontenacs and the Reds. In Providence, he tallied eight goals and 22 points in 34 games. Gerry truly found his niche in



Gerry Ouellette



Joe Zanussi

Buffalo, where he excelled for five seasons from 1965 to 1970. He was steady and reliable, averaging 70 games per season (345 total games). His last two seasons with the Bisons were his most productive, as he notched 25 goals in 1968-69 and 26 goals as team captain in 1969-70 – Buffalo's final season in the AHL – and helped lead the Bisons to the Calder Cup.

Joe came to Providence for the 1974-75 season from the Reds' parent club, the New York Rangers. The offensive-

minded blueliner, nicknamed "Crazy Legs," made an impact right away with 22 goals and 36 assists in 64 games. He earned the Eddie Shore Award as the AHL's best defenseman, was named to the AHL's First All-Star Team, and came in second in the voting for the AHL's Most Valuable Player.

Then, on Nov. 7, 1975, came the startling deal that sent Joe, Brad Park, and Jean Ratelle from New York to Boston in exchange for Bruins' Phil Esposito and Carol Vadnais. "I'll never forget Joe dancing out of the locker room," recalled Dave Maloney, Joe's partner on defense with the Reds. "He never really thought there was a chance that he would ever play for the Rangers and felt that he had a chance to play for the Bruins." And play he did. Joe skated in 60 games for the Bruins in the 1975-76 season. Joe retired in 1978.

By Vin Cimini
Reds Heritage Society Vice President

One of the key figures in the Reds' historic 1955-56 Calder Cup run was head coach Johnny "Jack" Crawford.

Born in 1916, Jack played 13 seasons of helmeted hockey for the Boston Bruins, contributing to the team's Stanley Cup championships in 1939 and 1941. Before playing professionally, Crawford was on a Memorial Cup winner with the West Toronto Nationals in 1936, and he then worked in the Canadian mines, while playing defense for the Lake Shore Blue Devils for one season.

He advanced to the International-American Hockey League with the Reds for the 1937-38 season, his first pro team and helped the Roosters to their fourth league title and first Calder Cup. The following season, Jack established himself with the Bruins, serving as team captain in 1946.

Following in the helmeted style of Eddie Shore, Jack was one of the early adopters of head gear and on the related question of, well, what was beneath it. The question was raised as to why Crawford donned the helmet in the first place. It appears it may have been more due to vanity than protection.

He was supposedly quoted in the 1999 book *Ultimate Hockey*, with the following: "When I played football as a teenager," Crawford revealed, "the paint would peel off inside of my helmet and the doctors say that some chemical in the paint triggered the skin infection that caused all of my hair to fall out over the years."

Jack Crawford's granddaughter, Jennifer Swaylik, confirmed that the family understood Jack's account about his helmet and hairline to be true.

"My grandmother believed he had what we would now call alopecia," Swaylik related. "He lost all of his hair as a late teen. It eventually grew back, but then fell out again, leaving thin patches until it fell out again, this time for good."

"He wore a helmet to cover it all. Any full head of hair you see in

Jack Crawford: the Helmet & the Hairline



The 1947-48 Bruins featured defense team including, from left, Fernie Flaman, Pat Egan, Jack Crawford, Frank Brimsek, Clare Martin and Murray Henderson. Flaman, Egan, Crawford and Brimsek all played for the Reds at one time during their careers.

pictures was in between the final falling-out period or, eventually, a very nicely done hairpiece," she added. "Did the paint in his helmet at St Michael's trigger something in his skin? It was the thought at the time. They never knew for sure."

The Society of International Hockey Research (SIHR) voted Jack's Reds 1955-56 Calder Cup team of Hall of Famers, "The greatest minor league hockey team and season of all time."

Crawford coached 340 games for the Reds during his five seasons behind the bench before spending one season as head coach of the Rochester Americans and two seasons leading the Baltimore Clippers.

Jack died at the young age of 56 in 1973. Wearing his trademark fedora, he collapsed at a game of the Cape Cod Cubs, an Eastern Hockey League team for which he was general manager.

THE AHL CELEBRATES 90 YEARS...

By Wayne Forrest
Reds Heritage Society President

The American Hockey League is celebrating its 90th anniversary this season, and the Providence Reds were there when the new league officially dropped the puck for the first time on Nov. 7, 1936.

The circuit was created through the merger of the Canadian-American Hockey League and the International Hockey League and became known as the International-American Hockey League (I-AHL). At the time, both leagues were fighting for survival, as they pondered what to do with financially strapped franchises.

The Boston Cubs folded in September 1936 after several seasons in the red, reducing the Can-Am to four teams, while the IHL lost half of its eight clubs for lack of money. A merger, team owners figured, would be the solution. The Reds were stationed in the Eastern Division with fellow Can-Am teams -- the New Haven Eagles, Philadelphia Ramblers, and Springfield Indians. The Western Division included the IHL's Cleveland Falcons, Pittsburgh Hornets, Syracuse Stars, and the first iteration of the Buffalo Bisons.

The I-AHL won the support of NHL President Frank Calder. "Hockey has been badly in need of a top-notch minor league that would work along the lines of the National [Hockey League], and I believe the new International-American is just that



The 1936-37 Reds: Front Row: Doggie Kuhn, Gerry Lowry, Lorne Duguid, Alex Motter, Jean Dubuc (manager), Albert Leduc (coach), Jack Keating, Bobby Bauer. Back Row: Bob McCully, Woody Dumart, Bert McInenly, Art Lesieur, Milt Schmidt, Gus Rivers, Red Conn, Paddy Byrne.

league," he touted. "I know the type of hockey both leagues have played in the past, and with new clubs going into the various member cities at regular intervals, new interest is bound to be created."¹

The 1936-37 season also was a historic time for the Reds. President and general manager Jean Dubuc forged a working agreement with the Boston Bruins, who were now without a farm team. The pact allowed Dubuc to have his choice of five players from the Bruins' roster. He wisely selected 19-year-old left wing Woody Dumart and 20-year-old right wing Bobby Bauer, who combined for 26 goals and 49 points for the Cubs the previous

season.

On the first day of training camp at the Montréal Forum, the Reds received from the Bruins a promising 18-year-old amateur center from Kitchner, Ontario, named Milton Schmidt, who played with Dumart and Bauer on the Kitchner (Ontario) Greenshirts junior team two years earlier. Schmidt led that team with 20 goals in 17 games, while Dumart was second-best with 17 tallies.

At 6 feet and 185 pounds., Schmidt was bigger than his Kitchner teammates, a faster skater, and exemplary stickhandler. Sensing the

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... AND THE REDS WERE THERE FROM THE START

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immediate synergy and familiarity, Reds player-coach Albert "Battleship" Leduc promptly paired the kids on the third line early in camp.

The trio became known as the "Sauerkraut Line" in Providence, the forerunner to their more famous moniker of the "Kraut Line" when they starred in Boston and led the Bruins to Stanley Cup championships in 1939 and 1941. Schmidt was the first to get the call-up to the majors from Providence on Dec. 8, followed by Dumart on Feb. 4, 1927. Bauer played only one game in Boston that season. After skating in 44 of the Reds' 48 games to score 14 goals – third best on the team – he joined the Bruins the next year.

All eight I-AHL teams were in action to start the inaugural season on November 7. The Reds opened in Springfield at the new Eastern States Exposition Coliseum, where the



The Kraut Line of Bobby Bauer, Milt Schmidt and Woody Dumart.

Indians scored in each period to win, 3-0. Dumart and Bauer were featured prominently in the game recap. The Providence Journal reporter wrote the next day: "Bauer and Dumart fought stubbornly for a score but could not get set for a telling shot."

The Reds finished the 1936-37 season with a record of 21-20-7, good for third place in the East. Unfortunately, they lost in the first round of the playoffs to Springfield, two games to one, with each game decided by one goal.

At season's end, the league's top brass offered high praise for the first year. Maurice Podoloff, former Can-Am president who oversaw the Eastern Division, called the I-AHL "very successful from every angle." John Chick, former IHL president who ruled the Western Division, said that "gate receipts had increased, and generally the hockey scene presented a healthier picture. All in all, a fine improvement."²

The I-AHL kept its name for four seasons and became the American Hockey League for the 1940-41 campaign. The Reds remained in the AHL's Eastern Division with New Haven, Springfield, and Philadelphia. The Western Division kept the former Cleveland Falcons (renamed the Barons) and the Pittsburgh Hornets who were joined by the Hershey Bears (now in their third season of operation), the Indianapolis Capitols (in year two), and the newly resurrected Buffalo Bisons.

The AHL now has 32 clubs serving as development teams for all 32 NHL franchises. The Providence Bruins are now in the 34th season of their highly successful run, which began in 1992.



This year marks the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Rhode Island Reds. Look for our Fall 2026 issue, coinciding with the Centennial of the Reds' opening season, for a special look back at the team's history.

¹ Springfield Evening Union, "New Hockey League Should Create Interest, Says Calder," October 15, 1936, p. 25.

² Providence Journal, "Present Inter-Am Hockey League Set-Up to Continue," April 6, 1937, p. 5.

SEISMIC SHIFT

The Two-Referee System Changed the Game for the Better

By Vin Cimini
Reds Heritage Society Vice President

According to many long-time aficionados, the adoption of two referees to monitor the game was one of the biggest innovations of all time in hockey.

The new system prompted players to change the way they approach the game as soon as a second referee appeared on the scene. Now there is a second set of eyes trained on players, forcing them to be more watchful about exchanges behind the play. Its implementation created a seismic shift in how the game is played and their conduct on the ice.

Before the change, games were officiated by one referee and two linesmen. The National Hockey League adopted a three-year trial period beginning in the 1998-99 season where each team played 20 home games with two referees. The next season, the system was used for 50 games per team, and it became permanent for all games in 2000-01. The decision to adopt the new protocols over a 36-month span was made primarily to train enough new referees and staff, given that the NHL would effectively be doubling its refereeing workforce for the 2000-01 campaign.

The American Hockey League began phasing in the two-referee system in the 2010-2011 season, starting with 25% of the regular season games and all playoff games with the long-term goal of fully adopting it as part of an official development agreement with the NHL.

There was no more getting away with chippy little plays when players



The NHL phased in its new two-referee system over three seasons to give itself time to adequately train new on-ice officials.

were exiting their own end. That was the time when the refs' eyes were turned and they could get in a cheap shot or a little bit of retribution. According to many, the mischief had come to the point where the skill players couldn't show what they could do.

League officials realized that they couldn't take fighting out of the game, so they said, "We've got to take this other baloney away."

The new two-referee system

eliminated a lot of the shenanigans, such as holding, hooking, and interference that went on behind the play, which in turn helped the league get most of the obstruction out of the game. Players quickly realized they had to adjust but not every player could. Some weren't great skaters and had to rely on their sticks to hold people up. They knew the new system might be the beginning of the end for their careers. And for many marginal players, it was.

Did You Know?

Johnny Bower – One of the Oldest to Don Pads

After his time in Providence, Johnny Bower put on the pads during the 1968-69 season as a 45-year-old with the Toronto Maple Leafs. It was his oldest appearance in the NHL, just 32 days after his 45th birthday. The year earlier, Johnny became the oldest goalie ever to win a playoff game and he remains the last netminder to win the Stanley Cup with the Leafs. Johnny follows only Maurice “Moe” Roberts as the oldest man ever to play goal in the NHL (45 years, 345 days). His 15-year career included 552 games played, 250 wins, and goals-against average of 2.51.



Johnny Bower laced up the pads and skates for the last time on Dec. 10, 1969.

Reds Were Upset in the 1957 Playoffs

After winning the regular season title and Calder Cup in 1956, the Reds repeated as AHL regular season champions the following season in their quest for back-to-back championships. The season was highlighted by Paul Larivee’s career highs in both goals (46) and points (89). However, the Reds were upset in the first round of the playoffs by the Rochester Americans, 4 games to 1, and Cleveland landed the crown.

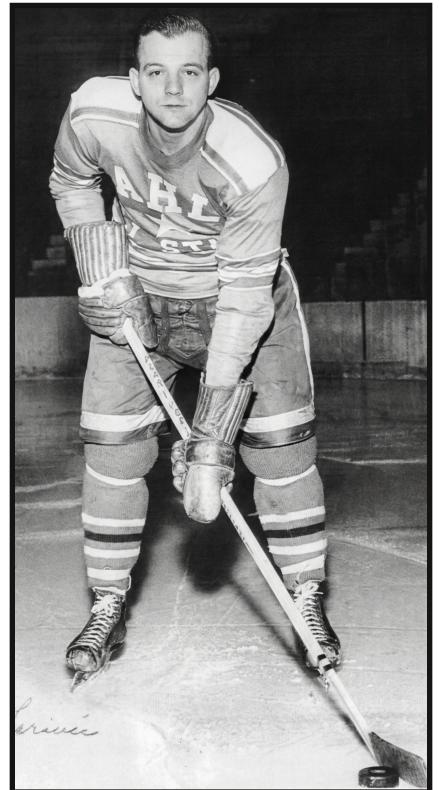
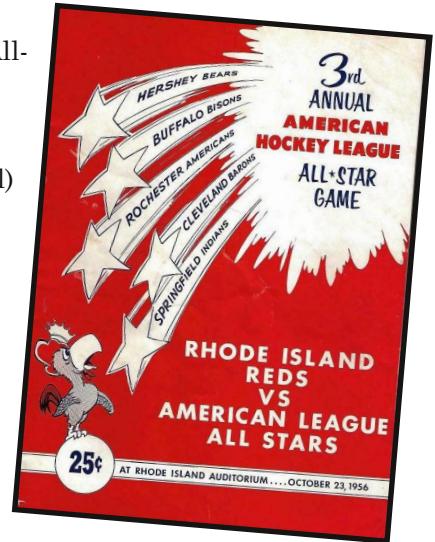
The Reds Defeated the AHL All-Stars

The 4th American Hockey League All Star Classic (although the official program mistakenly tabbed it the 3rd annual) was played on October 23, 1956, at the RI Auditorium. As the defending Calder Cup champions, the Reds faced a formidable lineup, but the home towners were more than equal to the task with future AHL Hall of Famers Zellio

Toppazzini, Jimmy Bartlett, Bruce Cline, Johnny Bower, Harvey Bennett, and the likes of Camille Henry and Paul Larivee suited up for the hosts. So, it was no big surprise when the Roosters outplayed and shut out the AHL All-Stars, 4-0, before 3,298 fans thanks to 47 saves by Bower.

Paul Larivee – Unsung Star

Paul was the centerpiece of the Toppazzini-Larivee-Henry trio that was arguably the greatest line ever to skate in Rhode Island – high school, college, amateur, or pro. Paul was the product of the Trois Rivières Reds, the Canadian farm team of the Reds during the late 1940s and early 1950s. He would go on to lead the league in goals scored in that 1956-57 season with 46 tallies and be the leading vote-getter among AHL All-Stars. In his 10 years in Providence, Paul scored 217 goals.





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Celebrate 100 Years, and Help Us Keep Reds' Legacy Alive

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Rhode Island Reds' first game on Dec. 3, 1926. You can help celebrate this centennial – and also help the R.I. Heritage Society keep the team's legacy alive by making a contribution.

For a donation of a \$50 or more, the Heritage Society will send you this beautiful, full-color, 18-by-24-in. poster – printed on high-quality paper and suitable for framing – illustrating the colorful jerseys and logos worn by the team during its 51-year history.

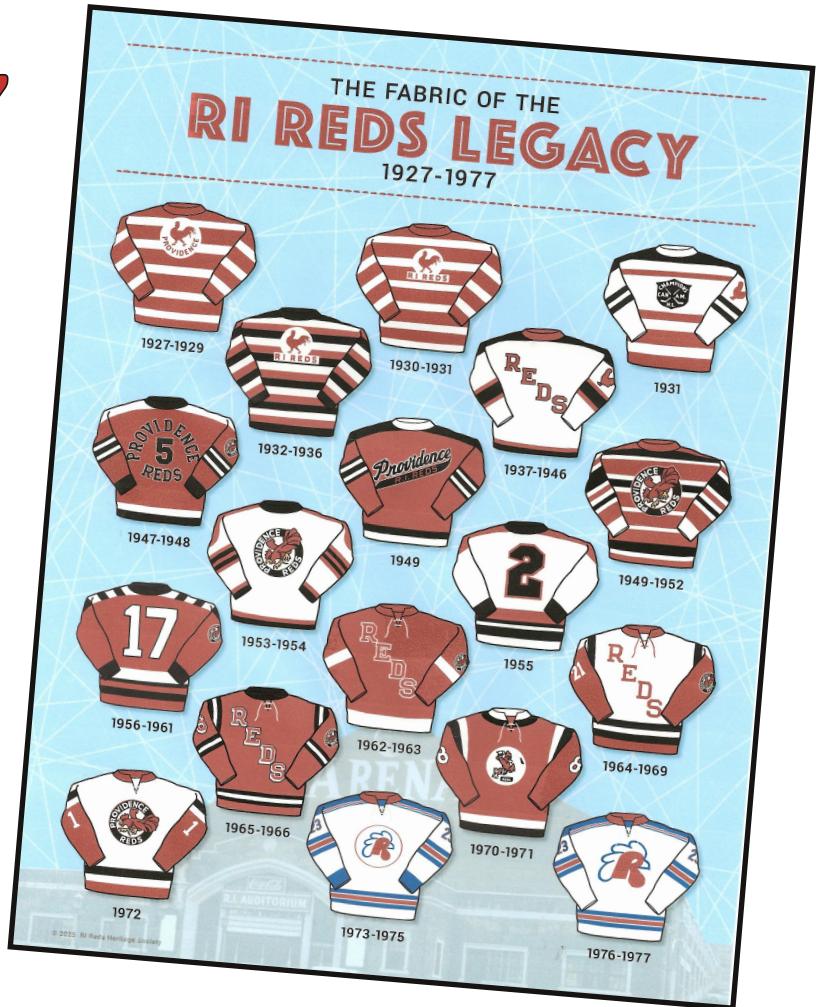
Please visit the Donate page on our website at www.rireds.org to send your contribution via PayPal or send a check to:

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P.O. Box 190, Greenville, RI 02828

All of the contributions will go toward events to commemorate the Reds' 100th birthday.

Our thanks in advance for your constant and valuable support.

Thank You Sincerely,
Wayne Forrest
Heritage Society President



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