

Poplar Point Memorials Induction
By Orille Hogue

First, I would like to thank the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame committee for the honor they have bestowed on our team. We are very grateful and happy to have been chosen. I, personally, feel very honored to be representing my fellow hockey players on the Poplar Point Memorials.

I believe we have to thank the community for giving us the chance to play and grow. You have to know that this community suffered greatly. One year after the rink was built, a summer storm struck and broke the west wall rafters in half. During the summer, everyone pitched in and a new west wall was put in place. The job was completed on December 12, 1950 and the rink was ready for another season.

Three years later, a tornado hit the town and the rink was totally demolished. It took another three years of fundraising plus cleanup and salvage after dismantling the destroyed structure. The new arena was ready for play for the 56/57 season. The old team was re-assembled and was very successful. The rest is left to history and the reason for us being here. Without the community's perseverance, through all the hardships in those first six years, we would not be here tonight!

In the ten years that the team was in existence, we played in six Manitoba championships and won them all! We had a lot of success due to the fact that we had a great leader. Bryan Hextall had returned home after playing with the New York Rangers. We benefited greatly from his expertise and experience. He always told us that we could win every game if we stayed positive. Though most of our team was made up of farmers and farmers' sons, we would buy into his theory. In 1952, Bryan left us to coach the St. Boniface Canadiens and we carried on. Confidence helped us win our third championship in a row.

Poplar Point was a hockey town for many, many years. We can never forget J. P. Bend who was "Mr. Hockey" in our town. He was the leader and the "glue" that spurred the community into action. He was associated with hockey all his life. Mr. Bend would organize the community and build a covered rink in 1915. He and his brothers would form a team to compete in the Intermediate play downs.

They had a very good team and they finally captured the Intermediate Championship in 1921. The team went by the name of the "Poplar Point Pilgrims". They played on and some of the players would marry and settle in town. Many of these families would have sons who carried on the hockey tradition. Names like Bend, Bell, Bruce, Brown, Pickard, Holliday and Webster...just to name a few. Some members of our team were first and second generation of these old hockey stars known as the "Pilgrims".

In remembering back, Mr. Bend would always refer to us as "his boys" while Premier Douglas Campbell, who was elected in our riding, would stand up in the Legislature and proudly state that "My boys from Poplar Point have won another championship!".

What I remember most about Mr. Bend was that he always made us out to be the best. For instance, on a trip for a two game series in Flin Flon, he found a number of beer cases stacked in our room. He found someone to remove the beer cases. He told this

individual that “his boys didn’t drink and only one or two of them smoked!”. Little did he know the real us!!!

In all of this, we, the players, owe an enormous debt to our hard working community who made all this possible. In closing, we would want to “remember” our friends who made up this team and who are gone from our midst. Also, one or two who can’t be here due to health problems.

I would be remiss if we didn’t give a “salute” to our parents and the community as a whole for giving us the opportunity to play the game we loved. They were very proud of their team and we were very happy to play for our community.

Addendum: As I look around this room I see quite a few guys who played with us on the other five Memorial teams. I believe that any of those teams could have been inducted. I am very glad that you came to help us celebrate the honor that we are about to receive.

- Orille Hogue