

Bobby Love Memorial Tournament

Dauphin hockey legend remembered

By Jamie Nybo
Dauphin Herald

Perhaps one of the greatest hockey players the Town of Dauphin has ever produced is being recognized by the New Westminister, B.C., minor hockey association, which has decided to hold an annual hockey tournament in his honor.

The First Annual Bobby Love Memorial Tournament took place March 28 to 31, 1997 and will continue every year at the same time.

Love was born in Dauphin to Thomas and Rose Love on Aug. 31, 1925. He was the fifth son in a family of eight boys and four girls.

Bobby's brother, Thomas "Stymie" Love, says Bobby was the most athletic of the eight boys.

"He was really into sports," said Stymie. "He especially excelled in hockey, golf, and fastball."

Hockey was his true love though, and he learned to play while skating on the frozen ponds of Dauphin's countryside with his seven brothers. Eventually he joined the Bantam "A" league in Dauphin, playing for a team sponsored by Scrases Meat Market. The following year he honed his



Love as a member of the Oshawa Generals in 1944

skills playing for the Dauphin Elks Midget All-Stars.

After noticing his exceptional play at the midget level, the Portage Terriers junior hockey club selected Love to play right wing for them. At the age of 16, Love left Dauphin to play on a team full of 18 and 19 year olds.

In 1942, with the the help of Love and their high-scoring forwards (six of the top 12 scorers in the league played for Portage), the Terriers managed to reach junior hockey supremacy in Canada by capturing the Memorial Cup.

"Without reservation I found Bobby to be one of the most gentlemanly and sportsmanlike players in my long and varied hockey career."

— Hal Laycoe

Two years later Love helped capture his second Memorial Cup with the Oshawa Generals of the Ontario Hockey League and also finished second in the scoring race. His linemates in Oshawa were future NHLers Bill Ezinicki and Ted Lindsay. Hockey legend David Bauer also played with him there.

According to Stymie, Bobby was a clever hockey player in a day when hockey was more about skill than size.

"He was a smooth stickhandler, a hard shooter and had a good head on his shoulders. He was a strong skater that could really pass the puck well."

Love's former coach Hal Laycoe echoes these sentiments in a tribute included in the tournament's program.

"Skillwise he was exceptional. He was a wizard on face offs and I never saw a player who could pass the puck better.

In addition he was a superb team player."

Love was impressive enough that the New York Rangers signed him when he was 18 years of age for \$150. Then war broke out and Love enlisted in the navy. Returning years later, Love was older and not in good NHL playing shape.

He joined the New Westminister Royals of the Western Pro League in 1948, where he won the league scoring title. He played there until he retired in 1957 to concentrate on raising his daughter and two sons.

Love was inducted into the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame following his retirement.

His love for the game took a new turn in retirement when he decided to share his knowledge and skills by coaching the youth of New Westminister. The people of New Westminister knew Love for his smile and that he had a place in his heart for the youth of that city.

Laycoe also had this to say about Love:

"Without reservation I found Bobby to be one of the most gentlemanly and sportsmanlike players in my long and varied hockey career."

It was for this reason that he was chosen to be honored with a memorial tournament, said tournament organizer Jack Steele.

"The local minor hockey association received donations in Bobby's memory to help needy kids play hockey after his death in 1994," Steele said.

"Wanting to honor his name, the executive approached his family about the memorial tournament, to which they agreed."

The tournament serves as a lasting memory for an exceptional hockey player with an extraordinary career that began on the frozen ponds of Dauphin's countryside.

Love was last in Dauphin in 1988 with his wife Dorothy when they attended a school reunion. In classic Bobby Love style he won the reunion golf tournament his first time on the Dauphin course with a score of 72, shortly after nailing in the third hole-in-one of his life.

1. This article was written circa 1998.

2. The first annual Bobby Love Memorial Tournament took place March 28-31, 1997.

3. This year 2011 marked the 14th anniversary of the tournament.

4. The article states that Bobby Love was inducted into the Manitoba Hockey Hall of Fame upon his retirement. He was a member of the 1942 Portage and District Terriers team that has been inducted into the Hall of Fame in the team category for winning the Memorial Cup, emblematic of Canadian junior hockey supremacy. As of 2011, Love has not been inducted for his individual accomplishments.