

Neil Duncan - A True Builder of Sport

By: Diane Imrie, Executive Director, Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame

For a majority of his 101 years of life, Neil Duncan was a dedicated builder of sports, from the local to the national level, carrying out his duties with passion and a true sense of commitment.

Anyone who has ever been involved in curling in northwestern Ontario has a story about Neil Duncan and his involvement at a curling rink, around a volunteer board table or at a curling event. You might have benefited from his technical knowledge or his organizational skills or you may have been one of those fortunate people who had the opportunity to hear his most distinctive and delightful laugh fill a room.

Born in Winnipeg, Neil first became involved with curling as a teenager. Moving to northwestern Ontario in the 1930s, he went on to dedicate himself to helping with the development of clubs and programs. Serving as a Director with the Port Arthur Curling Club from 1951-60, he held the position of President from 1955-60, and served on the Executive of the Northwestern Ontario Curling Association for many years.

When the cities of Port Arthur and Fort William hosted the Macdonald Brier in 1960, Neil served as a Co-Vice Chairman for the prestigious event. In 1968 he earned a spot on the steering committee for another national event, the School Boy National playdowns.

A strong supporter of youth curling, Neil served two terms as the Northwestern Ontario representative to the Canadian Junior Curling Commission and as Chairman of junior and schoolboys curling in the region for many years. As a technical expert in the sport, he served as the Northwestern Ontario Coordinator for Curl Canada instructional clinics and was a founding member of the Ontario Curling Development Council.

Known as a stickler for the rules, young curlers who benefited from his expertise developed a solid foundation and knowledge for the game that served them well throughout their careers. Neil continued to serve the sport of curling as a volunteer and as the Commissioner of Ladies Major League in Thunder Bay, remaining active well into his 90s.

Neil did not just lend his organizational skills to curling as he also served as President of the Thunder Bay Youth Soccer Association in 1979, President of the Northwestern Ontario Track & Field Association from 1975-81 and as an official at the 1980 Pan Am Junior Track & Field Championships. Neil's talents were also evident in the garden. A multiple Canadian Gladiolus champion and accredited national judge, he claimed the 1973 International Gladiolus Championship Award.

Included amongst the numerous awards granted this outstanding individual are a 1980 Special Achievement Award from the Province of Ontario and a 1988 Canadian Curling Association Award of Merit. For his outstanding efforts and contributions Neil was inducted into the Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame on September 25th, 1993.