

By Grant Granger

For decades George Pittendrigh's home on 13th Avenue in east Burnaby was a beehive of activity every spring as a steady stream of boys and parents came to his home to register for the lacrosse season.



"I can still see Dad sitting in his big chair, with a board on his knees going through the registration forms," wrote his daughter Joyce Jones as part of the Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame nomination package submitted for her father. "It seemed to take him hours to make sure the forms were filled out correctly, and that the names and birthdays on the forms matched up with their birth certificates."

The stream didn't stop with the start of the season. It just kept flowing right through the summer.

"On his days off, or, in his spare time, he was busy trying to re-string old lacrosse sticks, mending used pads and equipment so there would be some extras when new boys showed up wanting to try out. Dad never wanted to turn anyone away."

As the leagues grew, Pittendrigh would be kept busy recruiting coaches and managers. In 1974, he was inducted into the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame as a builder of minor lacrosse.

Pittendrigh was introduced to the sport in

1908. He played organized minor lacrosse for 15 years before turning to coaching. He cleared a vacant lot next door to his home that was overgrown with blackberry bushes and fruit trees so neighbourhood boys like Alex Carey, who will join Pittendrigh as inductees into the hall of fame on Feb. 28, could play. (The lot was owned by Burnaby and is now called Eastburn Park.)

There were so many boys who kept showing up that Pittendrigh decided to organize a league and the South Burnaby Minor Lacrosse Association was born with many of the games being played at the box at Richmond Park, now known as Edmonds Park.

That earned him the title "The Father of Minor Lacrosse in South Burnaby." At least, that's what one newspaper article called him.

"By taking an interest I think it gives [the boys] a chance to keep occupied and stay out of trouble," said Pittendrigh in the story. "I think as lacrosse has grown here in Burnaby, juvenile delinquency has definitely been on the downgrade."

Pittendrigh's 40 years of service earned him a life membership in the B.C. Lacrosse Association and induction into the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame in 1974.

"He just thoroughly enjoyed it," recalled Jones recently. "We never really got a holiday, but we'd go to White Rock [for a vacation] and we'd have to take a train because we didn't have

a car. But he'd have to come back a day later because he had a lacrosse game. That was his life other than his work [as a depot manager for the BC Electric tram system] and his family."

Pittendrigh, who was born in 1894, died on May 5, 1983.

(Grant Granger is chair of the Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame)

- *The 18th annual Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame banquet will be held at the Metrotown Firefighters club banquet hall, 6515 Bonsor Ave., Burnaby, on Thursday, Feb 28 (reception 6 p.m., dinner 7 p.m.) Tickets are available at tickets09@shaw.ca or by phoning Rosemary at 604-436-1672.*