

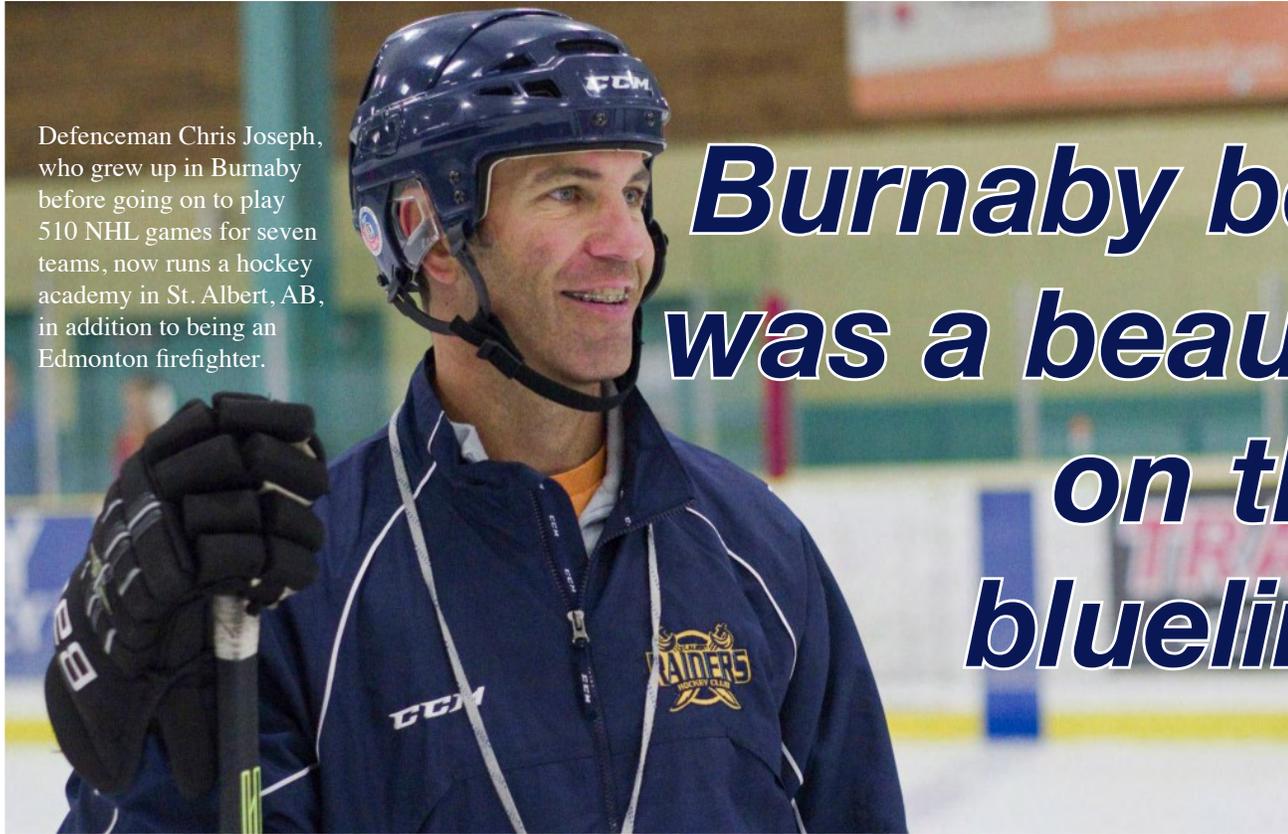


**By Grant Granger**  
**Chair, Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame**

**Tickets: \$85**  
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Defenceman Chris Joseph, who grew up in Burnaby before going on to play 510 NHL games for seven teams, now runs a hockey academy in St. Albert, AB, in addition to being an Edmonton firefighter.

# ***Burnaby boy was a beauty on the blueline***



**C**hris Joseph fell in love with hockey as a tyke in Golden before grooming his golden talent in Burnaby.

His father, Laurie, was from Burnaby and Chris was born in the city. But the family moved to the mountain town snuggled between the Rocky and Purcell ranges when his parents taught school there. Hockey was a big deal in the Rocky Mountain Trench and little Robin Christopher Joseph had plenty of energy, so he played and played and played.

After three years in Golden, the Josephs moved back to Burnaby and although Chris and his siblings (older brother Mike, younger sister Amber and younger brother Jonathon) also played many other sports, “we had a passion for hockey,” says Joseph.

Upon their return, Laurie took them straight to the Burnaby Winter Club to learn about hockey. Although Dad didn’t play puck he taught them a thing or two, too. “He believed he knew something about everything,” laughs Chris. Their Ingleton Avenue home — “It was a great place to grow up,” says Joseph — was across from the Burnaby Heights Park reservoir. “Dad made me run the stairs at the reservoir.”

Joseph believes the type of off-ice training and advice he got from his father, along with what he learned at BWC, prepared him for junior hockey, first of all for the Junior B Burnaby Blazers and then later in the Western Hockey League.

“It wasn’t him telling us what to do it was us asking what to do,” says Chris, whose smooth skating skills were suited to playing defence, of his dad. “He loved going to the games. Keeping him away from the rink is tough to do.”

“He would play the father-son game and we had him beat by novice. But amazingly enough for a guy that never played the game he understood it very well.”

Joseph tried out for the WHL’s Victoria Cougars when he was 14, the New Westminster Bruins at 15 and the Seattle Thunderbirds at 16 as well as attending Hockey Canada camps.

“It’s amazing how it happens. I always dreamed of playing in the NHL. I was always a pretty good skater, but I never thought of myself as a star,” says Joseph. “All I wanted to do was play hockey.”

Joseph played two seasons (1985 to 1987) with the T-Birds scoring 17 goals and 70 points in 139 games. He says during that time when he was attracting the attention of NHL scouts his parents, including his mother Margaret,

protected him from the politics of the sport. And he helped himself by not joining his teenage peers at parties. “I just wanted to be at the rink. It wasn’t that I had a dream of being in the NHL, it was just what I wanted to do.”

The scuttlebutt in 1987 was Joseph would be a first-round pick. “That was a bit of a shock to me. I had done all right as a 16-year-old,” says Joseph. “By the time draft day came around I was ranked fifth and I went fifth.”

**I**t was the Pittsburgh Penguins that took him that high at the draft held at Detroit’s Joe Louis Arena. Joseph started the season with the Pens as the youngest player in the NHL, but just six weeks or so into the season he was shipped to the Edmonton Oilers in a deal that included superstar defenceman Paul Coffey and another Burnaby Sports Hall of Fame member, Wayne Van Dorp, going the other way.

At Christmas, the Oilers lent Joseph to Hockey Canada for the 1988 world junior championship in Moscow. Joseph had been on the Canadian squad the previous tournament which ended with the ignominious Punchup in Piastany when Canada and the Soviet Union had the lights turned out on them during an all-out brawl involving everyone from both teams.

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Sticks, gloves and helmets were strewn all over the rink. Joseph was on the ice when the big brouhaha broke out pairing up with a Soviet player.

"I was rolling around on top of him, and then I looked up [to see all the other players streaming off the bench] and at that point I let him go. I skated around and tried to break up a goalie fight and [teammate] Yvan Corriveau tried to help me. Then the next thing you know the lights went out, and that's when it got really crazy. It was really ugly," says Joseph.

But Canada, and Joseph, redeemed themselves by winning gold in Moscow a year later. After the golden moment for Joseph was over, however, the Wayne Gretzky-era Oilers returned him to the Thunderbirds.

"It was hard. I went from getting my feet wet in the league (NHL) to the best team in the league [and] not having a spot on the roster. I went from a development role, wait and see, to not playing," says Joseph. "It was a good learning experience ... (Edmonton) had a pretty stacked team."

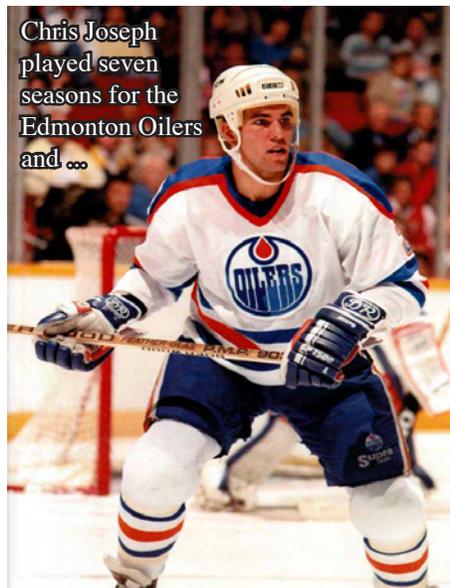
Over 15 seasons, Joseph scored 39 goals and 151 points in 510 NHL games including 120 games during two stints with Pittsburgh. He played 164 games over seven seasons with Edmonton and had two tours of duty with the Vancouver Canucks (three goals, 16 points in 63 games in 1996-97 and two goals and 11 points in 38 games in 1999-2000). He also played for the Tampa Bay Lightning, Philadelphia Flyers, Phoenix Coyotes and Atlanta Thrashers with minor league stops with the Cape Breton Oilers and Philadelphia Phantoms (AHL) and the Cincinnati Cyclones (IHL).

Although the NHL was done with him he wasn't done with hockey. Joseph went on to play in Turku, Finland for a season, three years in the Deutschland Elite League for Mannheim, and one in the Italian A league for Milan.

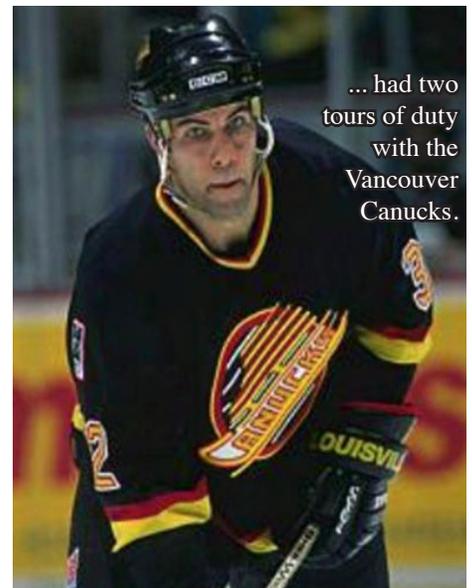
"The European experience was awesome, too," says Joseph. "When you first get started you hope to be a NHL star and to play 1,500 games. But then you get the ups and downs.

"Was I a disappointment? It's hard to say. But you do the best you can, but at the end of the day I played professional hockey for 19 years and it allowed me to see the world."

Joseph met his wife Andrea while playing in Edmonton so they returned to the area where he became a firefighter. The Josephs settled in St. Albert raising three children. The oldest, Taylor, is 23 and the youngest, Brett, is 17. They lost their middle kid, Jaxon, in April



Chris Joseph played seven seasons for the Edmonton Oilers and ...



... had two tours of duty with the Vancouver Canucks.

2018 when he was playing for the Humboldt Broncos of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League and was killed in a horrific bus-truck collision that rocked the country. Since the tragedy Joseph has become a vocal advocate for mandatory seatbelts on buses and improved training for truck drivers.

"The Humboldt Broncos affected the nation so much we do feel we have to speak out for those that haven't got the attention and make

the roads safer for everyone," he says. "We feel a little bit of a responsibility to use that for the greater good."

Even though he's retired from hockey, a full-time firefighter and a safety advocate, the fact is being a teacher is in Joseph's DNA so he also runs a hockey academy in St. Albert.

"I find it a lot of fun, and I love seeing kids get it," says Joseph. "I love passing on the love of the game to the kids."