

Three Generations of Major Midget League Champs



Winning a championship is one thing. Having three (3) generations in one family win the same championship is another. The Wilkie family has done just that. Three (3) generations of their family have won the Cromie Memorial Cup, the Major Midget League (MML) Championship, dating back to the 1940's. Ron Hemmerling, John Hemmerling and Ronnie Wilkie all share the memory of winning the championship and having their names on the admired trophy.

It all started in 1949 when Ron Hemmerling (grandpa of Ronnie Wilkie, dad to John Hemmerling) won the coveted Cromie Memorial Cup in Kimberley, BC with the Vancouver Eagletime Delivery team as team captain. "That was wonderful! At 17, it's a great experience," commented Ron Hemmerling. "Nobody expected us to win up there. That was the end of the line for us. There were no regionals or nationals back then. I think that's what makes it so memorable too. It was the highest honour."

Then, in 1982, John Hemmerling (uncle of Ronnie Wilkie, son of Ron Hemmerling) won the prestigious trophy with the Burnaby Winter Club Travelers team as assistant captain with a win over the North Shore Winter Club. The team then accomplished that no other BC team has done before; win the prestigious Air Canada Cup, emblematic of the Canadian Midget Hockey Championship, when they defeated Patrick Roy and the Ste Foy Quebec team in Victoria, BC. "At that time, there were no regionals. We went straight to nationals. Each province sent a team," said John. "It's (on winning the Cromie Memorial Cup) something that you'll never forget. The friends that I've made on that team are lifelong. We bonded as a team throughout the year and played together for many years at Burnaby Winter Club. I'll always remember those times." John Hemmerling, along with the 1982 Travelers, were inducted into the BC Hockey Hall of Fame in 2005.



This year, Ronnie Wilkie (grandson to Ron, nephew to John) currently captains the Vancouver North East Chiefs who just captured the MML Championship and Cromie Memorial Cup with a win over the Cariboo Cougars. "It (winning the championship) was awesome. It means so much to win. There's nothing quite like it," commented Ronnie. "I'm really looking forward to regionals." The team now faces the Alberta Midget AAA Champion in the Pacific Regionals, April 3 – 5, 2015 in the Lower Mainland.

"I actually didn't even know that they (grandpa and uncle) won it until I was looking at the trophy closely after we won," said Ronnie. "They both called me after and told me." John added, "This is quite a neat thing. My dad is super excited about this whole thing. Seeing his name on the trophy with his grandsons is a big deal for my dad."

Hockey has come a long way since Ron played in the 1940s. "At the time, there were only three (3) rinks in Vancouver," he said. "Kids now get way more ice time than we ever did. They're skating a lot more." Even since the 1980's, hockey players have a lot more opportunity than players back then did. "Players now are faster, training regimes are better. There is lighter, better equipment, coaching is better, training is better and there is more ice time available for the kids," commented John. "Back when I played, you played hockey in the winter. There were no spring or summer leagues. I just think the players are better now."

So, do you think the 1949 Vancouver Eagletime Delivery team could beat the 2015 Vancouver North East Chiefs? Ron didn't delay, "oh definitely! Do you think I'm going to say no?"

What about the 1982 Burnaby Winter Club Travelers? Would they have a shot against the 2015 Chiefs? "In a one game series anything could happen. Maybe we could," said John. "In a seven (7) game series, they'd beat us."

Finally, how would the 2015 Chiefs stand up against the 1949 Eagletime Delivery and the 1982 Travelers? "I think we could take them," said Ronnie Wilkie.