

GENE KINASEWICH

(Written by Jan Kinasewich)

In 1959 in Edmonton, Alberta, when Gene received his acceptance to Deerfield Academy, his geographically challenged brother Orie, who attended Colorado College, said, "That will work out fine. I'll be driving to Colorado College and I'll just drop you off on the way"!

Gene was the 13th of 14 children in a Ukrainian family. He only spoke Ukrainian until the second grade, as his family lived in a small town in Alberta. They moved to Edmonton in the mid 1940's and Gene attended elementary school in the city where he learned English. His older brothers played ice hockey on outdoor ponds where they taught Gene how to skate and shoot. This setting where Gene was raised was a far cry from the educational institutions on the East coast that he would eventually attend.

After Gene's parents died when he was ten years old, the older brothers and sisters took turns moving into the family house to take care of the younger children. The big brothers took a real interest in Gene's athletic ability and encouraged his baseball and hockey endeavors. It was when Gene was playing Junior A hockey for the Oil Kings in 1958 that he went with the team to Colorado and played an exhibition game against Colorado College. There he was introduced to a Harvard "scout" who began the wheels turning to get Gene to Harvard via Deerfield Academy.

Deerfield was a profound experience for Gene in many ways. He was challenged academically more than he had anticipated. His teachers and administrators took an active role in supporting and advising him and he benefited from this nurturing. Athletically he was a star. When he realized that he needed to buy his hockey sticks at Deerfield, he made a deal with the equipment manager: if he scored a hat trick, the school would give him a free stick. During that season Deerfield played sixteen games, and Gene scored three or more goals in eleven of those games. He ended up with quite a stash of sticks! Gene made friends at school who would be important to him all of his life. When Gene graduated from Deerfield, he imagined entering education as a career and perhaps even starting a similar school for young people who otherwise would not have the experience. Gene's youngest brother, Bob, followed the path and attended Deerfield for three years which made Gene very pleased and proud.

Gene soaked up life at Harvard like a sponge. He worked hard at his academics and graduated magna cum laude. His athletic career was legendary. And the people he knew there, friends and acquaintances, expanded his horizons. At the end of his senior year he won a Henry Russell Shaw traveling fellowship which took him to Europe for ten months. When he returned to Cambridge he entered

the Graduate School of Education and received an MEd. Gene became an Assistant Dean of Harvard College in 1966.

By this time Gene and I had been married for a couple of years and our twin sons were born in 1966. We led a wonderful life in Harvard Square and Gene enjoyed his student and faculty contacts at the College, and continued to play hockey in local men's leagues.

Hockey was always a priority for Gene, and he had some regrets that he had not pursued a professional hockey career. So when his brother Ray brought to Gene's attention a job in professional hockey, he was hooked. We left Cambridge for Seattle, and Gene became President of the Western Hockey League. This job took him back to the atmosphere that he had known in Edmonton. However, he had been "corrupted" by his education, and along with managing a rough and tumble group of athletes, he insisted on introducing a "no fight" rule into the league. This, combined with his young age of 30 years old resulted in a movement by the players to get rid of this "wonk" so that the guys could get back to the business of knocking each other silly.

We moved back to Cambridge, now with a baby girl as well, and Gene began a doctoral program in educational administration again trying to rekindle his ideas of creating an educational program or school. After a couple of years of study, he began a teaching job at Buckingham, Brown & Nichols in Cambridge, working with high school students. Over the next few years he coached hockey and created a Sport and Society course which was very popular. He also managed the Senior Project program and found a place where he was making a significant difference to students and felt very rewarded himself. Gene was a leader and had an enormous impact on his students. However, as a faculty member in an organization that was managed by the administration, he found it challenging to be a "follower". And private school teaching salaries made family life with three children a challenge.

Gene was a restless person, and when his brother Ray began talking about business opportunities in Edmonton, he felt drawn to the idea of going back to his home town and using the tools he had learned in the Cambridge environment. So he and Ray embarked on an expansion of the family business which had started out as a diaper service and had grown into a small hospital laundry. Our family moved to Edmonton and there Gene was able to play hockey in an Old Timers' League with a number of old friends he had known growing up. Ray and Gene brought their brother Bob into the business and together they built the K-Bro Hospital Laundry Service. Eventually they expanded to Toronto, British Columbia and Boston before the business was sold in 1997. After that Gene worked as a consultant to hospital laundries in Canada and the United States.

Toward the end of his life, Gene became enamored with a young hockey team from Ukraine that traveled to the U.S. to play exhibition games. He got to know the coach and the players and found great satisfaction in speaking Ukrainian again and trying to inspire these young players. He talked about setting up a Deerfield in Ukraine. In many ways this connected Gene to his roots in the Ukrainian community in Edmonton, but these were young people just beginning to find their place in the world, so they offered hope to him as well. He felt strongly that they should strive to get an education rather than reaching for professional hockey.

Before Gene died a group of his friends established the Eugene Kinasevich Fund to help these young Ukrainian hockey players. Gene participated in the formation of the Fund. Since it was established, the Fund has raised over \$800,000 and helped to send all 19 of these young people to New England prep schools. Several of them are now in college. One of the students, a girl who was on that boys' team, is a junior at Harvard and a star on the women's hockey team. The Gene Fund continues to raise money to support the students as they complete their college careers. The students have often voiced their appreciation to Gene for his encouragement and belief in them as useful human beings who have an opportunity to make a difference in this world. He would be thrilled and proud of their various successes in school.