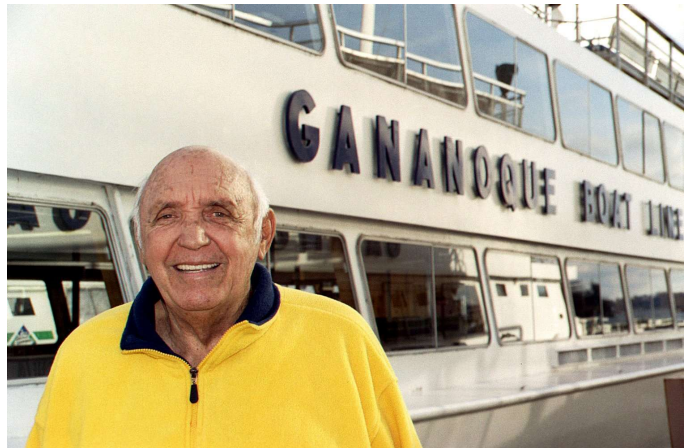


Naming of William Street Park for “Hal McCarney”

Oct 6, 2020

The Rotary Club of Gananoque proposes to name the newly renovated park at the foot of William Street for former Rotarian and Gananoque benefactor, Hal McCarney. Here is a summary of his contributions to Gananoque and the 1000 Islands Area.



1. Harold McCarney Jr was born in Gananoque on November 29th 1926 and died on September 16th 2008. He was the son of Harold McCarney Sr (Dooley) proprietor of the Provincial Hotel at the corner of Stone and King Streets, one of the finest hotels and dining rooms in the area. Rotary met there each Monday at Noon from 1931 into the 1960's. Hal saw the hotel business and Rotary first hand.

2. Hal attended school in Gananoque and developed a fascination and skill at football. Because of his large stature and determination he acquired the nickname “Moose”.

-- He attended Loyola College (now Concordia Univ) and Queen's University earning degrees of BA and MA in English, Economics and Politics. And, of course, playing football 10 yards at a time. Once he was heard to say that the BA stood for Boatline Administration and the MA for Motel Administration. Hal continued to coach football at Queen's for many years after graduation. He played the game of life the same way.

-- Hal was also an accomplished paddler with the Gananoque Canoe Club, eventually becoming its Commodore and founder of the North American Canoe Racing Championships. And, he continued to be a major supporter of Gananoque paddling into the 1970's.

-- In 1953 Hal married Kathleen Norris (Kally), a local girl, and together they worked tirelessly on all of Hal's projects.

3. In 1960 Hal and Kally built the first 10 units of the Provincial Motel (now Ramada) at the east end of town. It was greatly expanded over the next 10 years with more units and a restaurant. (Hal gained 20 yards)

4. In 1963 Hal joined Rotary and soon generated a project to save paddling in Gananoque. Rotary took over the assets and the liabilities of the Gananoque Canoe Club, effectively owning it. The liabilities vastly outweighed the assets, with unpaid taxes, crumbling footings and a frame building in trouble. Rotary did a lot of fund raising, including teen dances, but GCC was still going behind and Rotary was bleeding. But, paddling was saved. (Another 10 yards.)

5. In 1964 Hal built the Thunderbird Motel and Restaurant outside the north gate. He added the 1000 Islands Wild Kingdom beside it in the 1980's. In 1997 this property was sold to Textron for their new plant where Home Hardware is now. This saved an important industry from moving elsewhere.

6. In 1965, a Rotary Committee of Hal McCarney, Basil Rogers and Jack Gilbert (Mayor 1966-67) undertook to build Confederation Park on the derelict site of the Jones Shovel Company. Confederation Park was officially opened on July 1st 1967. (Hal gained 10 yards.)

7. In 1970 Hal, with two partners, bought Gananoque Boat Line Ltd. then operating small old wooden boats with a capacity of about 75 passengers. Hal foresaw the market for many more tourists in much larger modern aluminum tour boats carrying 300 to 400 passengers each. Hal moved ahead:

- Creating Algan Ship Yard in 1972 to build 5 sleek modern triple decker tour boats as well as aluminum vessels for Georgian Bay, the Galapagos Islands and the Caribbean.
- Strongly promoting the 1000 Islands at travel and bus tour shows across Canada, the US, then Europe and finally south east Asia. All the while Kally was right there with him.
- Designing tours from Gananoque and Ivy Lea that would suit the needs of bus tour companies.
- Advertising the 1000 Islands heavily in various media. (50 yards & a touchdown.)

8. In 1980 Hal brought a Queen's University drama student, named Greg Wanless, to Rotary with an idea to take over the Canoe Club building, leaving the paddling intact and using the rest of the building, including the upstairs dance hall, for a summer theatre. The 1000 Islands Playhouse was born. Rotary gave the building to the Playhouse in exchange for 20% of the shares and a seat on the Board of Directors, with the provision that, should the Playhouse fail, Rotary would get the building back. Hal and other Rotarians bought shares in TIP and invested countless hours of labour converting the building. (Another 30 yards.)

9. In 1992 Hal was instrumental in founding the Festival of the Islands as a summer entertainment. It became a very big attraction until 2008 (another 10 yards)

10. In 1998 Hal was instrumental in erecting a statue of St Lawrence, the martyred Archdeacon of Rome 1,700 years earlier, for whom the River was named. It stands on a cliff known as The Pallisades, overlooking the River just east of the 1000 Islands Bridge. (10 more yards)

11. Over the years Hal did many smaller things for local individuals or groups:

- a) For the fishers he had the Ministry of Natural Resources restock the St Lawrence with fingerling muskies and pickerel.
- b) For St John's Church he had a statue of St John the Evangelist installed in a niche that was built into the façade 110 years earlier.
- c) Several times he saw to it that the large swan fountain in front of the Town Hall was rebuilt and repainted in the Gananoque Boat Line shop. (15 yards)

11. A book, 1992 "Chess with Violence". Hal wrote a historical fiction about smuggling booze in the 1000 Islands during Prohibition in the 1920's.

A song, "The 1000 Islands Song". Hal wrote this song, later recorded in Nashville to promote our natural wonder. (10 more yards)

12. Awards and Honours:

- Rotary International, Paul Harris Fellowship.
- Royal Canadian Legion, Citizen of the Year.
- Gananoque & 1000 Islands Chamber of Commerce, Keeper of the Gates.
- Concordia University, Athletic Hall of Fame for Football and Basketball.
- Queen's University, Athletics Hall of Fame as a Football Player and as a Coach.
- Quebec Lieutenant Governor's Medal.
- Director of the Tourism Industry of Canada.
- And many others.

13. Hal McCarney's legacy in Gananoque and the 1000 Islands is our greatly expanded tourist industry and live theatre upon which many families now rely for a living. Look no further than our theatre, accommodations and restaurants in the Gananoque area to see proof of it.