

The Extraordinary Life
of
Alex "Shoo" Shibicky

In 1940, world class hockey great Alex Shibicky skated on a broken ankle to help the New York Rangers win the Stanley Cup. Having injured his ankle in the third game of the series, Shibicky sat out the fourth game and then had doctors numb his leg- from knee to foot. He kept the seriousness of the injury a secret and came back with a vengeance in the final two games to help the Rangers capture the coveted title. The courage and selflessness he demonstrated for the good of his team would be representative of Alex Shibicky's entire life.



In Canada, the name Shibicky is synonymous with hockey. In fact, Alex was so famous in his own country that, on more than one occasion, fan letters simply addressed "Alex Shibicky, Canada" actually made it to his mailbox. Hundreds of thousands of words have been written about his professional life. But Alex Shibicky's athletic prowess was only one dimension of a multi-dimensional man, who lived life to the fullest for every one of his 91 years.

It is a great challenge to write, with any brevity, about the remarkable life of Alex Shibicky. Known to the world as an athlete of heroic proportions, he was known to those closest to him as devoted son, loving husband and father, no-nonsense coach, mentor, steadfast friend. As a businessman, Alex was an innovative and highly respected entrepreneur. In all things, Alex was an honorable man- a straight shooter, on and off the ice.

Alex Shibicky possessed the same courage and adventurous spirit his parents showed when they left their Russian homeland to seek a better life in Canada. In 1912, just weeks after the doomed voyage of the Titanic, Roman bravely boarded the SS Czar and traveled first to Halifax, Nova Scotia. As the hopeful and excited Roman was being processed at Pier 21, an immigration official changed Roman's last name from Schileitzky to Shibicky, a small concession, Roman thought, for the opportunities that lie ahead for his family. A year later, Roman's wife, Tekla, and their youngest daughter, Nettie, joined him in their new homeland.

After settling in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Roman and Tekla welcomed their first son, Alex, to the world on May 19th, 1914. There would be four more Shibicky children. Sadly, their daughter Ruby, died in infancy. Alex was a thoughtful, fun loving young man, a devoted son and brother whose siblings greatly admired him and thought of him as nothing less than a hero.

Alex caught the hockey bug early in life and, throughout his youth, took every opportunity to get on the ice, much to the chagrin of his mother, who was distressed by the scrapes and bruises he brought home. A daredevil in his youth, Alex broke his back ski jumping at age 15, an injury that would haunt him until he retired from playing professional hockey in 1946.



Alex's work ethic was formed early in life as he watched Roman work tirelessly on the Canadian Pacific Railroad and Tekla provide a warm hearth and loving home for her family.



Tekla, a genteel woman with a charming wit and great love for her family, wanted only the best for her children. This included instilling in them an appreciation for the arts, including music. For Alex, that meant playing the violin, and this was much to *Alex's* chagrin! Still, he walked miles each week to attend his lessons, making an effort for his beloved mama. When Alex "accidentally" dropped his violin, Roman glued it back together and Alex continued his study. Alex preferred skates and rinks to bows and strings but made an effort for his mother, whom he adored. Inevitably, his half-hearted attempt as a musician would end, losing out to his love for a game that was his destiny. After all; Hemmingway had to write, Mozart had to compose and Alex Shibicky *had* to play hockey.

When he was only 19, Alex, unbeknownst to his parents, secretly played with the Selkirk Junior Fishermen just outside Winnipeg. During a practice one day, New York Rangers scouts saw this extraordinary young player and immediately brought him to the attention of legendary coach and manager Lester Patrick. Recognizing the prodigious talents of this youngster, Patrick quickly offered Alex a contract. But, before Roman and Tekla would allow Alex to sign it, Tekla insisted Mr. Patrick come to dinner at the Shibicky home. Since the hard-edged Patrick was not known as one to comply with such an invitation, this dinner became a story of legendary proportions in the press; reporters mused at the soft spot Patrick had found for the mother of his new left wing, and his promise to Tekla that he would "take good care of Alex."



After a year and a half with the farm team, Alex became a starting forward with the New York Rangers from 1935 until 1946. Much has been written about Alex Shibicky's hockey career and his time as a member of the Rangers "bread line," so named for Alex and life-long friends, Neil and Mac Colville, who had become the bread and butter for the team. A man of firsts, Alex was the first player to use the slap shot in competition, a play that left his opponents scratching their heads and his teammates even more impressed by this altogether impressive athlete.

Throughout his life Alex would prove himself to be a man of tremendous loyalty and dedication; to his family- to his team- to his country. In 1942, two years after Alex helped the Rangers capture the Stanley Cup, he, along with Mac and Neil Colville, sacrificed three years in the prime of his NHL career to serve in the Canadian Army.

Stationed in Ottawa, Alex 31 and his friends Neil Colville and Burt Neal were on liberty one weekend in the summer of 1945 when Alex met the love of his life at a resort area near the border of Ontario and Manitoba. Four years after he had heard Gene Autry introduce “Blueberry Hill” in the 1941 motion picture *The Singing Hill*, Alex would literally find *his* thrill when he first set eyes upon a brown-haired beauty named Gloria who, along with two girlfriends, sunned themselves by a lake- just a stone’s throw from a place called Blueberry Hill.

“The guys came by in a really nice canoe and saw that we were looking for something in the water,” Gloria Shibicky vividly recalls, some 61 years later. The day before, one of the girls had lost her bathing suit bottom and we were diving in trying to find it,” she laughs. The guys offered to help find the suit- repeatedly diving into the lake to recover the treasure. The bathing suit bottom was never found- but a connection certainly was made as the guys rowed the lovely ladies back to their vacation cabin.

“The next day, after lunch, there was a knock on the door and there they were, asking us if we’d like to go to Kenora.” said Gloria. The three young women sat wide-eyed in the backseat while 31-year-old Alex told of their plans to buy beer. When 19-year-old Gloria protested that they were too young to drink beer, the guys provided the ladies with counterfeit ID’s and told them to practice writing their fake names. Of course, the girls had no intention of drinking and, when they got to Kenora, the boys bought them pop and ice cream cones. Gloria and her friends strolled around town with their treats while the guys sat in the beer parlor. One has to wonder how Alex was able to win the heart of this beautiful young ingénue. Fortunately, subsequent dates would prove to be far more exhilarating.



The next week would be jam packed with group dates. In fact, the day after the Kenora



outing, the guys, once again, appeared at the cabin door and asked the ladies to join them for a barbecue or what, in those days, was referred to as a weenie roast. This was the first time Gloria heard the wonderful singing voice of the man whose voice she would hear every day of their 54- year marriage. Gloria remembers her first impression of the guys: “They were a heck of a lot of fun. “Alex had a beautiful singing voice. And, the guys were hilarious,” she chuckles, recalling the antics of the fellows and the hilarity of Burt’s Cab Calloway impression.

On August 15, 1945, VJ day, the guys escorted the ladies to a dance in Laclu. Gloria and Alex celebrated the end of WWII dancing the night away, then bid each other farewell as their enchanting summer ended. Alex’s army career had ended too, and he traded army greens for the blue shirt of his New York Rangers. That Fall, while in Rangers training camp, an exhibition game was held in Winnipeg. Accompanied by her younger brother Bill, Gloria witnessed, for the first time, this

carefree fellow with the wonderful voice and infectious laugh become the man who created magic on ice.

Letters bridged the miles between Gloria and Alex over the next year. On a cold and blustery February 14th Gloria felt only warmth as she held a beautiful valentine, not only the first one she'd ever received, but the first and *only* valentine she would ever receive from Alex. Perhaps he knew that, once he had asked Gloria for her heart, he had given his too. And that was that. Alex was a practical man, even in matters of the heart.

It would be five more years before Gloria Aspinall became Gloria Shibicky. Each summer Gloria and Alex would meet in Winnipeg or the Laclu area. Gloria often spent her summers in Laclu with friends, while Alex and Neil never missed an opportunity to fish and golf together at Hockey Haven, a resort near Laclu, which was owned by Hockey Hall of Famers Charlie Raynor and Sugar Jim Henry. Neil and Alex had first met at Lester Patrick's training camp, where an immediate and unbreakable bond of friendship was forged. Neil gave Alex his nickname, "Shoo," a moniker that stayed with Alex throughout his life. Shoo and Neil remained the best of friends, brothers really, until that friendship ended much too soon when, on the day after Christmas in 1987, Neil Colville, at age 73, succumbed to his battle with cancer. It was particularly tragic for Alex to lose the person who, next to Gloria, knew him best. The entire Shibicky family felt the loss of this dynamic and loyal friend, whom they had come to think of as part of the family. Everyone felt their father's pain; he had lost his best friend, teammate, and his fishing and golfing buddy. Alex, Jr. has fond memories of his caddying days, when he'd carry Neil's clubs on the front nine and then his Father's on the back nine. He also claims: "That's where I learned to swear!"



Alex and Neil shared a love of the outdoors and certainly created some wonderful "fish stories"



in subsequent vignettes.

through the years. Alex, Jr. recalls a week-long trip he took with Neil and his father: They had taken a 21-foot power boat up the coast of British Columbia, catching 40 and 50 pound salmon and braving 20 foot swells. "On the way back, we lost the lower leg of the engine," said Alex, Jr. who was then age 14. "While the boat was being repaired, Dad and Neil got toasted in the local pub for three days and left me sitting on the boat feeding the birds!" Despite this seemingly hands-off approach to parenting on that particular occasion, nothing could be further from the truth when it came to Alex Sr.'s parenting skills. That fact will become obvious

At the end of the 1946-47 season, Alex's chronic back condition brought early retirement to his playing career. His retirement from the Rangers brought on the next phase of his hockey career, that of coach and mentor. Over the next three decades, Alex would coach teams in Flin Flon, New Westminster and Indianapolis. His hockey retirement also brought on the beginning of many successful and some not-so successful business ventures.

In the summer of 1946, Neil and Alex bought a 1,100 acre grain farm outside of Winnipeg. Gloria was introduced to this new investment when Alex and Neil invited Gloria and a friend to come visit their new farm. Gloria laughs as she remembers the bumpy ride there in the back of a hay-filled truck and the great fun she had as she toured the farm on the back of a horse, with Alex at the reins. Gloria muses that the *real* reason the guys wanted them to come visit was so they would cook for them. And, of course, they cooked!

Throughout the years, Alex's childhood back injury would haunt him. He had seen dozens of doctors throughout Canada and the U.S. with little relief until, one summer, while in Laclu, Alex shared a dark secret with Gloria. He told her that, at times, the pain had been so excruciating he had actually contemplated suicide. Anyone who has experienced severe and chronic pain well understands the feelings of defeat and hopelessness that come with such a debilitating condition. And although Alex may have felt hopeless at times, wondering if the pain would ever end... enter Dr. James, a 38-year-old Winnipeg physician who literally turned Alex's life upside down in more ways than one! Gloria had learned of the innovative work of this young doctor, and convinced a skeptical Alex to give it a try. Although Alex had traveled more than 50,000 miles to seek relief- to no avail- he decided to trust Gloria and mustered up the faith to try one more treatment. In 1948, using a ground-breaking treatment, Dr. James flipped Alex upside down, removed fluid from his spine, and then replaced deteriorated disk bone with bone from Alex's hip. In a cast from stem to stern, Alex recuperated in Laclu for two months, while Gloria visited at every possible opportunity. Alex's tenacity and courage to try yet another painful procedure paid off; his back never bothered him again! Five decades later, in 1998, Alex once again benefited from a medical breakthrough when, at age 84, he became the oldest person in Western Canada to ever receive a pig heart valve replacement.

Alex made his beautiful valentine his wife on October 11, 1950 in a tiny chapel in Flin Flon, Manitoba. A red rose corsage adorned Gloria's elegant brown velvet suit, while lifelong friends, Walt and Eileen Cunningham, witnessed the beginning of a 54-year marriage that can only be described as wonderful.

Alex Shibicky was an entrepreneur extraordinaire; he was also an innovator and, throughout his life, a man of firsts. In the summer of 1951, Canadian movie-goers took in such Hollywood blockbusters as *The African Queen*, *High Noon* and *An American in Paris* on a giant outdoor screen at The Red Deer Drive-In, Alberta's first drive-in movie theatre, which Alex and Neil had opened



that summer. While Hollywood legends Marilyn Monroe, Humphrey Bogart and Kathryn Hepburn graced the screen, hockey legends Alex Shibicky and Neil Colville hosted the public in this exciting new film venue. As with anything Alex ever took on, he jumped in with everything he had and, along with Neil, handled every aspect of the enterprise, becoming projectionists, security men, concessionists and any other jobs that needed doing. In 1956, Gloria and Alex marveled to the excitement of extravaganzas, including the Ten Commandments and The King and I, before selling the business that year.



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Alex Shibicky became Alex Shibicky, Senior on August 18, 1951. While living in Flin Flon, Alex and Gloria welcomed their first child, a son- Alex, Jr. to the world. Alex had promised Gloria he would quit smoking at the birth of their first child. And, although the promise was made again, as four more children were born, Alex stubbornly held on to his smokes. His kids are at no shortage on stories about their father and his cigarettes. “He kept cigarettes in his socks and rolled up sleeves and announced he was “going out for a walk” well into his 80’s. Lori laughs as she recalls her father sneaking a cigarette at the side of the house, as Gloria literally put a damper on his habit, dumping a bucket of water on him from the window.



22 months after the birth of Alex, Jr., Alex and Gloria welcomed their first daughter, Kathy, in 1953. In 1956, just a few months after their third child, daughter Lori, AKA “Poodney Doodney” was born, Alex announced to Gloria, “I’ve got to get us to Hawaii.” So, as if caring for a five-year-old, three-year-old and a four-month-old baby wasn’t enough to handle, Gloria and Alex packed up the kids and took the whole kit and caboodle to Hawaii for a five week vacation. Gloria took it all in stride, a quality that would take her happily

through more than five decades of marriage to this larger-than-life man. When asked about the trip to Seattle and the ten hour plane ride to the Islands with three kids in tow, Gloria simply said, “The kids were perfect; no problems.”

And so, before Hawaii had even become America’s 49th state, the Shibicky family said Aloha to the islands, as they took in the splendor of the Waikiki shoreline. Gloria remembers a carefree five weeks in the tropics.



Alex Jr. recalls flying balsa wood planes on the beach and one especially vivid memory of paradise: “The native children would climb the palm trees- barefooted no less- and cut coconuts for us.” Drinking the delicious coconut milk, Alex recalls thinking to himself, - even at that young age- “now, *this* is paradise!” Certainly Lori and perhaps even Kathy were too young to have clear memories of the Islands, but surely the lull of tropical waters and lush landscape stays registered in their happy family memory banks.

A happy family is just exactly what Gloria and Alex shared. The birth of Nancy in 1961 and Bill in 1964 (Alex, Jr. *finally* had the brother he’d been asking for!) brought the number to five Shibicky children, each of whom was nurtured and encouraged by their Mother and Father, leaving them with loving memories and strong ideals that fully imbue each of these adult children today. Alex instilled in his children a strong work ethic and always encouraged them: “Whenever you touch something, make sure it’s a little better than when you found it.” This was an axiom that held true for Alex in every area of his life.



In 1957, Alex and Neil bought exclusive Kentucky Fried Chicken Recipe franchise rights for Western Canada. (Alex, Jr. boasts of having dinner with his Dad and “The Colonel” when he was six.) The KFC recipe was featured on the menu at their seven Aristocratic Restaurants. Sadly, Alex and Neil’s accountant in the operation misappropriated funds and the enterprise fell into ruins after just two years. To add insult to injury, the accountant died shortly after his larceny was discovered and attempts to recover the funds were futile. But Alex, ever faithful to his responsibilities, made sure every debt was honored, leaving no one to suffer financially. Even the strongest of men might have let this devastating betrayal and financial blow take them down, perhaps even leaving them with a jaded view of life. But, not Alex Shibicky. Here was a guy who never felt sorry for himself, or allowed the actions of others to keep him from the goal line. He simply kept his stick on the ice, grit his teeth and kept “peeping” for the next opportunity.



After he rebounded from the Aristocratic restaurant debacle, Alex investigated the purchase of a franchise with Dairy Queen. When he found the price too steep, he opened the Dairy King, a popular eatery in New Westminster for two decades. Dairy Queen Corporation thought the name was just a little too close, and tried to put the kybosh on this successful operation. Alex prevailed in the lawsuit. With the exception of Bill, who only remembers going with his Dad to the Fresh Pak supply store, every Shibicky child worked at the Dairy King. Alex, Jr. will proudly show you the scars on his arms from the burger machine and claims some of his siblings have them too. Whether mowing the grass, working the grill, or making ice cream, they all pitched in to work the family business. Nancy recalls the smell of chopped onions in the car after her Dad returned from Fresh



Pak with their produce each day. “I sure looked forward to a having a meal there, said Nancy. That was the best burger, fries and milkshake ever!” The Shibicky kids all insist they’d be millionaires today, had their father ever written down the recipe for his famous Dairy King Barbeque Sauce.

Given any opportunity, Alex’s children enthusiastically tell you about the wonderful, incredible man who was their father, always speaking of him in the most endearing terms. And, once you’ve heard them describe the ways in which he participated in their lives, it’s easy to see why. The Shibicky kids remember starting every day with the singing and whistling of their Dad. Often, he sang them to sleep. His favorites included Oh My Darlin’ Clementine, East Side West Side, You Are My Sunshine and even an occasional rousing version of:



“My gal’s a corker, she’s a New Yorker
I do most anything to keep her in style
She’s got a pair of hips, just like two battle ships
Thaaaat’s where all my money goes!”



All of the Shibicky children are gifted athletes with great reflexes. Certainly the athleticism is in the genes; but the reflexes may also have something to do with the fact that, before they could even walk, Alex, who according to Alex, Jr. “had incredible reflexes,” would balance them, their tiny feet standing on his hands. He carried the tradition on with all of his grandchildren, as well.



Alex encouraged his children in their sports activities but, when Lori wanted to play hockey, her father let her know unequivocally that “Girls skate.” Lori will tell you; she’s the biggest sports fan of the Shibicky women, and treasures the memories of all the hockey games she watched with her Dad, including ones that featured her favorite team- you guessed it: The New York Rangers.

Alex, Sr. was truly a morning person. Lori, Nancy and Kathy sweetly reminisce about his morning serenades (“Dad was always whistling and singing”) as well as the hearty breakfasts he prepared for them before chauffeuring them to skating practice each day at 5:00 am. Kathy, a professional skater with the Ice Follies for 14 years remembers: “Dad would sleep for the figure eights and then he’d always watch the skating, often encouraging us to “Give it a little more oomph.” And oh, how he loved their rosy cheeks!

Alex, Sr. had his first born in skates and on the ice at 18 months. He’d have him hang on to the back of a chair, put him out on the lake and let the wind blow him around. Alex, Jr. remembers his father telling him, as early as age four: “keep your stick on the ice!” Alex, Sr. was not particularly enthusiastic about his namesake playing professional or even college hockey. “He did his best to talk me out of it,” Alex, Jr. recalls. Still, Shoo’s love for the game gave Alex, Jr. a deep understanding and appreciation of the sport, and, like his father, he felt genuinely

driven to play. When it all came down to it: Alex, Sr. made sure his son went to the right school, using his clout to help this talented youngster realize his young dreams on a scholarship to the University of Denver. Alex, Jr. knew the thrill of top level college hockey as he competed in the 1973 NCAA National Championship game- University of Denver vs. University of Wisconsin. Alex, Jr. went to training camp with the 1974 Vancouver Canucks and played one year of minor league hockey before establishing his financial advisory practice.



Alex Shibicky was one of the founding members of the Burnaby Winter Club in their home town of Burnaby, B.C., where the Shibicky clan lived for three decades. Throughout his lifetime he coached hundreds of children of all ages, including his sons. Bill recalls how he practically lived there as a kid and reminisces about his father's teaching techniques, which would land him a hockey scholarship to Michigan State University (where played on the 1986 NCAA national championship team) and a pro contract with the Detroit Red Wings, until his career was ended by a groin tear. "I remember Dad teaching me to shoot properly telling me to 'Always peep for the next opportunity.'" "As a youngster he gave me bad sticks, sometimes several glued together, so I wouldn't take slap shots until I had strong enough wrists." And, he wasn't so much impressed with how many goals I'd make in a game. He'd always ask me, 'How many of those goals had a tassel on them?'" "No matter what you do," Alex always told his children, "put a tassel on it!"

Bill also said, rather wistfully, "My father changed the game of hockey. He didn't get the credit he deserved." Of course, his family and all who knew him, including top professionals of the game (many of whom have nominated Alex to the Hall of Fame) believe there are few who exemplify excellence in hockey more than Alex Shibicky. Ever working for the good of all, Alex, along with Neil and Mac Colville had even founded and was Vice President of the first National Hockey Player's Association in 1942. Unfortunately, the autocrats of the National League cared more about dollars and less about the welfare of their players. Using intimidation tactics even Walter Reuther would have found daunting, megalomaniacal team owners were successful in "persuading" players not to join the new Players' Association. Ironically, some 55 years later, just a few days after his death, the National Hockey League Players' Association and team owners came to terms on a Collective Bargaining Agreement, after the 2005 season-long strike.

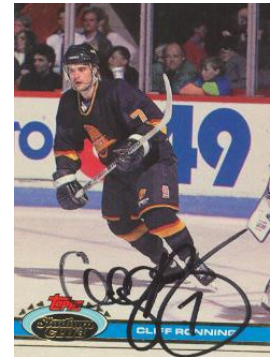
With skewed qualifiers that don't encompass the entire player, the jury's still out on whether Alex will ever be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. Still, it's simply a fact; Alex Shibicky was one of the greatest individuals to ever play or coach the game of hockey. While the Stanley Cup had not been awarded in the 2005 season due to the players' strike, the spirit of Lord Stanley surely smiled as Alex's family hosted the Stanley Cup at a Burnaby Winter Club reception honoring the life of a man who exemplified the skill, dedication and sportsmanship of a truly great athlete.

"Former New Westminster Player Ken Ulliyott enjoyed a three year player/coach relationship with Alex, which left them life-long friends. "Alex was an excellent coach. He impressed us right from the start," said Ulliyott. "He paid attention to everybody. He was demanding but he was willing to pat you on the back, too. He was a fundamentalist. He could explain the

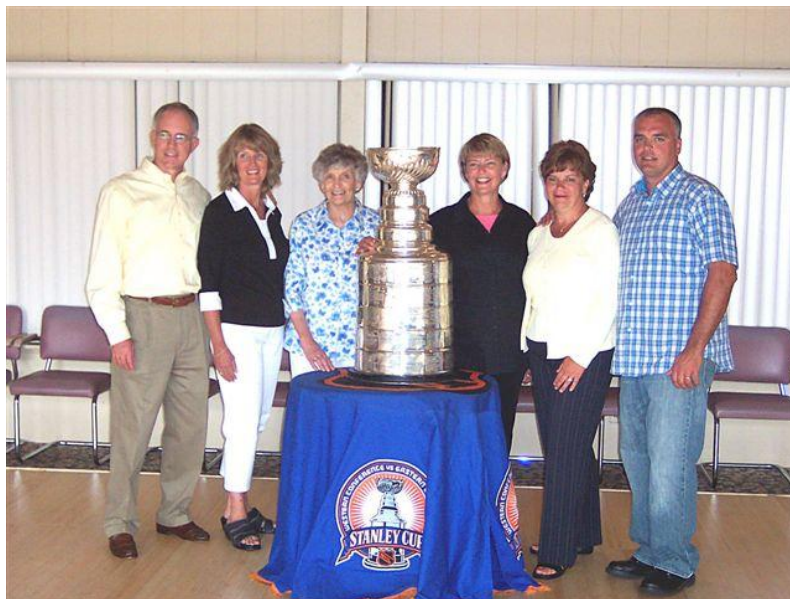
techniques to you and he could show you how to use them. When I went into coaching, I was a much better coach because I used what I had learned from Alex. When Alex quit coaching, the world was deprived of one of the finest individuals to ever coach hockey. If anyone deserves to be in the Hall of Fame, Alex does, and his record shows it." Ulllyott added, "If you'll excuse my language, he was one hell of a hockey player." Ok, Ken; you're excused!

Anyone who benefited from Alex Shibicky's coaching considers him the best coach they ever knew. Bob Ginetti, a European pro who played in the 1992 Olympics speaks of his mentor: "He was the most influential of all my coaches. 99% of the coaches don't teach the way he taught us. He was all about making the right play and he made smart hockey players. He told us that 90% of hockey was played from the neck up. All of his players from the Burnaby Winter Club went pro or got college scholarships." Ginetti fondly remembers tournament play: "We would always walk to the games and he'd have us stop at the corners, make believe we were on the ice and peep to see who was behind us. After the second period of every game, Mr. Shibicky would always say: "20 minutes to Broadway!"

NHL star Cliff Ronning can't say enough about Alex Shibicky's contribution to the game of hockey and credits his own success to Alex's superior coaching techniques, which started for Ronning at age six at the Burnaby Winter Club. "You could see that he absolutely loved the game of hockey. We connected early on because we shared the same passion for it. All the guys who played for him use techniques in our game that make you know: Alex Shibicky taught them." Ironically, one of the highlights of Ronning's career came as he played with the Vancouver Canucks against the New York Rangers for the 1994 Stanley Cup. As he played the seventh game of the series with a broken hand, he thought about his coach, his mentor, Alex "Shoo" Shibicky who, 54 years before, had also grit his teeth and skated on a broken ankle to help his team capture the championship.



When Shoo drinks, everybody drinks! The Burnaby Winter Club was also a social gathering



place for the Shibicky family. Alex took Gloria curling at the club each Sunday night, and Alex often spent time with fathers of the kids he coached. "They'd gather in the bar with my Dad to listen to his stories, which he always told as if he were telling them for the first time," said Bill.

When the Stanley Cup arrived just a few weeks after Alex's death, it seemed ideal for the Shibicky family to honor the memory of their father at the BWC. And although that trophy was a remembrance of one of

hockey's finest moments *and* a tribute to one of the game's all-time greats, for the Shibicky family, the award also stood as a testament to the life of an honorable man.

Alex Shibicky was a man of strong convictions. He was also a man of many sayings, which endeared him to family and friends and, at times, became a great source of amusement. One such axiom came about from Alex's childhood memory of the Sorby family, neighbors who simply tossed whatever they wished to be rid of into the back alley. Alex deplored waste and disorder of any kind; so when the Shibicky kids heard their father say the all-too-familiar "It's going down Mrs. Sorby Lane," they knew they had better straighten up!



"Stick together in stormy weather," Alex would often tell his family. No matter the weather, Alex made sure his family enjoyed the important things in life. Gloria and Alex's strong values became their children's values and even today, every one of them will tell you how much they cherished their time with their Mother and Father. With great fondness, the Shibicky

kids recall weekend trips and picnic outings to Birch Bay and Harrison Hot Springs. Often, they'd all pile in the pink and white station wagon and travel to Winnipeg to visit with both Gloria and Alex's relatives.

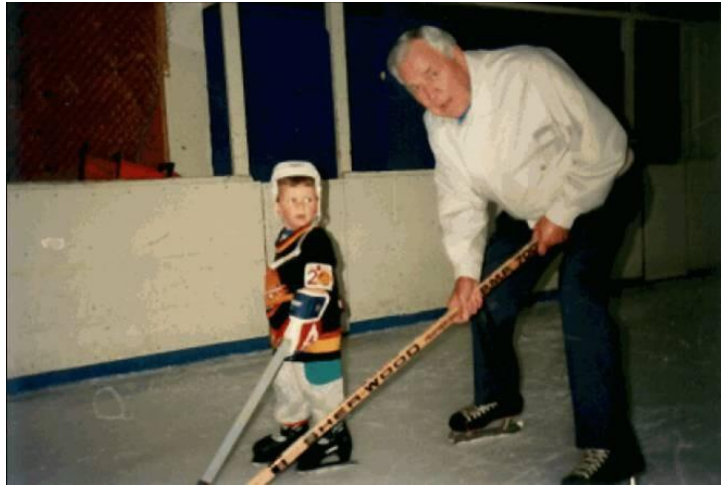


Without a doubt, the greatest treasures in Alex Shibicky's life were Gloria, their children and their children's children. Bill refers to his mother as "amazing" "a machine" and really, one can only marvel at Gloria's "take it all in stride" manner. This writer was more than impressed with the calm and cool of Gloria as she told of the time Alex caught his hand in the lawn mover. Having just prepared a chiffon cake, she put it in the oven, took Alex to the hospital where he received more than 100 stitches, and got back in time to take the perfectly baked cake from the oven. And, at the risk of repeating myself, I simply must, as I marvel at a woman who, with three children under five, cheerfully packed up the whole lot for a trip to Hawaii, with a "no problem" attitude about the whole thing! They say that behind every man there's a great woman. But Gloria was right there in front, the anchor of faith that allowed this larger than life man to be just exactly who he was. And Alex let his children know, in no uncertain terms, how he felt about their mother *and* how he expected them to treat Gloria. You'd never hear a child of Alex Shibicky's refer to their mother as her or she. She was Mother. That was understood.

Stanley Cup winner can't hold a candle to the title Alex received in 1982 when he joyfully became "Grandpa" at the birth of Lori's first child, Matthew. Alex welcomed his first granddaughter with Lori's second child, Carly in 1985. Nancy gifted Alex with two more grandchildren, Jamie in 1988 and Jennifer in 1991. Kathy's son Cody made it five grandchildren for Alex to spoil and love. And that he did!

Of course, Alex's grandkids were all initiated with the same balancing routine he'd worked with their parents. After all, he just wanted to make sure their reflexes were as good as they

possibly could be. He was a fan at Matt and Carly's baseball and soccer games and graced the sidelines at a number of Jamie and Jennifer's hockey and soccer games. "All the grandkids were



enthralled by his wonderful stories; some from the days of Al Capone," said Lori. Jamie shared with Nancy his memories of being 4-years-old when his grandpa played hockey with him at Seafair Arena and the fun he had when Alex took him putting. And, as long as we're on the subject of golf; it should most certainly be acknowledged that Avid Golfer Alex Shibicky scored two double eagles, the rarest feat in golf, during his lifetime of play.

Although Cody lived the furthest from his grandparents, when he visited his grandpa, they always had fun together. "Cody is very proud of his Grandpa," said Kathy. "He loved to hear Dad's stories and cherished their walks together. "We have the greatest video of Cody at 4, in back of mom and dad's place. Cody wanted to be a barber and Dad put up with him squirting and parting his hair," she mused. It's important to note that Alex was really quite particular about his hair. He combed it every night before he went to bed and the part had to be just right. Of course, when your grandson wants to be a barber, what else is there to do but let him try out his styling techniques on Grandpa! Cody has two hockey sticks, autographed by his Grandpa, proudly displayed above his bed.

Alex was a straight-forward, stand-up guy. He was tough when times warranted tough and yet, he managed to balance this with a gentle side, one that loved and cherished a remarkable woman, balanced babies on his hands, sang to his children and had an affinity for the earth's creatures. When his seemingly inexhaustible supply of energy began to wane- and this was only in his very last years- Alex loved to sit in the living room and watch the wildlife, especially the birds, which gathered in the trees on the creek that bordered their property. When Alex, Jr. and his wife Monika, visited Gloria and Alex in the mid 1990's, Monika quickly recognized her father-in-law's fascination with the birds and suggested they get him a bird feeder. Alex, Jr. was not particularly enthusiastic at the suggestion, but Monika's idea could not have been more perfect. A bird bath and binoculars were added to the mix, and Alex, Sr. spent many joyful hours communing with his feathered friends, even "Shoo"-ing off the big ones when they tried to prevent the smaller ones from partaking in a snack.

Alex "Shoo" Shibicky was an athlete of heroic proportions- an exceptional individual. He loved the game of hockey and shared his innate understanding of the sport with anyone who would listen. Millions marveled at the player and the innovation he brought to the game. Hundreds owe a debt of gratitude to a coach and mentor who taught them not only to work hard and be good sportsmen on the rink, but to let those hard and smart work ideals translate to their lives off the ice. A few dozen had the privilege to intimately know a gregarious, fun loving, stubborn, hardworking, good, good man, who never gave up. Six traveled and worked and

played with him; six laughed and cried with him, ate good food on warm plates with him and guarded their desserts from him. Six sang with him.

The 6,100 + preceding words are for the family Alex Shibicky loved. To honor the life of this man in a way he would appreciate will take only seven:

Shoo, you put a tassel on it!

