



NIGHTINGALE, Harold

February 15, 1934 - October 30, 2011

Quietly at home after a courageous 43 year battle with cancer, attended by his loving wife of almost 25 years, Josina Van Dyk. Survived by his sons Bryan and Jeff, and his grandchildren Jesse, Shawn, and Cole; all of whom will deeply miss his love, support and gentle coaching in their lives. Also survived by his sister Pat, and brothers Albert (Ab) and Noel and by Joyce Nightingale, the mother of his children; his nieces Cathy, Carol, and Tammy; his nephews Ken, Ryan, Mike, and Randy. He loved Josina's brothers and sisters as his own, and they too will miss him greatly. Following a rich and satisfying engineering career with the Royal Canadian Navy, General Foods, W.R. Grace, Eatons, and Canada Post, he obtained an M.A. Economics to start a new career in marketing with Canada Post and Statistics Canada. Always a sports enthusiast he played football and rowed in high school; was the Canadian University Welterweight Boxing Champion; taught swimming, canoeing and sailing for Toronto YMCA; was a professional ski instructor and coach for 20 years and played soccer and hockey until he was 72 years old. Both he and Josina enjoyed motorcycling and took extensive trips. Until his death he continued to canoe at their home on the Ottawa River. He once said, "Give me a canoe I can love and a paddle I can trust, and I will be content." He will be missed by his team mates, friends, and neighbours. Friends may call at the Garden Chapel of the Tubman Funeral Homes, 3440 Richmond Road, Nepean (between Bayshore and Baseline Road) on Friday and Saturday, November 4 & 5th, 2011 from 2- 5 p.m., and on Sunday, November 6th, 2011 from 12 noon until service time in the chapel at 1 p.m. In lieu of flowers donations to Palliative Care Outreach Program, 1716 Woodward Drive, Suite 111, Ottawa, ON K2C 0P8 or to Friends of Hospice 555 Legget Drive, Tower B Suite 140, Kanata, ON K2K 2X3, would be appreciated. Condolences, donations or tributes may be made at [www.tubmanfuneralhomes.com](http://www.tubmanfuneralhomes.com)

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**Harold Nightingale seen here in the last stages of his terminal cancer.**

**Photograph by: Chris Mikula , The Ottawa Citizen**

Harold Nightingale was only given weeks to live in early 2010, but, incredibly, he hung on for another 18 months.

By all accounts, Harold was an extremely positive man despite various battles with cancer, going back to 1968.

“Life is good,” he would tell his wife, Josina.

He finally succumbed to lung cancer on Oct. 30, three decades after he was first diagnosed and almost 10 years after he was told it was terminal. He was 77.

Harold had quite the academic, athletic and career resumé. He had done so much. But he would have wanted to do one more thing before he died: Raise public awareness about the need and importance of palliative home care.

Harold almost didn't get that care because he lived in Dunrobin, and the handful of doctors who do palliative house calls really only have the time and resources to serve patients in the urban Ottawa area. Josina was exhausted and in tears when she called the Citizen in March 2010. She hadn't had a decent sleep in months and had no one to turn to, especially at night, for advice on dealing with Harold's pain.

Josina once drove to the General Campus of The Ottawa Hospital in the middle of the night, during a snowstorm, to get Harold a prescription for oxygen from a palliative-care doctor. That trip would not have been necessary with palliative home care.

She dreaded the thought of having to call an ambulance to take Harold to hospital. Harold told Josina never to do that because he feared he would die there.

Harold's story touched Dr. Margaret Farncombe, who established the Palliative Care Outreach Program (PCOP) in 1997, 10 years after she became a physician. The service is the largest of three in Ottawa that provide care and comfort for the terminally ill at home.

Despite their rural address, Farncombe says she couldn't ignore the couple's isolation and desperation.

Her team of doctors, which now numbers five, makes palliative home care available around the clock, seven days a week. They provide comfort and care to the terminally-ill and advise family members how to manage pain and symptoms. PCOP, which has 40 to 45 patients, also offers bereavement counselling.

The doctors, all of whom have private practices, take turns working one day a week for PCOP. A doctor visits five to eight patients during the day, and then remains on call at night. They also each work one weekend of every five.

Farncombe shared those responsibilities until recently, but now primarily works out of the PCOP's offices on Woodward Drive. She is available if the other doctors need to consult with her. She plans to expand the program to provide home care to people with serious chronic conditions.

Farncombe is heartened by what she says is a positive change of attitude toward palliative home care, especially in medical schools. She says more medical students are showing an interest in caring for the terminally ill, and points to her team of five young doctors as proof. She managed with no more than two doctors until last year.

But more has to be done, she says, to attract doctors to the field. She envisions Ottawa communities, especially in the outlying areas such as Dunrobin, served by satellite clinics and house-call duties shared by local doctors.

Though OHIP pays the doctors for each patient they see, PCOP does not receive any funding from any level of government or from hospitals. PCOP's expenses, which include office rent and the salaries of a full-time nurse and office manager, are covered through donations.

Farncombe has worked in palliative care all her career. Before she established PCOP, the mother of three rode shotgun alone, driving to a patient's home or taking their calls, at all hours.

Many colleagues can't understand her devotion. Some see palliative care as pointless because the life of a terminally-ill patient can't be saved. And it is depressing work because people are constantly dying.

Catherine Hanson, a massage therapist who continued treating Harold at home after caring for him at the regional cancer centre, says Harold “told me the last 18 months were the best of his life because he was experiencing and learning something new every minute. ... He really enjoyed his last journey. He felt safe.”

Despite being so ill, all Harold wanted to do before his death was focus on the good things in his life.

He would gaze peacefully at the Ottawa River and the Gatineau Hills from the bed set up in his living room. He had a good view of the river, and one day last July, during a huge electrical storm, called 911 after spotting two overturned sailboats.

Harold would listen to music, play his guitar and watch hockey and football on TV. He was writing a book about life with cancer — but enlisted Josina with the task of finishing the last chapter on his final days.

Harold, who once taught swimming, would sometimes watch neighbours’ children as they swam in the river. From shore, he would shout out instructions on how they could improve their strokes.

There were also scores of stories about his life to rehash with his many visitors: The motorcycles he owned, his love of canoeing and his boxing prowess. He won the Canadian university welterweight boxing title while at the University of Toronto. He was a ski instructor and coach for 20 years. He played soccer and hockey until he was 72.

Harold was born in Toronto in 1934. He earned an engineering degree from U of T in 1957, and two decades later, a master’s degree in economics from Carleton University. He worked for the federal government, Canada Post and in the private sector. He had two sons from a previous marriage.

Being able to live another 18 months gave Harold the time to see friends and relatives over and over again — to the point, says Josina, where Harold was almost embarrassed because final goodbyes were being repeated so often.

Josina says her husband’s “competitive spirit showed itself in many ways.” When he received news that a friend had passed away, Harold exclaimed to his wife. ““Damn it! David beat me to the finish line.”

Harold was not afraid of death. “I just don’t want the dying to be miserable,” he said in March 2010.

Harold couldn’t stomach the thought of spending his last days in hospital. He had had enough of hospitals after suffering cancers, strokes and infections.

But even though he told his wife in 2010 that he was never going back to one, he did, about three months ago, when he couldn’t get his nose to stop bleeding. One of his palliative doctors suggested it would be best if he go to hospital.

When Farncombe asked him why he didn't put up a fight, Harold replied: "I knew I was coming back home."

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National Post ·

OTTAWA - Busting down the right wing, Peter Andrusek cuts in front of the net. The goalie drops and stacks his pads, so Mr. Andrusek follows around the goal and scores on the wraparound.

It's a sensational move for an 80-year-old. But the boys on the bench are having none of it.

"You're just lucky Harold had a seizure!"

Mr. Andrusek, a retired sheet-metal worker who gave up hockey after high school, only to return to the ice at 70, happily absorbs the abuse.

"You should have seen me play 60 years ago," he says.

Meet Ottawa's most decrepit and dedicated hockey team, the Geriatric Senior Buzzards. You have to be at least 70 years old -- or seriously afflicted by bad hips, knees, cancer or heart conditions -- to lace them up with these guys. The only player exempted from the rules is Jim Casserly, 65, a medical doctor who once revived a collapsed Buzzard on the bench.

They play twice a week, sometimes against the advice of doctors and despite the concern of loved ones. Indeed, each game is an artful act of defiance, a butt end to the ribs of the Grim Reaper.

Yet these are not bloody-minded old men. They're old hockey players. And they're willing to risk whatever time they have left.

"Is there a better way to go than on the ice?" asks 69-year-old Jim Sullivan, founder of the team. "I'd like them to bury me with a hockey stick in my hand."

Mr. Sullivan, a retired Canada Post manager, launched the Senior Buzzards after a second hip replacement and complications from diabetes left him unable to keep up with other members of his over-60 hockey team.

"I was moping around the house with my wife and she said, 'Why don't you start another team and fix the regulations so that you can play?'"

Mr. Sullivan had played from the age of four and had coached for 33 years. He didn't want to give up a game he could still feel in his bones.

So he put together a team of 22 regulars, many of whom were grateful for another chance to take to the ice. (There's now a waiting list of 40 players.)

The Buzzards dropped the puck for the first time on Oct. 4, 2000, with a unique set of rules, which remain in place. If a player falls down, play stops. Anyone on a clear breakaway must be allowed to take the shot unmolested. There's no contact, period.

The rulebook warns: "Several of our players have had major surgery or have problems with their balance. Please be careful not to touch them when skating close to them."

This year's roster tells of age and ailments the way other teams list goals and assists. There's Wayne Currie, 66, triple bypass; Norm Sauliner, 70, prostate cancer; Bud Thivierge, 66, stroke; Ron Davis, 69, knee with steel plate; and Harold Nightingale, 70, cancer. Two regulars are inactive because of cancer treatments.

In five years of play, an ambulance has been called only three times to the rink. Each time, it came for Bill Parrington.

Mr. Parrington, now 75 and the team's official scorekeeper, was a founding member of the Buzzards, a goalie with a trick heart. He had been forced to retire as a mechanic in 1987 because of a series of heart attacks. Still, in the spring of 2000, when he heard about the Buzzards, Mr. Parrington sought the OK from doctors at the Ottawa Heart Institute for a hockey comeback. To his surprise, they approved.

He played with an implanted pacemaker and defibrillator, his heart protected by a kneepad sewn into a chest protector. He always defended the net at the west end of the Nepean Sportsplex, nearest the emergency exit, since he knew he might have to use it.

Three times, when his heart kicked into a gallop, his implanted defibrillator delivered a powerful shock to set it right. It left him flat on the ice each time.

The last incident was the most serious. He was taken to hospital on a stretcher still wearing his goalie equipment.

"The nurse took the sheet off and just about had a fit," he remembers. "That was my 15 minutes of fame. I think everyone in the hospital came to have a peek."

Mr. Parrington had been a talented young netminder. He played for the Morrisburg Junior Canadians and, in 1948, won a tryout with Buffalo's American Hockey League team. He gave up the sport when he was 55, and then again last year. The second time, he says, was the hardest.

"When you come back, you get a taste of it again and how fun it is," he says. "I had five good years with these guys, fun years. I had a lot of hockey, but you never get enough."

After their Wednesday game, the Buzzards gather at Chances "R" restaurant for beer, fries, hockey talk and health news. After the Friday game, they'll have coffee, in concession to the team's many diabetics who have to go easy on the alcohol.

The team has some storied ironmen, players such as Mr. Nightingale, whose comebacks are the stuff of legend. The retired engineer was told in November, 2002, that he had only a year to live;

cancer had spread to his lungs. He had surgery to prevent fluid from collecting in his chest, but the cancer was unstoppable. "I'd get things in order if I were you," his doctor told him.

Mr. Nightingale returned to the ice two months later. He kept an oxygen tank on the bench and warned others to be careful of the place where his rib had been removed.

The Buzzards are as much seniors' support group as hockey team. Humour, applied gently but often, is the therapy of choice in the dressing room and on the ice.

The hockey itself is strangely mesmerizing, like the dance of a shadow boxer. There are flickering bursts of speed and flashes of the competitor within. The passing is plentiful, soft and accurate. It's slow and careful, yet sometimes downright miraculous, as when Mr. Andrusek scores his wraparound.

"We don't count goals," explains Jim Sullivan. "We count survival. We just want to live to play again."

There is no fountain of youth. But inside the Nepean Sportsplex, the men of the Senior Buzzards have discovered a magic window on a time when they were young and strong and fleet -- and full of the joy of scoring goals.

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