

John Bate – October 26, 2023

John and his wife Marilyn were in IC for a number of years....part of the group that went to Russia. He was a really fun and nice man and he was our Memorial arena manager in Victoria for many years....first as Assistant manager and then as Manager. This is the Arena that IC always did their show. That arena has now been replaced but it was home to many of us competitive skaters in the 1950's and early '60's.



John Bate was as much a part of the old Memorial Arena as the many legendary athletes and entertainers who performed in the Blanshard Street facility, later replaced by Save-on-Foods Memorial Centre.

Bate, who died last week at age 87, retired in 1997 as director of parks and recreation for the City of Victoria, but is best remembered as the engaging and energetic assistant manager of Memorial Arena for three decades, starting in 1965.

“The arena was his life. He loved it,” said his wife, Marilyn Bate.

John Bate was integral to the running of the arena and oversaw all the athletes and performers coming through the affectionately nicknamed “Barn on Blanshard,” from Brian Orser to Roy Orbison, the Beach Boys to Tina Turner.

He was also the arena’s ambassador to the tens of thousands of fans who came through the building for Cougars hockey, Shamrocks lacrosse, Brier curling, wrestling and roller derby.

Even those who took part in the Friday night public skates and 6 a.m. minor hockey knew him.

“He treated everybody the same, whether you were the star athlete or performer, or if you were the Zamboni driver,” said Marilyn Bate. “Contracts were often by handshake. That was John.”

Vince Kreiser skated at the Memorial Arena as a kid in hockey and public skating, and remembers Bate as a constant presence at the rink. “John was effervescent and active and would be running all over the building at all times,” said Kreiser. “He was non-stop. He lived down at the rink.”

Kreiser went on to manage arenas and recreation facilities across the province and got to know Bate professionally. He said Bate was respected provincewide.

“From managing staffing, ice making or events, he did it all. John was an excellent mentor to a number of us ‘young guys.’ He always had time for a phone call or personal visit to discuss the part of the recreation business he loved the most — ice arena operations. In every way he met the definition of a true B.C. ‘rink rat.’ ”

Memorial Arena was famous for the unmistakable smell of fried onions as soon as you entered the front doors. That was all Bate and his sense of marketing.

“It smelled so good, you knew you had to turn right to that first concession and buy a hot dog before the game,” said Kreiser.

Bate also had a mischievous sense of humour. After the *Times Colonist* referred to the Memorial Arena as the “Barn on Blanshard” once too often for his liking, Bate brought hay to the press box and spread it all over the floor, then nailed up horseshoes for when reporters arrived to cover a Cougars hockey game that night.

He also discarded his usual game-day suit and tie that night to dress in checkered shirt, straw hat and overalls.

John and Marilyn Bate met when both skated in the Ice Capades, and Marilyn was frequently at his side during games and events at the arena, including many international, national and local sports events.

Both entered the Greater Victoria Sports Hall of Fame as a pair in the Class of 2016.

John Bate was also assistant manager of Royal Athletic Park, McPherson Playhouse, Royal Theatre and manager of Crystal Pool. He became deputy director of recreation for the City of Victoria in 1970, and was made a life member of the Recreation Facilities Association of B.C. in 1993.

The Bates were also known for Candy Cane Lane, which used to draw thousands of Victorians to the Bates’ Saanich neighbourhood on Tattersall Drive for an annual Christmas lights display.

John Bate is survived by Marilyn, son David, daughter Lisa and six grandchildren.

A celebration of his life will be held Dec. 22 at 2 p.m. at McCall’s.

<https://www.mccallgardens.com/obituaries/john-harry-isaac-bate>



**Lisa Hackwell**

Jun 24, 2015 · 🌐 · Las Vegas, NV, United States · 👤

Victorian's from different years. John and Marilyn Bates, Brad McDonald, Sonia Burling Polson and Dave MacDonald with Julie and I.



<https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/obituary-john-bate-was-mr-memorial-arena-7766867>