

Marilyn Ivanovick

Nov. 4, 1941 -

Since arriving in town in 1968—that's when she and her late husband Rick, a Brantford native, took up residence—Marilyn Ivanovick has played an integral role in the sporting life of the community.

Marilyn, a native of Simcoe, has always been active, playing volleyball and basketball in her early years through high school, and then cycling, which she still does.

When she and husband Rick married, work took them to various cities, including Kitchener, Hanover, Whitby and finally Galt, a year after Canada's Centennial.

"As soon as I came here I joined the YWCA on Thorne Street," she recalls. There, she met another newcomer to Galt, Barb LeBrun. The two became lifelong friends, and decades later were still active together, completing a hike of the Bruce Trail with some other friends between 1995 and 2000.

She joined an industrial volleyball league in those days, and when the Can-Amera Games began she enthusiastically started what would become a 35-year affiliation with the Games.

"I was there from Day One," she recalls. That was the summer of 1972 when the first Games were held in Saginaw Township, Michigan.

"We took the bus to Saginaw and then we walked in the parade. And we hitchhiked to the various games. We had our t-shirts on and people picked us up."

She played every year in Can-Amera except for the first year the Games were held in Cambridge, because she was pregnant with her son, Blair. "But I did scoring," she recalls.

Her obvious enjoyment in the Games, and her enthusiasm, made her a natural for the Cambridge Can-Amera committee. Early in the Games she joined the committee, serving as a co-ordinator of volleyball. She remained on the committee for the next 30-plus years, eventually coordinating other sports, and then finally serving as Can-Amera chairperson for the 19th and 20th editions of the Games.

"It was a super experience," she said.

The 20th anniversary event was held in Cambridge, and a video was produced for the occasion.

In the early years she recalls Dr. Moffat, one of the founders of Can-Amera, still playing volleyball on the men's team, when one of the women, Jess, dislocated her shoulder.

"He came over, had her lay on the floor, and then put one foot on each side of her shoulder and then pulled her shoulder back."

Longtime friendships were developed over the 35 years of Can-Amera.

"I still send Christmas cards to Dale and Brenda Mikesell."

She recalls that a handful of years ago, when the Elcombes were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary—the late Laird Elcombe was also a longtime committee member and Chair—a number of Saginaw friends came up to celebrate the occasion. Laird Elcombe, who passed away December 17, 2024, served as chair after Marilyn.

She also served as Games chair for the 35th and final Games in 2005, filling in for that one year when Anthony Streppell was to take over as he had a conflict that summer. He was to become chair the following year but the Games folded owing to decreased participation.

She never participated in the torch relay, but one year she was thinking of cycling down to Saginaw for the Games. Torch run organizer George Aitkin gave her a map of the route.

She mentioned to Mike Kilpatrick, another longtime Can-Amera participant and member of the torch relay team, that she wanted to cycle. "We could take three or four days," she said.

"Oh no, we've got to do it in one day." But cycling 400 kilometres in one day lost its appeal, though she would later make many long bicycle trips, including a memorable one to Atlanta for Habitat for Humanity. Completing a hike of the entire Bruce Trail with friends was also a highlight.



Marilyn Ivanovick was a torch runner for the 2012 Vancouver Olympics.

Although her Can-Amera involvement spanned a remarkable 35 years, she's been involved with the Cambridge Sports Awards even longer. "I think it's probably been about 45 years," she said, recalling she and the late Kali (Bogias-Parsons), worked together for many years on the Sports Awards committee. Both she and Kali served as chair at times.

Through her many connections with Can-Amera, the Cambridge Sports Awards, and the Tour de Grand, she has helped shape and lead the sporting life of the community.

She has also met and become friends with so many people that it's difficult to even try to count.

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