# John Harry Isaac Bate

John went gently into that good night on 26 October 2023, at home in Victoria, BC, aged 87 years. He was a loving son, husband, father, family man, friend and member of the BC sports community.

‘Johnny Bates’ grew up at 2788 Franklin Street in the East End of Vancouver, one block away from the Forum at the PNE. He attended Hastings, Templeton and Vancouver Technical schools. He completed a four year apprenticeship at the Vancouver Vocational Institute and received his Journeyman Plumbing Certificate.

John was a talented athlete and top junior hockey prospect. Judged too short to play professionally, on a bet he tried out and became the first hockey player to make the Ice Capades, a feat written up in *Sports Illustrated*. Between 1958 and 1962, John travelled the world entertaining people on ice, including a memorable visit to Russia during the Cold War. John was an accomplished showman (a trait he carried throughout his life) and thrilled audiences as a clown, character and cast member in many skits and shows. During his time at Ice Capades, he fell in love with Marilyn Braun, a fellow skater from the Prairies and Victoria, and the two of them began married life in Vancouver with John as Building Supervisor for the PNE Agrodome.

John and Marilyn settled in Victoria in 1965 when he became Assistant Manager of Memorial Arena. He was promoted to Deputy Director of Recreation in 1970 and retired as Director of Parks and Recreation in 1997. During that time, John was variously responsible for Memorial Arena, Crystal Pool, Royal Athletic Park, Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse.

John had a love affair with the Victoria sports community and a passion for the ‘Barn on Blanshard’. In addition to his job,

he and Marilyn volunteered as organizers at hundreds of international, national and local sports competitions over five decades, including the Commonwealth Games. He was a lifelong member and Past President of the Recreation Facilities Association of BC. He was a founding member and Past President of the Greater Victoria Sports Hall of Fame and honoured when he and Marilyn were inducted in 2016.

John had a soft spot for Christmas. For over 30 years, he and Marilyn and their neighbours hosted ‘Candy Cane Lane’ on Tattersall Drive which brought holiday cheer to thousands of visitors each year who came to see the displays, meet Santa Claus and his elves and receive free candy canes. It was John’s way of sharing the season of joy that he never experienced as a child.

John was a short man but a larger than life character. He loved to make people laugh, often at his expense. He had lifelong friends from the East End and Ice Capades. Decades of friendships with coaches, general managers, team owners, players, doctors, trainers, referees, scouts, agents, broadcasters, sports writers, performers, promoters, hoteliers, facility managers, league officials, ushers, colleagues and others associated with sports and entertainment communities across Canada and America. Whether living in Victoria or just visiting, friends often ended up at his house for one of Marilyn’s home cooked meals and occasionally a few drinks.

John was a family man. He and Marilyn shared a special bond that merged their personal and professional lives. They were a true team. He often recalled how lucky he was that a scrappy kid from the wrong side of the tracks found a nice Prairie girl to keep him on the straight and narrow. John was appreciative of Marilyn’s family who welcomed him as their own. He was a dedicated father to his children and active ‘Papa’ to his grandchildren.

After retirement, John and Marilyn revived their wanderlust with cruises and trips to Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Indian Ocean, Ireland, Middle East, United Kingdom and United States. John enjoyed taking home movies and time capsules of these travels and earlier adventures during Ice Capades, summer vacations in Parksville and Birch Bay, family holidays and family reunions brought back warm memories in the last few years of his life.

When not travelling, John's garden was a source of pride and joy. He remained an avid green thumb to the end, puttering around his workshop and backyard to make sure flowers, shrubs and garden gnomes came and went at their appointed times. He played hockey, soccer and golf until late in life.

John is survived by his loving family. His wife of 59 years, Marilyn (née Braun); son, Dave (and daughter-in-law, Joanne); daughter, Lisa; six grandchildren, Jordan, Riley, Jacob and Harper Bate from South Africa and Ellie and Tiernan McMahon from America; brother-in-law, Bill Braun (Hilary) and their families and extended kin across the country. John is reunited with his parents, John and Mary Bate; in-laws, Ike and Dorie Braun; his mentor, Dave Dauphinee (Elaine) and many other family and friends. The tempo of the afterlife may noticeably pick up with John's arrival.

Thanks to Dr Buie, Dr Nadra, Dr O'Fiesh, Dr Lundy, Dr Patel, Ed from RHS and Kelly, Liz and Sarah from VHA for all their care and kindness over the past few years.

If desired, donations may be made to the John and Marilyn Bate Scholarship in Recreation and Health Education at the University of Victoria by visiting https://extrweb.uvic.ca/donate/johnbate or contact UVic by phone at 250-472-4924.

At John's wishes, a Celebration of Life will be held at 2:00 pm on Friday, 22 December 2023, in the Sequoia Centre at

McCall Gardens, 4665 Falaise Drive, Victoria, BC with a live stream available.  Link below:

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85928458302?pwd=68qGmZoNi6XaChtbiPZKbhQdE05ZMl.1

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens
www.mccallgardens.com