

William Hamilton

September 1, 1917 – December 4, 2009

Hamilton – William passed away peacefully after a short bout of pneumonia at Hospice in Victoria, B.C.

He was predeceased by his parents William and Marion, sisters Jean (late of Victoria), Rachael, Marion, Kate, Annie and brothers Tom, Jim, John and Robert all of Scotland. Willie is survived by his loving wife of 65 years, Winnie and twin daughters Jean (Tom), grandchildren Christopher (Avril Johnson), Dr. William (Dr. Kelly Cox) and Jeanette Carlson and Janet (Dr. Gary) Dillabaugh, grandchildren Hamilton and Cameron Muirhead, step-grandchildren Brent (Miriam), Dr. Lisa and Trevor Dillabaugh. In Victoria, he is survived by his niece Marion Favor and her family. He is also survived by his sister-in-law Anne of Liverpool, England and many nieces and nephews throughout the world.

Born into a coal miner's large family in Meikle-Earnock, Hamilton, Scotland, Willie excelled as an athlete from an early age. His first love was soccer and in 1934 he signed with the first division English team, Preston North End Football Club in Preston, Lancashire. As left half, he played with his room-mate Bill Shankly (latterly Manager of Liverpool FC) and good friend Tom Finney (later Sir Tom). During the years leading up to World War II, including 1938 when "Proud Preston" won the FA Cup, Willie played with and against the best of English footballers.

After the War began, Willie joined the Blackburn Police Force while still playing with Preston North End. In Blackburn he met Winifred Johnson, a Lancashire lass living across the street from Ewood, the Blackburn Rovers FC grounds and they were married in 1944. When League football was suspended because of risks from bombing raids, Willie joined the British Army and was posted (as he affectionately described "overseas") to Cardiff, Wales. From here he "guested" with

many teams for charity matches and enjoyed playing with, rather than against, many of the English League stars. At War's end, Willie returned to Preston North End playing until 1949 when he transferred to first division Queen of the South in the Scottish League. In 1951 at the end of his playing career, Willie transferred to Hamilton Academicals as player manager until retiring in 1953. During his career, Willie played with some of the best footballers in the world and heard the roar of crowds from the pitch at Deepdale, Old Trafford, Wembley, Hampden Park and many other stadiums.

In 1955, Willie and his young family immigrated to Victoria where he was employed at the Dockyard. As football was still in his blood, he became player manager in the old Pacific Coast Soccer League where he was Player of the Year in 1960. After leaving the Dockyard, Willie worked in the building trade constructing many homes in Victoria.

In retirement Willie and Winnie traveled a great deal as their greatest pleasures were visiting family and friends. He also frequented Ardmore, Cedar Hill and Uplands Golf Courses. Willie was a kind and generous grandfather who spent countless hours with the grandchildren. In his last days, they all returned from throughout the world to visit with him.

Willie was highly principled, a man from a humble beginning who used his gifts to rise to the top in the world of professional sports, to care and provide for a loving family and enjoy an independent retirement, living in the home he built until his final illness.

A celebration of Willie's life will be held at the Uplands Golf Club, 3300 Cadboro Bay Rd, Victoria, B.C. on December 20, 2009 from 2:00 – 5:00 pm. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Victoria Hospice, 1510 Fort Street, Victoria, B.C. V8S 5J2.