

In Memory of ... Bill Gable, Jerry Chernivec and Phil Graber

Last season was a tough one for the Minnesota Hockey family, during which we lost Bill Gable, Jerry Chernivec and Phil Graber. All three were capable and storied leaders with long histories of service to Minnesota Hockey.

Bill Gable, born in 1945, was a classic example of dedication to youth hockey in Minnesota. He started his involvement by coaching in the Centennial Program in the 1980's and joined the District 10 Board in the 1990's, progressing from League Coordinator to Tournaments VP and then District President / Assistant District Director. Bill became Minnesota Hockey's Tournaments Vice President in 1998, and handled that difficult job meticulously – his training as a machinist probably helped him to cope with all the details. He attended countless meetings and took thousands of phone calls to make tournaments easier for the volunteers and safer for the kids. Bill learned he had cancer in 2008, but continued on as VP until 2009 when the work load became too much for him. He returned to District 10 as their Tournaments VP, never giving up his love of the game or any chance to help the kids. Even after he stepped down from the District board he stayed on in an advisory position and helped as long as he could. Bill passed on September 8, 2010.

Jerry Chernivec, born in Ely in 1940, was a chemical engineer and patent attorney for 3M. His 20 years of volunteer service started with White Bear Lake Youth Hockey. Jerry took on increasing responsibilities until he became MAHA President in 1985, serving in that capacity until 1994 when 3M transferred him to Austin, TX. His 10 years of service stands today as the longest by any MAHA President. During that same period, he also represented the Minnesota District as a director for USA Hockey (AHAUS at the time). Jerry made several significant contributions during his tenure, particularly his two-year chairmanship of a special committee formed in 1983 to deal with the age change issue. Within MAHA circles, Jerry was affectionately known as the “Big Kahuna”, a title of respect he earned for his low-key yet precise management style, with frequent injections of humor. He had a knack for getting people involved and continually challenged us to work together so that every youngster in the state could experience what the sport has to offer. Jerry passed away on November 23, 2010.

Phil Graber, born in 1953, managed and partly-owned a machine shop in Fridley. He began his hockey service with Coon Rapids Youth Hockey, and went on to become District 10 Director (1995-2005), MH Secretary/Treasurer (2006-2008), USA Hockey Director (2003-2009), and MH Director Emeritus (2008-2011). Phil believed that if you want to make a difference then get involved – and THAT HE DID – he lived it every day of his adult life! In addition to his hockey volunteering he participated in the Coon Rapids Police Reserve, Minnesota Precision Manufacturers Association, Fridley Rotary Club, Gopher State Timing Association, Minnesota Street Rod Association and the Minnesota Beater Boys Car Club. He also enjoyed spending time at his cabin and riding his motorcycle. Phil passed away suddenly on February 4, 2011 after 30 years of service to Minnesota Hockey. Even after Phil's death, he continued his giving ways. He was an organ donor and someone today is able to enjoy the sense of sight through his eyes, literally seeing life as Phil once saw it.

The dedication and contributions of these three individuals will be long remembered. Their service to hockey and Minnesota's youth truly made a difference, and we will be forever grateful to their families for sharing them with us.