

# *Celebration of Life*



Dr.  
**Gene Sutton**

# Dr. Gene Sutton

*By John Kernaghan, Hamilton Spectator- June 9, 2001*

The sports world is much like any other sphere; sometimes you have to show a little ingenuity to get stuff done. Or in the case of Dr. Gene Sutton, "in-gene-uity".

Sutton, the Hamilton woman recently a part of the Canadian Olympic Committee, was at her creative best when officials at the 1996 Olympics clamped down on passes for family and friends of athletes. Sutton was on the mission staff trying to iron out the many problems that plagued the Atlanta Games.

"We discovered that they would issue VIP passes if you gave a Royal-sound name. So I got two people in that way. One was Anne of Green Gables, the other was the Queen of Ontario".

So, add gullible to everything else in Atlanta folks have been knocked for. Sutton describe her job of untangling logistical problems there, as one of the most challenging ever. "Olympic transportation was an oxymoron" she recalls painfully. It offended the organizer in Sutton, a woman who appears to have suddenly burst on the scene but actually has done everything from the dirty little jobs on up.

As well as being elected to the Canadian Olympic Association Executive and Board, she was recently named the Chef de Mission for Canada's teams at the 2003 Pan-AM Games in the Dominican Republic. She considers management to be her best skill, not surprising given a life time of juggling activities, events and family life.

That goes right back to public school at Wentworth Public school while living on Steven Street in east Hamilton and Dalewood School in Westdale while living on Kenmore Ave. Young Gene was in Brownies, highland dancing, volleyball and basketball.

Fast forward and the last weekend she was involved in the COC discussion to address the feasting problem of development of athletes in Canada.

Sutton says the Olympic Organization is moving toward more help for high performance athletes while leaving funding of grass roots sport programs to the federal agency, Sport Canada.

"We're looking at help for the high performance side through four-year Games cycle, not just the Games themselves."

Athletes will have a sympathetic voice at the COC table in Sutton. With a background of managing teams and events, she's not likely to forget why she is there. Amateur sports in Canada has been beggared by executives and administrators who have said athletes come



*Continued on Page 4...*



# Agenda



6 PM to 7 PM ♦ Cocktail Hour

7 PM to 9 PM ♦ Guest Speakers

- ★ Stephanie Sutton
- ★ Kellie Hinnells
- ★ Murray Kilby
- ★ Colin Hood
- ★ Slava Corn
- ★ Jean-Paul Caron
- ★ Chris Rudge
- ★ John Byl

9 PM to ?

- ♦ Open Mic
- ♦ Snacks and Refreshments
- ♦ Dancing
- ♦ Socializing



*Photo of Parliamentary Assistant Peter Fonseca, Minister Jim Watson, Dr. Gene Sutton, Team Ontario Chef de Mission, and Premier Dalton McGuinty receiving framed photos of athletes.*

Continued from Page 2...



▲ Gene enjoying a softball game

first, then acted based on politics and self-preservation. The apparent turnabout of Denis Coderre, the Secretary of State for Sport, from athletes-first to putting backyard votes up front is a case in point.

Other than a misstep in her first choice of careers, everything has lead the energetic woman to having a hand in Canadian sports from the grassroots level to podium.

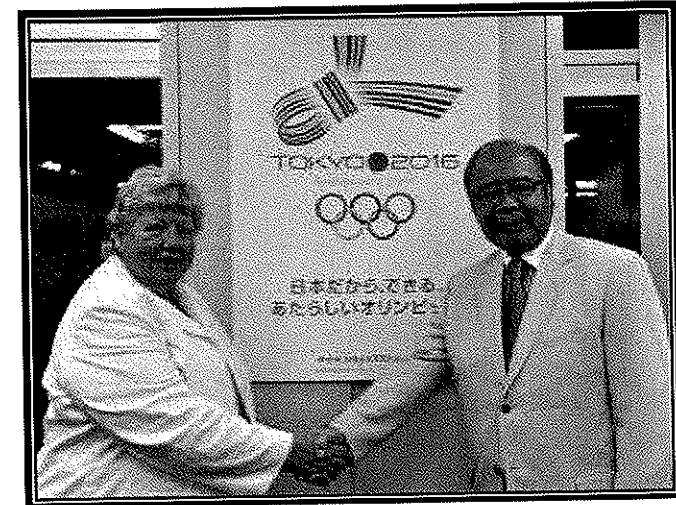
"I started out in nursing

but it took only five hours in the classroom to know it wasn't what I wanted." She shifted to physical education at McMaster and then to Winona High School as a gym teach, introducing gymnastics and winning two Ontario titles.

"It was new to everyone but I found some good floor music to work with and attended coaching clinics and judging courses. I became a better coach." Then she moved to Scott Park where she organized several meets. "I found that was my passion, organizing events. It was such a challenge, making it happen live in front of a big crowd. It is a great feeling." Sutton was instrumental in everything from setting up world, Pan-Am and Olympic gymnastics trials to the World Gymnastics Challenges of 1993 to 1995 and 2001 Children's International Games in Hamilton.

One of her finest moments, she says came before the 1992 Olympics, when Canadian gymnastics actively pushed for her to manage the two teams in Barcelona.

A woman handling the men's team was something breakthrough. Former



▲ Under an initiative to promote increased Olympic education in Japan; Tokyo 2016 and the Japan Olympic Academy (JOA) hosted a lecture September 20, 2008 by Dr. Gene Sutton, Executive Board Member of the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) and head of the Canadian Olympic Academy (COA), to discuss related activities in Canada, the host country of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

top-ranked Canadian gymnast Curtis Hibbert says Sutton was so deeply steeped in the sport she was instantly accepted. "I remember we had a problem when a coach was late. Gene had to go out and assist on the apparatus during competition and we didn't miss a beat."

Sutton will have to be as versatile in her new roles, as well as the teaching position she has taken for next fall at Mac. She will head a course for first year kinesiology students called Sports Issues in Canada, bringing firsthand experience in past and current issues to the job. Sutton, by the way, gets to call herself Dr. thanks to the doctorate in sports psychology she was awarded for a 1987 thesis on sports. She canvassed 500 competitive swimmers and gymnasts who had dropped down to other levels.

Her findings challenged the common wisdom that too much training or pressure was forcing kids 13-15 out. She found, in fact that 87 per cent who left the top competitive level with involvement in other sports, preferring a more rounded experience.

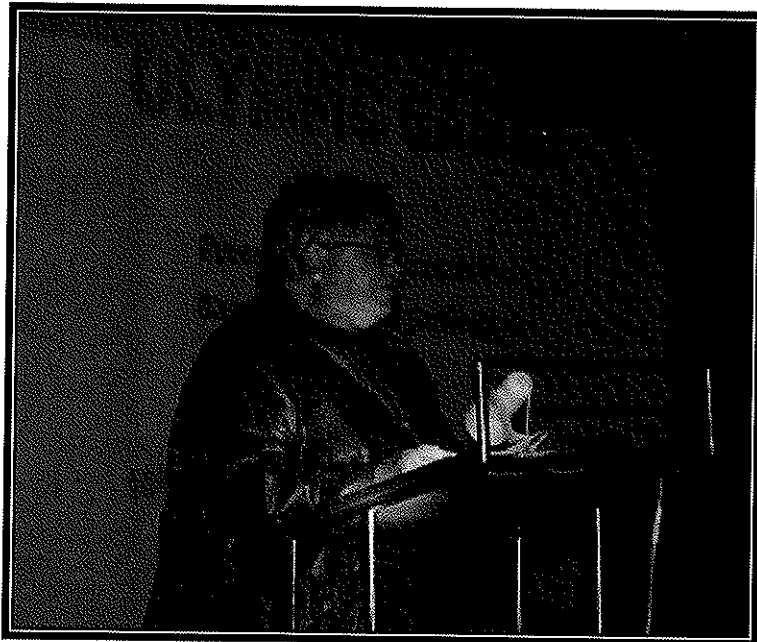
Her early months with the COC Executive could be the most frantic in years for the Olympic organization should Toronto 2008 win it's Games bid next month.

And if all fails, work will intensify related to the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver, BC. Also, high on the agenda is a budget for the Salt Lake Winter Games early next year.

And though the 2003 Pan-AMs are a way off, already it looks like Canada will have to start finding ways to get the best people there. In the '99 Games in Winnipeg, the Pan Am movement was hurt by the Americans sending their B Teams in swimming and track.

In 2003, the world swimming championships are scheduled right on top of the Games. "We don't want to offend the Central and South American countries by not sending our best, so that we have to start going to our federations now about participation. But most groups see the Pan-AMs as a great spring board for Olympics."

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◀ Gene lecturing at the International Olympic Academy on April 9, 2009. Her lecture was on the role of NOAs in relation to NOCs and the Youth Olympic Games.





## Al Craig

Al Craig is the Officer for Mohawk College and Colour Commentator for Hamilton Bulldogs broadcasts on Talk 820. He spent 23 years at 900 CHML.

He knew Gene for almost 30 years, but became much closer as a board member of SportHamilton.

### *A Special Memory about Gene*

Gene was full of surprises. One night after a dinner at Dundurn Castle she said she had to show me something in her car. She opened the trunk and pulled out something I

recognized right away. Who but 'Doc' would be in possession of the Calgary Olympic Torch!



## Steph Sutton

Stephanie Sutton is referred to by some as "Little Gene", and for good reason. She has followed in her Mother's giant footsteps - taking on the world of Sports and Recreation.

Steph graduated from the Mohawk College Recreation Leadership Program, winning the Skip Stanbridge Award for her achievements of high academics and excelling in her practicum second year at Brantford Parks and Recreation.

After graduating from Mohawk, Steph began working as a Facility Supervisor at a Community Centre in Brantford, followed by a position as Facility Manager of the Dundas Granite Curling Club. She is currently the Coaching and Officials Program Coordinator for Softball Ontario.

In addition to her work experience in sport, Steph made Gene proud by attending the Canadian Olympic Academy in 2008, volunteering at countless sporting events, and recently becoming involved with KidSport Ontario and Big Brothers and Big Sisters Hamilton.

### *Special Memories about Mom*

My favourite memory of my Mom is her coming to watch me play Softball and Hockey. She was always my biggest cheerleader no matter how my team and I did in the game.

One day I was waiting for the bus at the end of the driveway in Copetown, and I noticed that my Mom had come out of the house and gotten into her car with no pants on. She then drove to the end of the driveway and wished me a good day at school. To which I simply turned to her and said "Umm... Pants?" Saying nothing, Mom put the car in reverse and drove back up to the house, got out of her car and went back inside. She then returned outside - with pants this time - came to the end of the driveway and said "Let's try this again. You have a good day at school." And I said, "You too."

My favourite 'Geneism': "Don't be insulted when someone compares you to me - take it as a compliment."



## Kellie Hinnells

Kellie Hinnells is a long time friend and colleague of Gene Sutton. Anyone in Gymnastics always thinks of the dynamic duo of Doctor Gene and Nurse Kellie.

Their shared love of sport and sense of humour were a couple of the things that drew Gene to Kellie over twenty years ago. In 1988 Gene introduced Kellie to Gymnastics as a volunteer on the organizing committee of the Canadian Championships.

In 2000 she was proud to see Kellie become an employee in her passion of Gymnastics as the Women's Program Manager at Gymnastics Ontario and even more so when she became the Technical Director in 2003. Together they have collaborated and led many gymnastics programs and events in

Ontario over the past twenty years.

During that time Gene also introduced Kellie to the Olympic Movement and the philosophy of "Making a Difference." They worked together on the Ontario Olympic Youth Academies, SportHamilton and the incorporation of the new Community Sport Councils of Ontario. Kellie and Gene have been linked with their passion for Gymnastics and their love of shopping and travel.

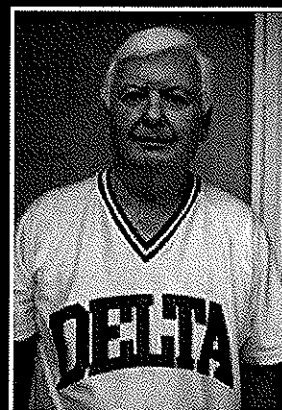
### *A Special Memory about Gene*

Florida - sitting by the pool, reading a book, shopping, shopping, shopping and "Guppy's"

Being able to share on site her experience as the Chef de Mission of the Pan American Games in 2003.

Teaching her how to use the computer - such a brilliant lady had challenges with technology.

The daily phone calls and decisions about where we were going for dinner - and then having dinner at one of our many haunts where they knew our name and we had a special table.



## Murray Kilby

Murray Kilby spent his entire 37-year career as an educator with the Hamilton/Hamilton-Wentworth School Board. Through his career, he was a business education teacher, vice-principal and principal.

He coached tennis, basketball and hockey.

Murray was Principal at Delta Secondary School in Hamilton, ON with Gene from 1989-96.

### *A Special Memory about Gene*

Murray was always jealous of Gene's collection of red and white clothing - he was amazed that someone had just as much (or more!) red and white attire as he did!



## Colin Hood

Colin Hood is the former Executive Director of OFSAA. He has worked for Municipal and Provincial Governments in Sport and Recreation, taught in schools in Manitoba, England and at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

He is now retired and living in Sidney, B.C.

### *A Special Memory about Gene*

In my role as Executive Director of OFSAA I worked with Gene who was a Vice Chair of Women's Advisory Committee and an OFSAA Board Member. I was always amazed at how she carried out her many roles and responsibilities at OFSAA Gymnastic Championships. I was able to witness her guiding influence over the Gymnastic Sports Advisory Committee and her key leadership role in the organization, planning and operation of the Ontario Junior Olympic Academies.

Diana Ranken says that the first comment Gene made at every OFSAA Gymnastic Championship was not about gymnastics but "I hope you have brought the Girl Guide cookies for sale."



## Slava Corn

Breaking into the heavily male-dominated world of international sport federations, Slava Corn provides tremendous leadership in the world of gymnastics. She was re-elected as Vice President of the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG) at the FIG 2008 Congress in Helsinki, Finland, and was the FIG delegate at the 2008 Olympic Games. She also served as a member of the IOC team responsible to review the Olympic Results Information System (ORIS). She continues to sit on the Board of Directors of Gymnastics Canada. And, as Director of Sport and Recreation at Seneca College, now retired, she was the driving force behind the development of the Seneca College Coaching Technique Diploma Program and the Sport School Program.

This combination of high level academic classes with elite sport training is a unique concept in Canada.

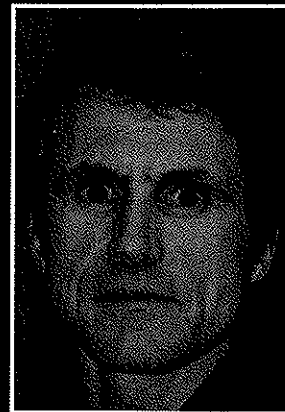
### *Special Memories about Gene*

Gene started most conversations with me like this "you probably know this already....." This was Gene's way of sharing information yet not making the person feel uncomfortable that she knows more than they do. Quite frankly most of the time she was telling me something I did not know.

At GCG board meetings she was famous for one quote "I know this is getting too operational but....."

And finally: "if you are Prince Albert then I am Queen Elizabeth!"





## Jean-Paul Caron

Jean-Paul Caron was appointed President & CEO of Gymnastics Canada in August 2000. Prior to his appointment, he held several leadership positions within the Canadian gymnastics structure: Chief Executive Officer & Technical Director - Gymnastics Ontario; Technical Director - Fédération de Gymnastique du Québec; Women's High Performance Director - Gymnastics Canada.

### *Special Memories about Gene*

I've known Gene since I started to be involved in gymnastics at the National level, and she has always been there to support me with my development - good and bad times.

She was a mentor and a dear friend of mine for over 20 years.

I've met Gene for the first time at the 1987 Women's Elite Canada event in Toronto, where she helped me survive my first real encounter with a very unique group of Women's High Performance Coaches. Without her help, this would have been a dreadful experience for me. She supported and guided me through this first contact and she made a difference.

I've shared so many great moments with Gene, making it very difficult to highlight only a few. The 1991 World Championships and 1992 Olympic Games were very special events full of excitement and challenges. Gene was the Gymnastics team manager for both events and she had to compose with so many unusual and some time funny situations. However, nothing she could not handle with a unique style and sense of humour.

I know that one of her favourite moment at the 1992 Olympic Games was when her role as the Gymnastics Team Manager was expanded to "Men's Assistant Olympic coach". She truly enjoyed being around our Men's team during podium training and the image of Gene lifting Curtis Hibbert on rings is memorable. She always took a real pleasure at describing how she reminded Curtis to tight up his "bum".

Gene had a unique and remarkable passion for the sport of Gymnastics and the Olympic movement. But most of all, she cared for the athletes and everything she did was for the athletes. At 2009 Canadian Gymnastics Championships, Gene introduced a new theme "Gymnastics with the Stars", a tribute to past and current gymnastics "champions". This concept was a true reflection of how much Gene appreciated and respected the athletes.

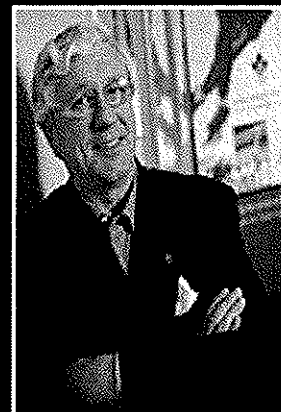
Gene has received all the Gymnastics Canada awards and recognition. Life member, Malcolm Hogarth Leadership Award, Program Service Award and at the recent 2009 Gymnastics Canada AGM she was presented with the Jay Goold Memorial Award. I had the honour and privilege to present this prestigious award to Gene on June 22, 2009 and I will never forget that moment.

Since 1976, Gene has provided exceptional leadership through her volunteer commitment with Gymnastics in Canada. Her overall contribution is unique, her personality is unique and her style is unique.

We were very, very fortunate to have such a dedicated and knowledgeable individual as part of the Canadian Gymnastics family and she will be part of our lives forever.

Gene will be greatly missed but we all know that her spirit will always be there for us. Gymnastics Canada Board meetings will never be the same without Gene's presence and exceptional contribution.

We love you Gene and thank you for a wonderful life.



## Chris Rudge

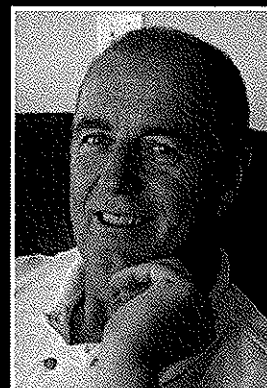
Chris Rudge was named Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Olympic Committee in January 2003. He is also currently an adjunct Professor at the University of British Columbia's School of Human Kinetics.

Mr. Rudge is a former Senior Executive and member of the Office of the CEO of Quebecor World Inc., which was the world's largest commercial printer. In his 12 years, he held several executive positions including: Executive Vice-President, Marketing, Communications and International Development; and Chairman, CEO and President, Que-Net Media.

Mr. Rudge has been active on a number of boards, including The Paxen Group Inc., Merrill Lynch Canada, the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the National Ballet of Canada, and the White Ribbon Campaign. He is also active in the push to bring the 2015 Pan American Games to Ontario, sitting on the Toronto 2015 Board of Directors.

### *A Special Memory about Gene*

Gene was one of those rare individuals whose dedication to the Olympic Ideal, particularly through her work with Olympic education and Olympic academies, transcended the politics of sport. She was genuinely focused on the needs of athletes and coaches. In all she did, through her work in gymnastics or her support of athletes at Games, the athletes were first and foremost in her mind. For many she can truly be described as having been, for many years, the conscience of the Olympic movement in this country.



## John Byl

John Byl, PhD, is the president of CIRA Ontario and a professor of Physical Education at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. Dr. Byl has contributed to 15 books. He authored several books, including Intramural Recreation as well as Organizing Successful Tournaments, and has coauthored several books including Chicken and Noodle Games as well as Christian Paths to Health and Wellness. He is the winner of several professional awards and a regular workshop leader. He has a special interest in promoting fun, active participation for all children and developing and maintaining personal wellness. John and his wife Catherine are currently training to run their first marathon.

### *A Special Memory about Gene*

Gene loved the mushroom soup at our SportHamilton dinner meetings, and if she loved food like this, her common phrase was, "That soup is to die for." She would say it with such positive emotion.

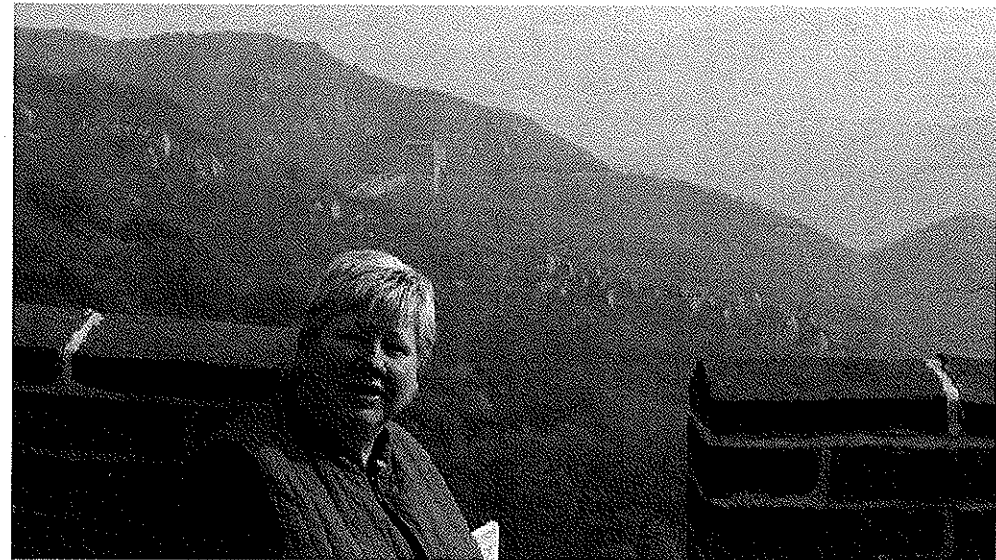
She also loved her diet cokes.

# Did you know this about Doc?

<b>Hometown:</b>	Hamilton, ON
<b>Licence Plate #:</b>	DOK JOK
<b>Favourite Place to Eat:</b>	The Keg
<b>Favourite Drink:</b>	Diet Coke
<b>Favourite Place to Shop:</b>	Shopping in the States
<b>Favourite Cartoon Characters:</b>	Betty Boop and Doc
<b>Favourite Ballpark Candy:</b>	Big Red Feet, Green Leaves and Red Liquorice
<b>Cell Phone Ring Tone:</b>	O'Canada
<b>Favourite Song:</b>	Old Time Rock 'n Roll - Bob Seger & the Silver Bullet Band

## More Fun Facts:

- ★ Gene highland danced for Queen Elizabeth at Ivor Wynne Stadium in 1953
- ★ Gene grew up thinking that Osk Kee Wee and Osk Kee Waa were part of O'Canada
- ★ Mom was always proud to wear Red and White
- ★ Doc loved to travel around the world or even for a day trip somewhere close by.
- ★ Doc's favourite collectible were Inukshuks



# Special Thanks

Thank you for being a part of the celebration of  
the life of Gene Sutton!



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