



CANADIAN OUTRIGGER HALL OF FAME Norman MacDonell (Posthumous)



Summary

For those who knew Norman MacDonell, he epitomized "*the salt of the earth*" (a very good and honest person). The August 2022 obituary for Norman MacDonell is replete with platitudes and condolences from far and wide conveying sadness at the loss of this remarkable individual. The words that friends and family shared about Norman say it all - *True and trusted friend; A gentle, kind and caring man who was always happy to help out when he could; Such an interesting, adventurous, and kind man; Genuinely engaged in any conversation we had; Quiet confident manner; Always a great support and helper; He was thoughtful, careful and wise; Whenever I had concerns or challenges I could always talk with Norm; He would listen quietly and carefully and when he responded to me it was always gentle with kindness, encouragement and spiritual wisdom.* This Canadian Outrigger Hall of Fame bio is a testament not only to Norman MacDonell, but also to the 100s of individuals across Canada like him who have made a lifetime commitment to the paddling community by working tirelessly out of the limelight. Norman MacDonell, like so many other members of the paddling community, does not have an illustrious bio of Olympics or IVF or Molokai or Catalina or Queen Liliuokalani paddling achievements. What Norman is recognized most for is a lifetime of selfless contribution to the paddling community and for having made a lasting positive impact on everyone that has ever had the good fortune to have spent time with him. [01]

Early Career

Most of the background on Norman was provided by the "*VCKC – 50 Years of Paddling*" publication and by lifelong friend David Hill. Doreen and Charlie MacDonell, moved to Grande Prairie, Alberta in 1952, where Norman was born in 1954. His siblings were Sandy and Elizabeth-Anne, and Mhairi. Norman relocated circa 1977 to BC. He was married to Lisa and father to Julie, Anna, and Greg. [02] Norman was a very competitive white-water kayaker and member of the BC Provincial team many times. He also competed at the National level. Norman and David Hill paddled as white-water slalom paddlers from about 1983 to 1990. Supposedly, Norman was the first white-water kayaker to paddle down the Class IV rapids above Skutz Falls on the Cowichan River. [03] David and Delia Hill joined VCKC in 1991, following an introduction to VCKC by Norman MacDonell.

Outrigger Canoeing Achievements

Norman was very competitive but never egotistical like some other top performing athletes. He was always smiling, good spirited and eager to give advice when he saw a need for it. He loved to innovate and experiment with boats, paddles, and paddling technique. Norman excelled as a paddler but his goal was never to win a race. It was about taking himself to his own physical and mental limits. A race was just a chance to do this and to have fun with other people challenging their limits. Norman has represented Team Canada at International Va'a Federation (IVF) World Distance in 2019. At 2019 Australia IVF World Distance, Norman would place 7th in V1 Masters 60, and race with a Canadian crew that would place 6th in Master 50 Men V6. [04] There are no online records of Norman ever having competed in V1 prior to 2018, yet he easily earned the V1 Masters 60 seat at the 2018 Team Canada World Distance time trials. Norman had the fastest time in an OC1 at the VCKC 2018 Wake Up the Gorge. [05] Norman easily won the V1 Masters 60 division at the 2019 FCRC Winter Series race. [06] Norman easily won the V1 Masters 60 division at the 2019 Latitude 48 D'Arcy Cash Dash race. [07] In April 2022, Norman & Samuel Liu would place 1st in Open Marathon Canoe 2 (MC2) at Fort Langley Spring River Run. [08] In May 2022, Norman displays his versatility in small-boat racing by placing 2nd in both Open Marathon Canoe (MC1) and Open Marathon Canoe 2 (MC2) at the VCKC Restart the Gorge 2022. [09] Likely the final mention of Norman racing, is the VCKC June 2022 Newsletter where VCKC wishes Norman well as he heads off to compete in the Columbia River Gorge Outrigger Race. [10]

Coach-Builder Achievements

David Hill worked with Gord Oliphant to acquire a loaner OC6 outrigger canoe for VCKC in 1994. Norman got into outrigger canoe paddling when David Hill brought "*The Burrard*" over from Whistler. Norman, David Hill, Gord Oliphant, Shelia Allen, Arpad Szatory, and Rosemary Henry were the first outrigger canoe paddlers at VCKC. To launch and land "*The Burrard*", Norman, David Hill, Cameron Shankland, and Arpad Szatory devised a horizontal ladder or slipway with the rungs made of one-meter lengths of plastic pipe laid out a metre apart and held in place by chains. The OC6 could be lifted down onto the rungs and slid along the slippery pipes into the water. A Vancouver club had used a trolley to move their OC6, and so Norman and David Hill and others designed one with fat, smooth tires that could run down the beach keeping the hull a foot or so above gravel. [11]

Norman contributed to the VCKC Huli clinics. *The first winter that VCKC had "The Burrard" crews would paddle into the Upper Portage Inlet. To get there, crews had to paddle under the Craigflower Bridge. This bridge was old and stood on many wood pilings. The pilings were spaced just wide enough that the outrigger canoe could pass through with a foot of so clearance on each side. Norman encouraged David Hill, the steersman, to paddle full speed through this gap. We did this many times until one night a slight steering mistake caused us to clip a piling, flip and get stuck under the bridge. We could not upright it between the pilings so had to swim the boat to deeper water. It was dark, near freezing water, and no one was wearing a PFD. Worse, was that no one in the boat but me had ever hulled the boat. I shouted instructions and we got the boat flipped up right. Before I could say anything, Norman tries getting into the boat from the opposite side of the ama. So, we flipped again. A few more minutes of swimming and we got the boat upright and bailed out. Next problem, only I still had a paddle. We spent the next 10 minutes or more looking for black carbon fiber paddles on the water, in the dark. We got back to the clubhouse a bit more than slightly hypothermic. As we dried off and warmed up, Norman smiled and jokingly said, "You know we really should practice that Huli thing".* – as related by David Hill

The CORA "loaner" program for "*The Burrard*" was due to end in May 1995 with Comox acquiring possession of the OC6. The outrigger canoe program had 1 year to raise the money to buy their own boat. An OC6 was expensive and would come with ongoing maintenance and care. At their monthly outrigger canoe meeting, they decide that anyone paddling the outrigger canoe regularly would pay the Club \$50 a year on top of their membership fee and this money would be for the program's expenses. The VCKC Executive agreed in principle to support the purchase of an outrigger canoe, guaranteeing a loan of up to \$6000 and to pay one-third of the costs. The program had to raise the rest of the money. The VCKC Executive also agreed that regular outrigger canoe paddlers had to pay an extra annual fee; \$80 was suggested but soon dispensed with. Funds raised at the garage sale in April were applied towards the purchase. The first sale raised \$740, and a second one in June added \$300. Additional funds came from the sale of surplus stock from Van Isle Windows, where Norman worked and from the sale of a VCKC Cook Book put together by Kathy Baur. The new outrigger canoe arrived in early May 1995 and was paid off by end of Sep 1995.

VCKC organized a mid-distance outrigger canoe race in July 1996 – the first Island Iron Outrigger Canoe Race. The organizing committee worked hard and long to set up this new venture. Norman, Rosemary Henry, Arpad Szatory, Kirsten MacPherson, Jacquie Tuttle, Gord Oliphant, and Cliff Dunajski were the core team, with Kevin Peterson soliciting trophies, prizes, and arranging accommodations. The event was based in Cadboro Bay, with a 15-kilometre race route out round Discovery and the Chatham Islands. A total of 23 teams were entered from Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, and Comox, as well as VCKC.

Exemplary Achievements

Norman had been Sales Manager for Victoria's Van Isle Windows since 1989 when Hong-Kong-based Tom Lee, a Canadian who makes plastic plants and other decor in factories in China where costs are low and labour cheap, bought the company from founder Ed Sawatsky. In an age when so many things we use are manufactured overseas, Van Isle Windows is a rare exception. The Victoria-based company which churns out about 12,000 vinyl windows a year and has a workforce of 50. Van Isle Windows has been a consistent economic driver in the region since opening 35 years ago, providing steady, well-paying jobs. The other bit of irony in the Victoria business is that nothing in the supply chain used to make the windows comes from China. The big bundles of vinyl used for framing comes from Washington state. The glass is purchased in Vancouver via Seattle-area plants and the hardware is from Central Canada. [12] Attention to detail and quick service are the pillars of Van Isle Windows business plan. "*We set the bar high for the product and the service and we've been able to hold to that,*" said Sales Manager Norman MacDonell. "*It makes it more difficult for our competition.*" Van Isle Windows and Norman have been cited in the press frequently as well as recognized by the Better Business Bureau for their exceptional service to the community. [13] [14] [15]

References

Note	Article	Link
[01]	2022 Norman MacDonell	https://www.legacy.com/ca/obituaries/timescolonist/name/norman-macdonell-obituary?id=39973116
[02]	2018 Doreen MacDonell	https://www.mccallgardens.com/obituaries/doreen-macdonell
[03]	Cowichan River - Skutz Falls to Marie Canyon	https://www.bcwhitewater.org/reaches/cowichan-river-skutz-falls-to-marie-canyon
[04]	2019 Australia IVF World Distance Results	http://www.ivfiv.org/uploads/2/5/3/8/25381158/world_distance_2019_results_all_days.pdf
[05]	2018 May VCKC Newsletter	https://www.vckc.ca/resources/Newsletters/2018/2018-05-VCKC-Newsletter.pdf
[06]	2019 FCRCC PNWORCA Winter Series #5	http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2019/pnworca5.html
[07]	2019 D'Arcy Island Cash Dash	http://www.jerichooutrigger.com/races2019/darcyisland.html
[08]	2022 FLCC River Run – Small Boat Race	https://www.fortlangleycanoecub.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022-FLCC-River-Run-Small-Boat-Race-Results-April-10-2022.pdf
[09]	2022 Restart the Gorge MC	https://www.vckc.ca/Restart-2022
[10]	VCKC June 2022 Newsletter	https://www.vckc.ca/resources/Newsletters/2022/VCKC-Newsletter-2022-06.pdf
[11]	“The Burrard” First Outrigger Canoe In Canada	https://www.canadianoutrigger.ca/the-burrard-first-outrigger-canoe-in-canada/
[12]	Windows of opportunity - Van Isle Windows	https://www.timescolonist.com/business/windows-of-opportunity-4596853
[13]	Are your windows leaking? Calgary Herald Published May 16, 2014	https://calgaryherald.com/life/are-your-windows-leaking
[14]	2014 Times Colonist Better Business Bureau	https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiqyPvAhuf9AhUglzQIHboCAYEQFnoECBgQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pressreader.com%2Fcanada%2Ftimes-colonist%2F20140330%2F282093454700952&usg=AOvVaw2v4bGCclbRSQCOLD DpqYgS
[15]	Mike Regimbal (BBB Board Chair) and Van Isle Windows (Norman MacDonell) November 15, 2014	https://www.flickr.com/photos/bbbvancouverisland/15606739780