

Jimmy Cully, a "pioneer of inclusion"

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Jimmy Cully, a "special son" of Pembroke, passed away Thursday in Ottawa.

He was 67.

Born January 7, 1939, he grew up in Pembroke at a time when people with disabilities were not often included in society.

Mr. Cully had Down's Syndrome.

Friends and family all agree that Mr. Cully's outgoing nature, friendly demeanour and sheer determination brought about positive changes in Pembroke society making him a "pioneer of inclusion."

Barbara Calnan, his sister, said she had so many fond memories of her brother, that it was difficult to pick out one as her favourite.

"He was very kind and loving," she said. "The main thing I will always remember about Jimmy was his kindness and that he gave a lot of love."

Their mother Eva Cully (Lafreniere) wanted no part of the era's societal norm of hiding away or institutionalizing people with disabilities.

She sent her son to regular classes, eventually arranging private tutoring for him at the Grey Sisters' Motherhouse.

Mr. Cully was a member of the Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment army cadets for 18 years and played with the other boys in his neighbourhood such as Pembroke resident Bill Higginson.

"We would play road hockey until 10 o'clock at night. I remember his mother coming down and giving us heck because we were keeping him out so late. He was only 12 or 13 at the time," Mr. Higginson said.

Hockey figured prominently in Mr. Cully's life and he was the Lumber Kings' stick boy under coach Jim Farelli.

Mr. Cully was also close to another big name in Pembroke hockey, Art Bogart.

Mr. Higginson recalled one frigid January evening when Mr. Bogart had bought a brand new Pontiac with power windows and was driving Mr. Cully home after a Lumber Kings' game.

"Jimmy was in the back seat like King Tut calling out 'windows down' and Art would open the windows. Then he'd call 'windows up' and Art would put them up. Well then the windows jammed down and by the

time they got home the car was full of two inches of snow and everyone was frozen solid," Mr. Higginson said.

Terry O'Neill called Mr. Cully an old friend and remembered how Lumber Kings' coaches Mac McLean and Jim Farelli would bring him into the team's dressing room between periods.

"He was considered one of the team," Mr. O'Neill said.

Mr. Cully enjoyed spending time with Mr. O'Neill's minor hockey team as well.

"He was part of everything. He was really well-liked and really well-known. Jimmy was part of the community. I think the community was good for Jimmy and Jimmy was good for the community," he said.

Mr. Cully's brother-in-law, Michael Calnan credited Jimmy's mother Eva Cully with being a driving force behind the development of ARC Industries in Pembroke.

He believes Mr. Cully inherited his mother's determination.

"Jim had a persistence and determination that some would call obstinacy, but eventually he would always win you over with love," he said.

In 1999, Mr. Cully required more care and moved to Ottawa to live with his sister Barbara and her husband Michael. The couple took him to spend winter's with them in Florida.

"On the flight he always had to sit on the outside aisle so he could shake hands with everybody that walked past," Ms. Calnan said.

Mr. Cully continued to keep a scrapbook of Lumber Kings' items and Ms. Calnan and her husband took him to Nepean Raiders' games so he could watch when they played the Kings.

In 2005, Mr. Cully was presented with the Community Living Upper Ottawa Valley (CLUOV) executive award.

At the ceremony he was described as being a well-known and respected man of distinctive character.

"When you think of community living, you think of Jim Cully," said Kathy Bennett, service co-ordinator at CLUOV.

Mr. Cully passed away at Longfields Manor in Ottawa on Thursday, surrounded by his family.

A memorial service will be held at Longfields Manor on May 12, with a memorial service and interment to be held in Pembroke at a future date.

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Anthony won The Community Living Ontario media award for his article. Mr. Dixon's story, which explored the life and times of a beloved member of the Pembroke community who did not let his disability hinder the achievement of his goals, was chosen from several entries.