

Jane Swan



If you have participated in track and field, road racing, or cross-country in the Lower Mainland in some capacity in the past 35 years, you inevitably will have crossed paths with Abbotsford's Jane Swan. Together with her husband, Gerry, Jane selflessly volunteered literally thousands of hours to a lengthy list of causes, organizations, events, and individuals.

Jane and Gerry founded the Valley Royals Track and Field Club, based out of Abbotsford's Rotary Stadium, in 1980, which has developed into one of the most successful track clubs in Canada, providing training for many well-known athletes competing on the national and international scenes. Over the years with the Royals, she served as chief fund-raiser, registrar, and meet coordinator for numerous provincial and national championships. Jane and Gerry even had a hand in designing the stadium itself, still considered one of Canada's finest track and field facilities.

But the true measure of their impact on the community can be found in the number of athletes, coaches, and organizers that cite Jane and Gerry as crucial to their career and individual development. Jane and Gerry may have been building a fine track club, but they also played an important part in building an army of fine people that any community could be proud of.

While much of Jane's time was spent organizing and administering the club, she somehow found time for a number of other prominent positions in BC sport. She served as president of BC Athletics from 1994-1997 and vice-chairwoman of the BC Sports Hall of Fame and Museum. Swan was instrumental in Abbotsford's successful bid to host the 1995 Western Canada Summer Games and later served as the event's Director of Sport.

She was chairwoman for the 1995 Canadian Disabled Track and Field Championships. Earlier, she served on local soccer and lacrosse executives. And just for good measure, she served as director for Pacific Sport Fraser Valley and Achilles International, as well as playing a key role in the formation of the Abbotsford Sports Hall of Fame, a legacy project of the Western Canada Summer Games. Rarely has an individual played a part in community sport in such exhaustive fashion.

Swan has been recognized for her efforts with a number of prominent awards. Along with Gerry, in 1993, the City of Abbotsford named Jane a "freeman" of the city, recognizing those individuals who have provided extraordinary service to their community. In 1995, Swan was named Executive of the Year for the BC Amateur Athletic Association and she has also been inducted into the BC Athletics Hall of Fame.

From coordinating local elementary school events, such as Abbotsford's annual cross country grand prix season, to organizing international track events, such as the 1996 Harry Jerome Track Classic at Rotary Stadium that attracted the likes of then 100m world record holder Donovan Bailey, Swan had her hand in a wide range of activities for the benefit of the development of amateur athletes. It was through such efforts that

brought both Swans not only local, but also national, notoriety. Of course, this was never their objective—it was always done only for the kids.

Sadly, Jane Swan passed away in March 2004 at the age of 67. The City of Abbotsford was quick to honour Jane and Gerry's contribution to the development of sport in this province, renaming the track at Abbotsford's Rotary Stadium, The Jane and Gerry Swan Track. As the long-time home of the Valley Royals, it was a fitting tribute, for in more ways than one, this labour of love was truly the house that Jane and Gerry built.

Written and researched by Jason Beck, Curator of the BC Sports Hall of Fame.