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## Forty years later, the Panther spirit remains strong

By **Michael Conway**  
*Post Contributor*

It has been over 40 years since I had last attended a university hockey game. Gone was the frigid, cement block, frost encrusted construction of the 1960s known as St. Dunstan's rink. The beautiful MacLaughlan Arena was the replacement. What a welcome venue!

I was disappointed with the lack of St. Dunstan's and, to a lesser extent, Prince of Wales College memorabilia.

I had hopes of revisiting past glories of youthful times, anticipated eerie apparitions of professor priests cheering from standing room areas or glimpsing the spectre of Billy MacMillan or Vincie Mulligan skirting the defense to fire a blistering wrist shot high to the stick side of the opposing goalie, and one last time turning on the red light of another SDU

victory. But that was another time, another place.

I had expected to see the fresh young faces of university students in attendance. They were few.

It was then that I realized it was a long weekend. Too, I know that today's student is a serious product of a serious world.

Time is at a premium and even those that would like to attend home games are intent on using their time in a more constructive manner. Hockey games are relegated to the rewards or stress relief categories.

While watching the game and making notes for this assignment, I reflected on what was and what is now.

Looking around the arena and while strolling the concourse between periods, I realized what I had been missing all along.

I was a dinosaur living in the past. I remember the turmoil during the plan to

amalgamate the two institutions of higher learning on P.E.I. Our guest lecturer, Dr. MacDonald, discussed it at length with us during one of our classes. Stories remain about the two solitudes but I now saw everything in a new light.

Since entering the arena I saw or was greeted by a number of people I have known well or at least casually, my entire life.

There were former university hockey players and their coaches, doctors, lawyers, team trainers, business men, families, minor hockey teams and me.

I was the newbie at the game.

I was the one who had gone away for 40 years. Everyone else had continued to support the team and remained part of that great and growing family of St. Dunstan's, Prince of Wales and now UPEI. These people provided the continuity of spirit so

absolutely necessary for the ultimate success of any educational institution.

The game was fast and furious from the opening face-off.

Unfortunately, UPEI was having difficulty denting the twine behind the Xmen goaltender. Fellow U103 classmate, Matt Carter, was a standout for the home team. He scored once and rang the puck of the post during a UPEI power-play. It would have tied the game 3-3.

With approximately 45 seconds remaining in the period, I watched as young minor hockey players would make their way to the entrance of the Panther's dressing room. There, they would patiently wait to offer high-fives to each of the Panthers.

Each player would reach up to touch the outstretch hand of the youngster above them.

Some would raise both hands, giving high-fives to

both sides of the staircase thereby ensuring that the young players received their personal thrill from their hockey heroes.

When my son played organized hockey, I passed on my love of the game to him. I tried to instill in him the lesson, that there was much more involved with playing hockey than hockey. The Panthers lost 5-2 but they demonstrated that the blended spirit of St. Dunstan's and PWC is alive and well at UPEI and continues to thrive for the greater good of the Prince Edward Island community. In defeat, the Panthers were able to overcome their disappointments and still reached out to lift the spirits of the young hockey players and give them a lasting memory. Young hockey players don't forget that, and in doing so, the Panthers have cultivated and perpetuated the continuity of spirit of the next generation.