

## PRIOR, William "Bill" VHS '41

January 18, 1923 - April 14, 2015

At 92 years of age, Dad pitched his last inning on April 14, 2015. Born and raised in Victoria, he graduated from Victoria High School before starting a 38 year career at the Queen's Printers, interrupted when he served his country during World War II. After dating for a mere ten years, Mom and Dad were married for almost 60 years. Dad was active in sports throughout his life and enjoyed many friendships through lacrosse, basketball, bowling, curling and horseshoes. A talented pitcher, he played amateur and professional baseball and is a member of the B.C. Sports Hall of Fame and Greater Victoria Sports Hall of Fame. In 1952, Dad was a member of the Victoria Tyees, who won the Western International League pennant. He coached baseball for decades and his legacy is the hundreds of young players that he worked with. In his retirement, Dad turned his energies to helping friends, neighbors and family. He could always be counted on to be there for them. Left to remember him and his beautiful garden are his wife, Margaret, son Monte and daughter Laura.



## Victoria's Bill Prior was a pioneer in Canadian pro ball – VHS '41

[CLEVE DHEENSAW](#) / TIMES COLONIST - APRIL 22, 2015 10:08 PM

Bill Prior, a lanky fireballer and one of the greatest pitchers in Island baseball history, died last week at 92.

Prior was a big part of the professional Victoria Athletics and Tyees that played at Royal Athletic Park from 1946 to 1954 in the old Class-B Western International League, the first four seasons in which they were a farm team of the New York Yankees. The level would be considered Double-A by today's standards and Prior considered himself fortunate to play pro ball while remaining in his hometown.

Prior played nine seasons with the organization and was one of the Canadian pioneers in pro ball.

"The former head of Major League Baseball Scouting, Don Pries, commented that dad was one of the first Canadians to play professional baseball and paved the way for the many Canadian players who play throughout MLB today," noted son Monte Prior, a Victoria lawyer.

Prior's talent on the mound was evident early. As a Vic High student, he was called up to play senior baseball for the Pitzer & Nex team at the age of 16. He later threw for the Army squad in the Victoria war-time league and also pitched for the Canadian Army all-star team on a tour of Europe.

"Because of the war, and the fact I was in the army, I didn't turn pro with the Victoria Athletics, and later Tyees as the team became to be known, until I was 25," Prior once explained.

"By that time, I was set in my ways, and too old to start learning new tricks. But I had a good career and I did all right."

Prior, who went on to a civilian career with the Queen's Printers, was key as the Tyees won the Western International League crown in 1952 with a .631 winning percentage.

“While dad was a starting pitcher, he would also come into the game as a relief pitcher on some occasions in the second game of a double-header, after starting the first game,” said Monte Prior.

“So much for pitch counts in those days.”

Prior is enshrined in the Victoria Sports Hall of Fame and his impact was felt in Island ball.

“Bill Prior brought hope to Island players of my generation that we could play pro and go as far as our talent would take us,” said pitcher and shortstop Jerry Lister, a star on the Victoria Centennials team that represented Canada at the 1970 world amateur baseball championships in Cartagena, Colombia, and at the 1971 Pan Am Games in Cali, Colombia.

“Bill was such a coach and mentor to us as kids and instilled in us that practice makes perfect. And that you could have a 100 mile-per-hour fastball but that the most important thing was keeping the batter off balance by changing things up and using both sides of the plate,” added Lister, who went on to play for the New York Yankees farm team in Omaha.

“Bill always supported local youth baseball.”

That, in many ways, was his proudest legacy.

“It was dad’s coaching that was his most significant achievement,” added son Monte Prior.