

Perley Rideau goes for the gold in new lottery

Former Ottawa native, Olympic champion Barbara Ann Scott-King's vintage roadster being raffled off for capital campaign

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News – Imagine cruising down Elgin Street in a shiny red Mercedes Benz with the top down in the heat of the summer.

But not just any regular Mercedes Benz – Barbara Ann Scott-King's vintage roadster, a 25-year-old classic car which is, for the time being, in the hands of the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre Foundation.

The organization is raffling off the late Olympic winner's most prized possession in a lottery to raise funds for their capital campaign, said foundation executive director Daniel Clapin. This is a one-time only lottery, he said. The lucky winner will drive away with the 1988 Mercedes Benz 560 SL.

It's a way to honour the figure skating champion posthumously, he added, and to pay homage to the commitment and dedication she demonstrated towards the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre.

Only 1,948 lottery tickets will be sold at a cost of \$100 each. The number of lottery tickets sold is significant because it commemorates the year she won the European, world, and gold Olympic titles in just a six-week period, said Clapin.

Scott-King won the Canadian championships from 1944 until 1948, claimed the North American championships from 1945 to 1948, the European championships in 1947 and 1948, and the world championships in 1947 and 1948.

She was only 19 when she won the world championships in 1948, said Clapin.

To recognize her achievements, the city presented Scott with a convertible in 1947, but after Olympic officials cautioned that the gift could pose a risk to her athletic ranking, she returned the vehicle to the city.

But the city gave her the car back during a ceremony after she won the Olympic gold, according to the website.

To this day, she remains the only person to hold all championship titles, including the Olympic gold medal, all at once, said Clapin.

“Her record was never surpassed,” he said.

“We (Canada) were just coming out of a war, and we began to embrace her and held her high (because of her achievements)”

The car itself was transported from Florida, where Scott-King’s widow, Tom King, continued to reside. After Scott-King passed away in September 2012, King contacted the foundation the year after to donate the roadster to the foundation, said Clapin.

“Barbara would have wanted the foundation to have it,” he said.

The draw is set to take place on her birthday; May 9.

HISTORY

Clapin said Scott-King’s connection to the centre and foundation is everlasting, and dates back to when her father fought in the First World War.

In 2012, she accepted an invitation to act as honorary co-chair for the centre’s Capital Campaign for the new independent and assisted living project currently underway at the health centre, but long before the announcement, she would visit the health centre’s residents on her trips from her Florida home, said Clapin.

Scott-King, who was known for wearing bright colours such as red and for her flamboyant personality, said Clapin, lovingly called the car her “Bennie”.

With a vibrant signal red base colour and brown tan leather interior, the car is still safe and reliable to drive after undergoing emissions and safety tests, he added.

“It’s still got years left in it,” he said.

The vehicle’s value is \$40,000.

Currently, the vehicle is at the Perley Rideau, but will be displayed somewhere else in the city in order to gain more exposure and interest from the greater community, Clapin said.

Just like the vehicle’s late owner, “Bennie” is petite, fast, and delicate, he added.

Clapin said they hope to inspire people to become involved in supporting the health centre and to follow Scott-King’s example in living life to the fullest.

“When you come to the Perley-Rideau, you don’t come here to die – you come here to live,” he said.

“Barbara was emblematic of that message.”

The Perley-Rideau recently expanded their programs and services to introduce a Seniors Village, a new project with three key focus areas, said Clapin.

The first is assistance to seniors in their home with programs available at the Perley-Rideau Russell Road location.

The second is specially designed apartments for independent living with assisted-living services.

The third is a health-care centre with programs designed for long-term care and specialized programs.

For more information on the lottery, or to purchase tickets, please call 613-526-7173 or visit www.perleyrideau.ca/mercedes.