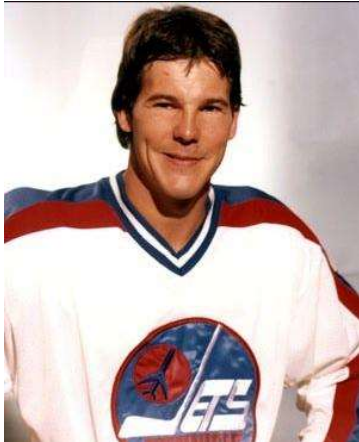

BARRY LEGGE

#1378, retired

Written & researched by John Burchill



Barry Legge, Winnipeg Jets, 1980-81

May 31, 2021, marked the 10th Anniversary of the official return of the Jets to Winnipeg. The team has moved on to the second round of the NHL Playoffs and I am reminded of an early Jets player who played on or against three *different* Winnipeg Jets teams ...

He ‘traded lumber’ with Gordie Howe, tripped up Bobby Hull, scored on Vladislav Tretiak, broke Wayne Gretzky’s scoring slump, blocked for Mike Luit, played with the real ‘Hanson Brothers’ from Slapshot, set up plays for Mark Messier, Robbie Ftorek, Rick Dudley, and was coached by Jacques Demers, all before donning a Winnipeg Police uniform. I am talking about Barry Legge of course.

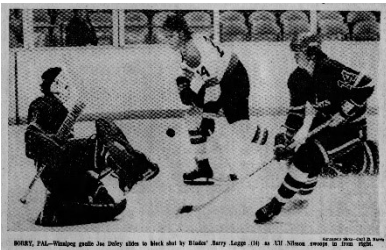


The Gordie Howes of tomorrow, courtesy the Greater Winnipeg Minor Hockey Association.

CREAM OF GWHMA CROP HONORED

A big night for young hockey stars
GWHMA Award Winners - Winnipeg
Tribune, April 14, 1966

Barry was well known for his defensive play from a very young age, first making a name for himself in 1966 when he was selected as one of the top players in the Greater Winnipeg Minor Hockey Association. “*The Gordie Howes of Tomorrow*” they were called by the Winnipeg Tribune in their April 14, 1966 edition.



Baltimore Blades' Legge stares down
Jets Joe Daley and Ulf Nilsson -
Baltimore Evening Sun, February 19,
1975

Barry had the chance to meet “Mr. Hockey” himself during the summer of 1964 when Howe gave him some batting advice while visiting his St. James baseball team. Barry would meet Howe again several more times between 1974 and 1980 when he was playing with the Houston Aeros and the Hartford/New England Whalers in the WHA/NHL – they even traded high stick majors in 1979. Barry was also on hand when Hartford retired Howe’s jersey on February 18, 1981, just before the Winnipeg Jets took on the Whalers at the Hartford Civic Center.

After playing minor hockey with the Winnipeg Mustangs Barry moved on to play with the St. James Canadians in 1970 with the Manitoba Junior Hockey League, before joining the Winnipeg Jets of the Western (Canada) Hockey League in 1971. Barry played three seasons with the Winnipeg

Legge clicks as Clubs' power-play centre

Blades 5, Winnipeg 5

The coach of a last-place hockey club sometimes succumbs to pot-pourri strategy in search of a successful solution to his problems. And Gord Pennell, coach of the cellar-dwelling Winnipeg Clubs in the Western Canada Hockey League's Eastern Division, begrudgingly falls into that category.

Pennell inserted defence-man Barry Legge at centre on the Clubs' sporadic power play, and bingo. Winnipeg scored four goals with the man advantage, including two in the final period, to earn its second consecutive 5-5 tie with Saskatoon Blades in Saskatoon.

"This is only the second game I've tried him at centre on the power play," added Pennell. "It didn't work so well in Medicine Hat Saturday night (lost 4-1), but I was understandably pleased with the results today (Sunday)."

Just the same though, the fourth-place Blades crept another point ahead of the

founder-tying Brandon Wheat Kings in the eastern chase. Blades now lead the Wheaties by four points and still own four games in hand, while the Clubs trail Saskatoon by 11.

Legge made the play on this occasion, pumping a hard slap shot at Saskatoon goaltender Brian Holderness who made an outstanding save on the drive. But the rebound lay agonizingly in front of Holderness for what seemed to be five seconds before Baxter swooped in from his pivot position to lift the loose disc into the unguarded cage.

Baxter's fourth goal of the season nullified a pretty go-ahead goal by Blade captain Bob Bourne. The big Saskatoon centreman converted a breakaway scoring opportunity at 9:11 of the third period by whipping a quick wrist shot past John Menry's glove hand, and it appeared the 5-4 score might stand up.

"We should have won it right after that," indicated Blade coach Jack McLeod. "Both Ron Valade and Garth Dietrick had great chances to restore our two-goal lead. But it just seems we can't put the game away when we get the opportunity. It happened on Friday too."

Saskatoon Star Phoenix, February 8, 1974

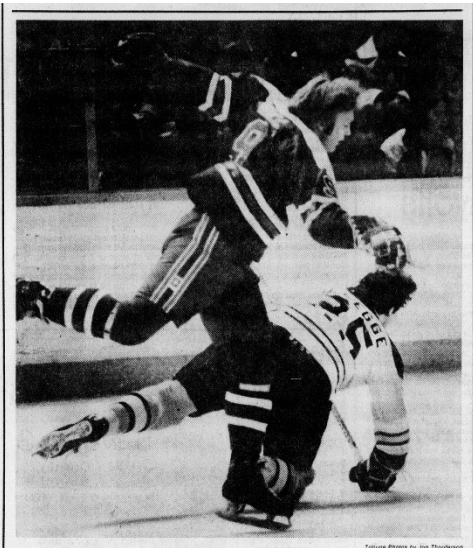
Jets/Clubs¹ before being drafted in the 4th round (61st overall) by the Montreal Canadiens in the 1974 NHL amateur draft, and 31st overall by the Michigan Stags in the WHA (World Hockey Association) amateur draft.

With future Hall of Famers Larry Robinson, Serge Savard, Guy Lapointe, and staples Jimmy Roberts and Pierre Bouchard already playing defence, cracking Montreal's line-up was extremely unlikely for Legge, so he chose to sign with the Michigan Stags in the WHA instead.

Barry would play 345 games in the World Hockey Association for the Michigan Stags, Baltimore Blades, Denver Spurs, Ottawa Civics, Cleveland Crusaders, Minnesota Fighting Saints, and Cincinnati Stingers. While that appears to be a lot of teams, Barry was less of a journeyman and more the product of being drafted by teams that kept relocating.

After five full seasons in the WHA, Barry spent the next part of three seasons in the NHL with the Quebec Nordiques and the Winnipeg Jets from 1979-80 to 1981-82, playing a total of 107 games before hanging up the blades.

Barry's best season was with the 1976-77 Cincinnati Stingers when he collected 29-points feeding the likes of Rich LeDuc, Blaine Stoughton and Rick Dudley to a second-place finish in the Eastern Division. The following year was almost as good, netting 24-points feeding Cincinnati's newest star Robbie Ftorek to a 109 point season. When the WHA folded in 1979, Barry would follow Ftorek to the Quebec Nordiques in the NHL.²



Barry Legge trips up Bobby Hull - Winnipeg Tribune, March 4, 1978

¹ In 1966, Ben Hatskin formed the Winnipeg Jets as an entry in the Western Canada Hockey League. In 1972 Hatskin brought the World Hockey Association to Winnipeg and called it the Winnipeg Jets as well. In 1973 Hatskin sold the "Junior Jets" to a group led by Gerry Brisson. A sponsorship deal with Club Beer, gave the team a new name, the Winnipeg Clubs. Doug Wilson was another member of the 1973-74 Clubs who would go on to a very successful NHL career.

² Although Barry was selected by the Winnipeg Jets in the WHA dispersal draft, he was traded to Quebec with fellow Cincinnati alumnus Jamie Hislop for teammate Barry Melrose. Barry would be re-acquired by the Winnipeg Jets the following season from Quebec in a cash trade.

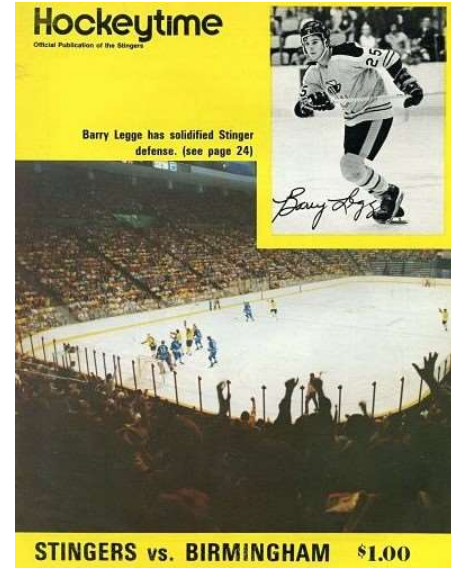
For those too young to remember, the WHA was the first major hockey league or at least the most successful to compete with the NHL from 1972 to 1979. The WHA tried to capitalize on the lack of hockey teams in a number of large US and Canadian cities and hoped to attract the best players in the world by paying more than the NHL. *Sixty-seven* (67) players left the NHL to play in the WHA in the first year, led by Chicago Blackhawks star forward Bobby Hull who signed with the new Winnipeg Jets.

An initial attempt to merge six WHA teams (Edmonton Oilers, New England Whalers, Quebec Nordiques, Cincinnati Stingers, Houston Aeros, and Winnipeg Jets) with the NHL in 1977 was rejected by the NHL before the 1979 merger was approved that saw the Edmonton Oilers, New England Whalers, Quebec Nordiques, and Winnipeg Jets join for the 1979-80 season. The Oilers are the only WHA merger team to retain both their original name and city.

The Cincinnati Stingers, where Legge found his most stable years, joined the WHA in the winter of 1975-76. While owners Bill DeWitt Jr. and Brian Heekin failed to land an NHL expansion team, they bought into the WHA, building the Riverfront Coliseum. Barry was acquired in October 1976 from the Minnesota Fighting Saints, a team that also hosted the Carlson brothers (aka the "Hanson Brothers" from the 1977 movie "Slap Shot" and "Slap Shot 2") at the time.

Besides Robbie Ftorek, Cincinnati also acquired 17-year old Mark Messier early in the 1978-79 season after his previous club, the Indianapolis Racers, folded. The future Hall-of-Famer played 47 games for the Stingers during the WHA's final season. Messier was the last active WHA member in the NHL when he retired in 2004 at the age of 43.

In fact, almost all of the Cincinnati players were picked up by NHL teams and played in the NHL after 1979 including Peter Marsh, Barry Melrose and Rick Dudley who also played with the Winnipeg Jets. Besides Mark Messier, Mike Gartner was another NHL Hall of Famer from Cincinnati. Mike Liut was a top-50 all-time goalie in ranking by The Hockey News, and Jacques Demers was the last coach to lead a Canadian team to a Stanley Cup when Montreal won in 1993 (he would also coach Barry with the Quebec Nordiques in 1979-80).



Barry Legge on the cover of Hockeytime magazine, December 22, 1976

Legge's Consistency Rewarded With Co-Captain Nomination

BY TERRY FLYNN
Enquirer Sports Reporter

Barry Legge isn't a flashy hockey player. He's a defenseman, and he goes about his job with the Cincinnati Stingers minus any flair or showmanship, playing tight defense and scoring occasionally.

It might therefore come as a surprise to many hockey fans in Cincinnati that Legge should be selected as one of the Stingers' assistant captains on the eve of the team's game at Riverfront Coliseum tonight (7:35 p.m.) against Houston. It even came as a surprise to Legge.

"Yeah, I'd have to say I was surprised," said Legge after he was offered the "A" on his sweater by Stinger coach Jacques Demers. "I had to think about it for a while before I accepted. There were other guys like Whitley (veteran defenseman Pat Stapleton) who deserved it too."

Demers didn't think the decision to make Legge an assistant captain was at all unusual.

"HE'S THE type of player the team wants to build around," said the Stinger coach. "He's a real winner, and he's a team player. His play has show leadership on the ice."

"He's not the flashy type of player, and he's a quite, reserved kind of guy. But he's a solid defenseman who gives you the same game every night. He has played hurt and that's the sign of a winner."

Legge, a 23-year-old native of

Winnipeg, Man., came to the Stingers last year after starting the season with the Minnesota Fighting Saints. He showed continuing improvement last year and has looked even stronger on defense this season.

"The first half of the season I did pretty well, but I've been struggling a bit lately," said Legge, who nonetheless is a plus player on a team that had a disastrous start and is just now beginning to see the light.

Legge said he wasn't making too much of the assistant captain post. "It's not that big a thing," he said with the type of shyness that has marked his career. "I'll try to be a leader on the ice, but I've never really looked at myself that way. One of the things I'll do, I guess, is talk to the referees some times."

Looking at the recent trade which saw Ron Plumb, Rich Leduc and Claude Larose depart Cincinnati, Legge said he had questioned some of the Stinger deals in the past but had "a different attitude now."

"I couldn't figure out why they traded some guys who were doing a pretty good job," he said. "I was a little upset for a while, but I'm not worrying about it now. I just go out and try to do my job on the ice and help the team."

Sizing up Sunday's six-player, three-team trade, Legge said it appeared the Stingers came out on top.

"IF YOU take it by position, it looks pretty good," he said. "You can't really replace a guy like Plumb-

ber, (but Barry) Maggs is a good defenseman so we didn't get hurt there. If you take Greg Carroll for Rich Leduc, and Carroll plays well the rest of the season, we don't lose anything there. And Claude Larose is a good winger but so is Reg Thomas, and Thomas is bigger."

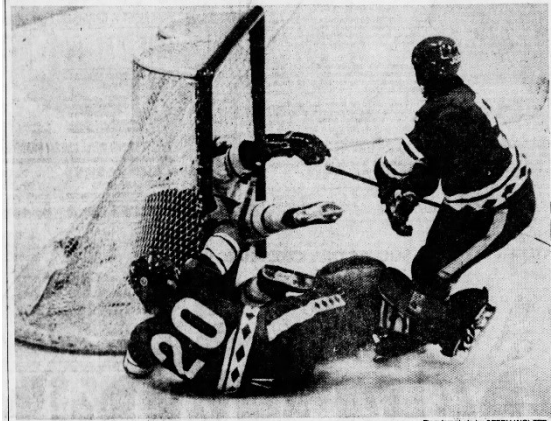
Looking back to the start of the season, Legge said there had been so many changes on the roster he had trouble recalling all the players who had departed. But he added, "I think the team we have now is strong and I'm certain we'll be in the playoffs. We have a solid lineup."

A total of 19 players who started the season in Cincinnati are now playing elsewhere. Asked if he thought the team which played in the season opener could have rounded into shape and made the WHA playoffs, Legge said it would be difficult to make comparisons.

"It's hard to say," he said. "We had a pretty good defense when the season started, but we had a lot of good forwards too. The defense is probably stronger now, but there's no way to tell if the original team would have come around. Look at (goalender) Ernie Wakely. He wasn't going well early in the season, but he went to Houston and now he's playing great. There's no way to tell what could have happened."

Legge isn't concerned with what might have been. He's interested in how the Stingers are playing right now and he's pointing to a strong finish and play-off berth.

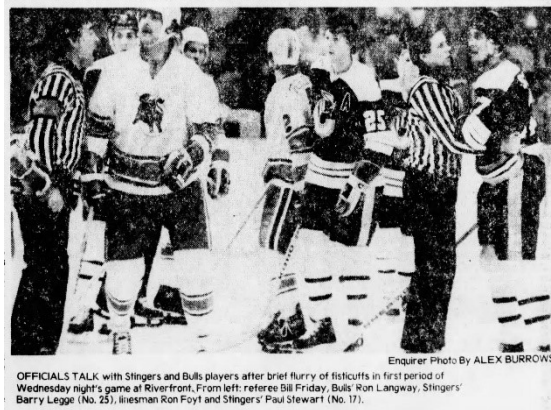
Cincinnati Enquirer, February 15, 1978



STINGERS' BARRY LEGGE believes in following his shot—all he was into the nets—while scoring goal in second period of Sunday night's game. Russians are Vladislav Tretiak (No. 20) and Vassil Pervushin.

Enquirer photo by GERRY WOLTER

Barry Legge scores on Vladislav Tretiak - Cincinnati Enquirer, January 9, 1978



OFFICIALS TALK with Stingers and Bulls players after brief flurry of fistcuts in first period of Wednesday night's game at Riverfront. From left: referee Bill Friday, Bulls' Ron Langway, Stingers' Barry Legge (No. 25), linesman Ron Foyt and Stingers' Paul Stewart (No. 17).

Enquirer Photo By ALEX BURROWS

Newly minted Assistant Captain Barry Legge - Cincinnati Enquirer, April 6, 1978



According to Gartner the WHA “was an unbelievable experience. It was a great stepping stone. The top players were just as good as the NHL, but there was not as much depth.” Stories about the WHA’s bench-clearing brawls were legendary. “It was just like ‘Slap Shot,’” Barry Melrose once said. In one game, known as the “Thanksgiving Night Massacre” (as much for the 12-2 score as the brawl that broke out 24 seconds into the game), was between Cincinnati and the Birmingham Bulls on November 24, 1977.

Prior to the game, Birmingham had acquired Dave Hanson & Steve Durbano (Dave Hanson, being one of the “Hanson Brothers” from Slapshot). The starting lineup that night featured Durbano, Frank Beaton, Serge Beaudoin, Gilles “Bad News” Bilodeau, and Bob Stephenson. Cincinnati countered with Ftorek, Del Hall, Jamie Hislop, Ron Plumb, and Barry who took a major and a misconduct during the melee. “The thing I’ll always remember about that fight,” said Melrose in a later interview, “is [Birmingham] had this minister come out and say a prayer before the game.” After that game, Cincinnati brought in their own tough guy, Paul Stewart, who had once trained with boxing champ Aaron Pryor.

Probably one of the highlights for Barry during his stint with Cincinnati (in my opinion at least) was playing against the Soviet Red Army national hockey team in a series of games against the WHA in 1976-77 and again in 1977-78. Cincinnati lost 7-5 to the Soviets on their first meeting on December 28, 1976. While they lost 9-2 in their second meeting on January 8, 1978, Legge was one of the only players to crack Vladislav Tretiak.

Just over a month later Barry was rewarded for his hard work and consistency as Assistant Captain of the Cincinnati Stingers by Coach Jacques Demers. “He’s the type of player the team wants to build around,” said Demers in an interview with the Cincinnati Enquirer on February 15, 1978. “He’s a real winner, and a team player”, continued Demers. “His play has shown leadership on the ice. He’s not the flashy type of player and he’s a quiet, reserved kind of guy. But he’s a solid defenseman who gives you the same game every night.”

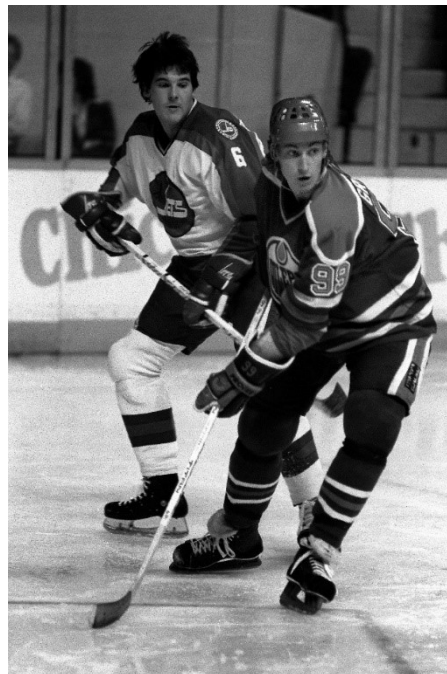
I would hear those same comments years later from Dick Scott (later Chief of the Brandon Police), who was second in command of the Training Division when Barry joined the Winnipeg Police, and Danny Smyth, Winnipeg's current Chief of Police, who was Barry's boss when he worked in the Fort Garry district – *a quiet, reserved kind of guy, who just did his job.*

Other highlights of Barry's time in Cincinnati were no doubt tripping up the powerful offence of the Winnipeg Jets – Bobby Hull, Anders Hedberg and Ulf Nilsson – before his hometown friends and family as they tried to score on Mike Liut with no avail. However, Barry wasn't so lucky with a young Wayne Gretzky who, on April 3, 1979, was in the midst of a 4-game scoring drought. "*Gawd, I was beginning to wonder when I would score again*", muttered Gretzky to the Edmonton Journal. "*After 4 games without a goal, and only two in the last 12, I needed a break. I got it. My shot (the game-winner) was kicked in by Barry Legge*".

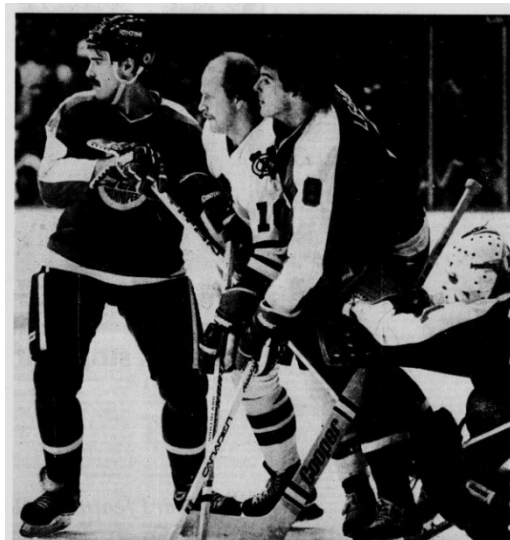
That would end out Barry's season in Cincinnati and he would wind up playing for the Quebec Nordiques in his inaugural NHL season after the demise of the WHA. Barry would play 31 games for the Nordiques that year and 5 with their American Hockey League team, the Syracuse Firebirds. In the off-season, he was sold to the Winnipeg Jets in a cash trade.

The move to Winnipeg at the start of the 1980 NHL season was great for Barry – he was back in front of his hometown friends and family and playing alongside some of Winnipeg's great players – Morris Lukowich, Dave Christian, Norm Dupont, Willy Lindstrom, Dave Babych, Ron Wilson, Moe Mantha, and a young Dale Hawerchuk.

Being married with two children, and a third on the way, it was a chance to be closer to family and hopefully some stability. However, it proved somewhat fleeting. As 1981 closed the Jets brought in Serge Savard from Montreal to play defence and would send Barry to the Tulsa Oilers in the Central Hockey League starting in 1982.

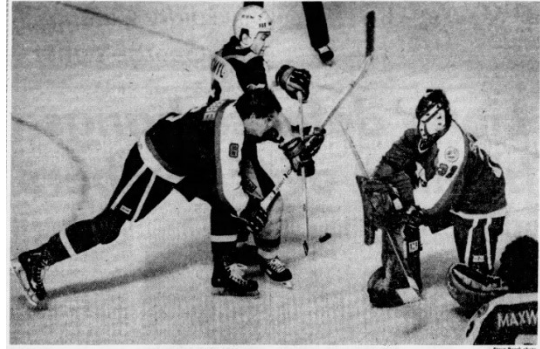


Barry Legge checks Wayne Gretzky - Courtesy of Ken Gigliotti, Winnipeg Free Press



Barry Legge & Dave Babych squeeze out Chicagos Reggie Kerr - Arlington Heights Daily Herald, February 9, 1981

With a third child due in less than a week, it was no time to be uprooting his family again. In addition, Barry had developed a serious rash – which had first appeared when he was playing in Cincinnati. After many visits to different doctors, it turned out Barry was allergic to polyester, which of course all the equipment was made of at the time. It was time to hang up the blades.



SUPPORT WASN'T this stout for Winnipeg goalie Doug Soetaert vents Stan Smyl from reaching rebound, but Canucks fired 44 much of Sunday evening at Pacific Coliseum. Barry Legge pre-shots, 24 in first period, at Soetaert en route to 5-1 win.
 Legge ties up Canuck's Stan Smyl - Vancouver Sun, November 9, 1981

Barry had two brothers in the Winnipeg Police at the time, Tom #1126 who started on November 15, 1976, and Bob #1207 who started on November 28, 1977.³ Policing appeared to be a viable option.

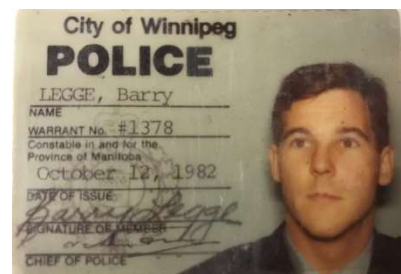
However, it wasn't that easy. With junior hockey taking Barry on the road as a 17-year old he never completed grade 12. As such he needed to go back to school and finish first. After completing his Grade 12, Barry applied for the Winnipeg Police and was hired on October 12, 1982. He graduated from Recruit Class #102 on July 22, 1983.

For the first two years of his career policing, Barry walked the beat. It was a rite of passage for most new police officers. Barry would remain a uniform officer for his career working primarily in the downtown, Ft. Garry and St. James areas. Like his hockey days, he was a quiet, reserved kind of guy, who just did his job. He coached his son for a few years and ran the winter sports program at Kirkfield Community Centre. He also refereed for one year but found it was not to his liking.

After 32 years in policing Barry hung up his holster and retired in 2014. I asked him if he has any special memories. Nothing in particular he says. Like hockey it was mostly about the people – he met so many interesting characters along the way. As another famous Manitoban once said, *“Life is like a road that you travel on / When there's one day here and the next day gone / Sometimes you bend, sometimes you stand / Sometimes you turn your back to the wind”* – Life is a Highway (or a Jetway), and Barry took the journey.



Recruit Class #102, 1983. Barry Legge - back row, third from the right



³ Both good hockey players in their own right, Tom would also play with the St. James Canadians in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League as well as the Winnipeg Clubs and the Flin Flon Bombers in the Western (Canadian) Hockey League before joining the Winnipeg Police.