



Dear Fellow Alaskan,

I grew up in Western Canada, which means I played hockey. All the kids played. We played until our face, fingers and toes were nearly frozen. Hockey is a way of life in Canada and I loved it!

My first recollection of playing comes from family photos of me at age three, wearing my sisters figure skates. Later, I remember countless hours of shooting pucks and working on new moves. The first time I flipped the puck over the boards was the greatest thing I had ever done. I was ecstatic! I remember playing hours of street hockey in the freezing cold winters of Edmonton, Alberta. I played with my friends, my dad, my sisters and shooting on “Mom the Goalie.” Needless to say, hockey was going to be a big part of my life. I knew this at a young age and I knew I wanted to be very good at it.

I believe the key to being successful at whatever it is you do means putting in a tremendous amount of hard work. For me, hockey was a passion. The hard work never felt like. I enjoyed playing it.

My goals in life were to play college and professional hockey. I had to stay focused if I wanted to reach my goals and realized that things I did off the ice impacted my performance so I stayed out of trouble and made sacrifices. In high school when most of my friends were out at school dances and parties I was at home getting ready for the game. I ate healthier foods to fuel my body. I did my homework and kept good grades so I would be accepted into college and play NCAA college hockey. I missed out on some things that were probably fun at the time, but I knew that the rewards were much greater and allowed me to continue doing what I loved. This commitment to hockey and school eventually paid off. I received a scholarship to UAA and played four years of NCAA division I hockey. After receiving my degree at UAA, I played two years of pro hockey in Europe and then eight years with the Anchorage Aces.

Now that I am done playing hockey professionally, I have turned my attention to coaching young hockey players here in Alaska. I hope to pass on some of the things I learned playing hockey to the *younger kids so they can enjoy the same great rewards*. My message to kids, and anyone in general, is to find something you love to do and work as hard as possible to excel at it. Make the appropriate sacrifices and *stay focused*. *If you do this*, you can't lose! Stay Healthy!

Dean Larson

Alaska Aces and UAA Hockey's all-time leading scorer and Seawolf Hall of Fame Inductee