



1111 ECHOES

NEWSLETTER OF THE RHODE ISLAND REDS HERITAGE SOCIETY

FALL 2021

Heritage Society Wants Reds Memorabilia

Preserve Your Treasures for Posterity - and Take Credit, Too!

By Andre Mayer
Heritage Society President

Do you have RI Reds memorabilia that you would like to have displayed forever? We and the RI Hockey Hall of Fame are interested in collecting items for our planned "brick-and-mortar" museum and portable displays.

We are accepting all sorts of Reds related items and artifacts such as signed sticks, jerseys, equipment, programs, correspondence from players and teams, and images, especially those that have been autographed.

This is an opportunity to clean out your clutter and share it with many admiring eyes.

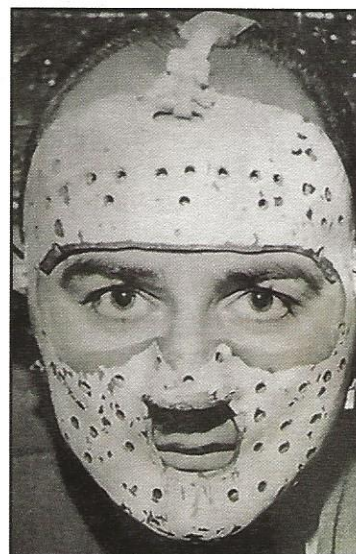
But wait, there's more. As the RI Reds Heritage Society and the RI Hockey Hall of Fame are 503(c)(3) non-profit organizations, donations are eligible for a tax credit.

Here's how it works. You send us an artifact or a picture of it and an estimate of what you think it's worth. We review your assessment, evaluate its worth and advise you of what we think its value is.

If you agree and send the item to us, we'll send you a tax credit form (similar to what the Salvation Army uses) to help reduce your taxes...or you can hold on to your item and we say "sacre-bleu".

Contact the Society at:

PO Box 504
Lincoln, RI 02865
www.rireds.org
401-230-5905



Among the treasures in the Heritage Society collection are Johnny Bower's pads and Gil Mayer's mask. Both are on display in the Society's exhibits at the Dunkin Donuts Center.

Cartoon Memories: The Player of the Century



Over the course of his brilliant hockey career, Zello Toppazzini, played for a 3 NHL teams (Boston, New York, Chicago) and 3 AHL teams (Hershey, Cincinnati, Providence).

Topper's 13 brilliant years in Providence earned him revered status not only in Rhode Island but in hockey towns and among fans throughout league circuits. He was endlessly featured in articles previewing upcoming games in rival cities, and one of his fans was famed American artist and Cleveland sports cartoonist Lou Darvas.

Topper's lovely wife, Shirley, claims this Darvas illustration to be her all-time favorite. "It perfectly captures him," she will tell you. We think it does, as well – a deserving visual tribute to the Reds' "Player of the Century"!

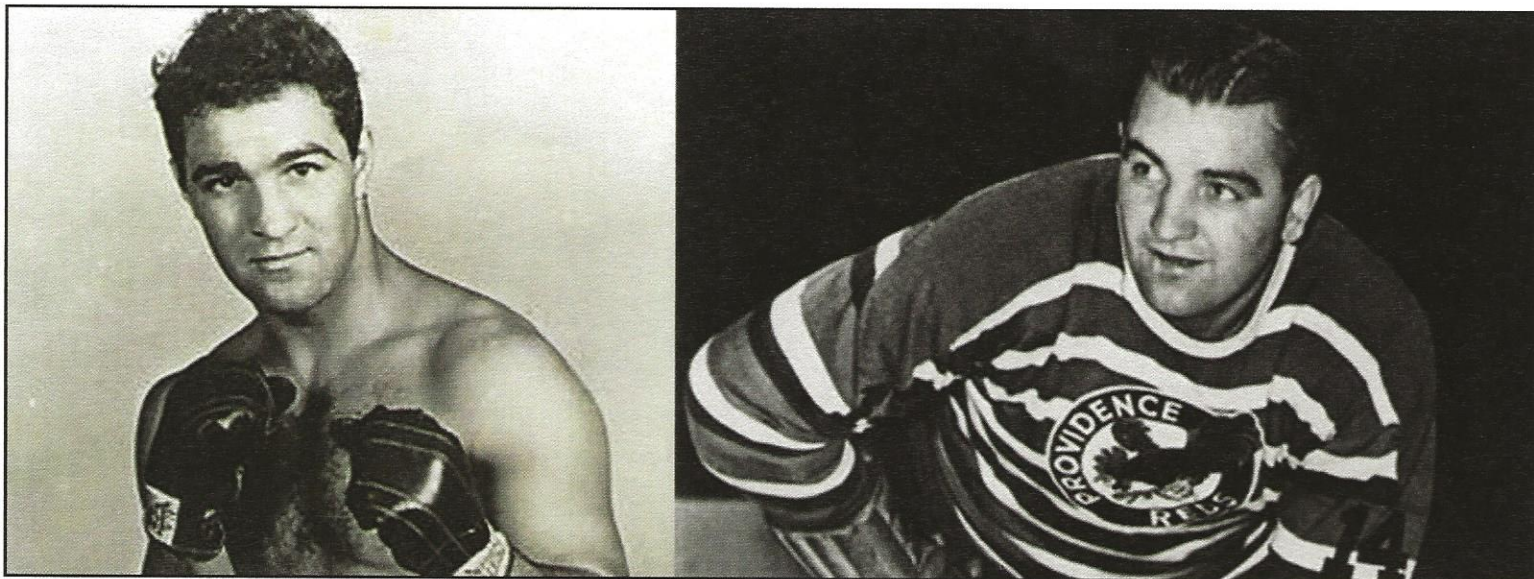


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THE MAIN EVENT

SCHERZA vs. MARCIANO

When Discretion was the Better Part of Valor

By Vin Cimini and Arnie Bailey
Heritage Society Board of Directors

In his 13 seasons in pro hockey, Chuck Scherza of the R.I. Reds earned a reputation as a scorer, fierce checker who could dig the puck out of the corners, and a tough customer who never backed down from a fight.

His career penalty totals rank third on the list of all Reds' players in the team's 51-year history. And his list of serious injuries ranks near the top, too. They include a punctured lung during a NHL game and a 16-stitch wound in the top of his head during one of his 10 years with Providence in the AHL.

But there was one time when Scherza was quick to turn down a fight, when he realized that discretion far outranked valor. And no one could blame him.

His fisticuffs foe would have been Rocky Marciano, who just happened to be the guy who would reign atop the world's heavyweight division for more than four years and earn The Ring

magazine Fighter of the Year award three times.

"It was Mike Thomas (a former Providence Journal sports writer) who suggested a Marciano-Scherza boxing match in one of his columns," Chuck once recalled. "Marciano fought a lot of his bouts at the Auditorium and I had seen him fight there quite a few times. And I remember once autographing a hockey stick for Rocky."

If Marciano had a "home" arena, it certainly had to be the R. I. Auditorium. The old barn on North Main Street was the site of many boxing programs, as well as scores of other kinds of events, in addition to hockey.

Born in nearby Brockton, MA, Marciano fought more than half of his pro bouts at the 1111 North Main Street showplace about 40 miles southwest of his birthplace. It was the site of 28 of his 49 pro bouts, and 24 of his 43 knockouts.

And it was in Rhode Island that Rocky actually became Marciano. It was during a bout at the Auditorium

that the ring announcer was having difficulty pronouncing Rocky's birth name, "Marchegiano." So, Rocky's handlers suggested "Marciano" as a short, easier alternative.

It certainly wasn't fear of fighting that kept Scherza from stepping into the ring against Marciano. On the ice, Chuck always was quick to drop his gloves and pay back an opponent. His style of play was rough enough that he logged 539 minutes in the various penalty boxes of hockey.

And it certainly wasn't fear of being injured that kept Scherza on the outside of boxing's squared circle. He played with abandon and often paid a price.

But Church Scherza was wise enough that none of those bumps, breaks and bruises came from a knockout punch thrown by a boxing legend named Rocky Marciano.

Chuck Scherza passed away in 2014 at the age of 91, having spent most of his life in Rhode Island though he was born in Canada. Rocky Marciano died in a plane crash in 1969 at the age of 45.



Zellio Toppazzini gets his blades looked at in the locker room. His skates, with leather boots and tubular steel blades, were state of the art at the time.

Today's Equipment: Lighter, Stronger, Faster

By Andre Mayer
Heritage Society President

Remember those heavy leather skates that bent sideways as you learned to skate? “We used to call them ankle benders,” remembers Tom Shanley.

If you laced them up today, you'd be

laughed out of the rink. Equipment has changed radically since the days when the Reds took to the ice.

Now skates are made out of one-piece of composite material that is extremely light and can be molded to your feet using heat right in the store. The sides are now rigid to allow a stronger push on the ice. This adds

more player protection, too.

The eyelets are “L” shaped rather than “C” shaped to allow for more forward flexion. The concept is similar to that of ski boots where leaning forward helps generate speed.

The tongue has a piece of plastic

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Lighter, Stronger, Faster

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inserted for protection and there are many custom-made tongues.

Replacing broken blades no longer requires removing rivets to replace the blade.

Blades can be replaced simply by pulling a built-in "trigger" that loosens the blade for easy removal and replacement.

The "Tubular Blades" no longer exist because they could get caught in the facemasks of players.

Hockey sticks are now made out of one piece of composite material. When you select a stick, you need to know the shape of curve that you prefer because it can't be retroformed or replaced.

You also need to know where your preferred flex point on the stick is. For example, a low flex point allows for a quicker shot which is difficult for a goalkeeper to read.

A higher flex point makes the shot harder.

The trend is moving to more flex and a longer stick.

You can also select a stick with a "rocked lie" rather than a set flat lie. With a rocked lie, you adjust your body to the puck as you skate and shoot.

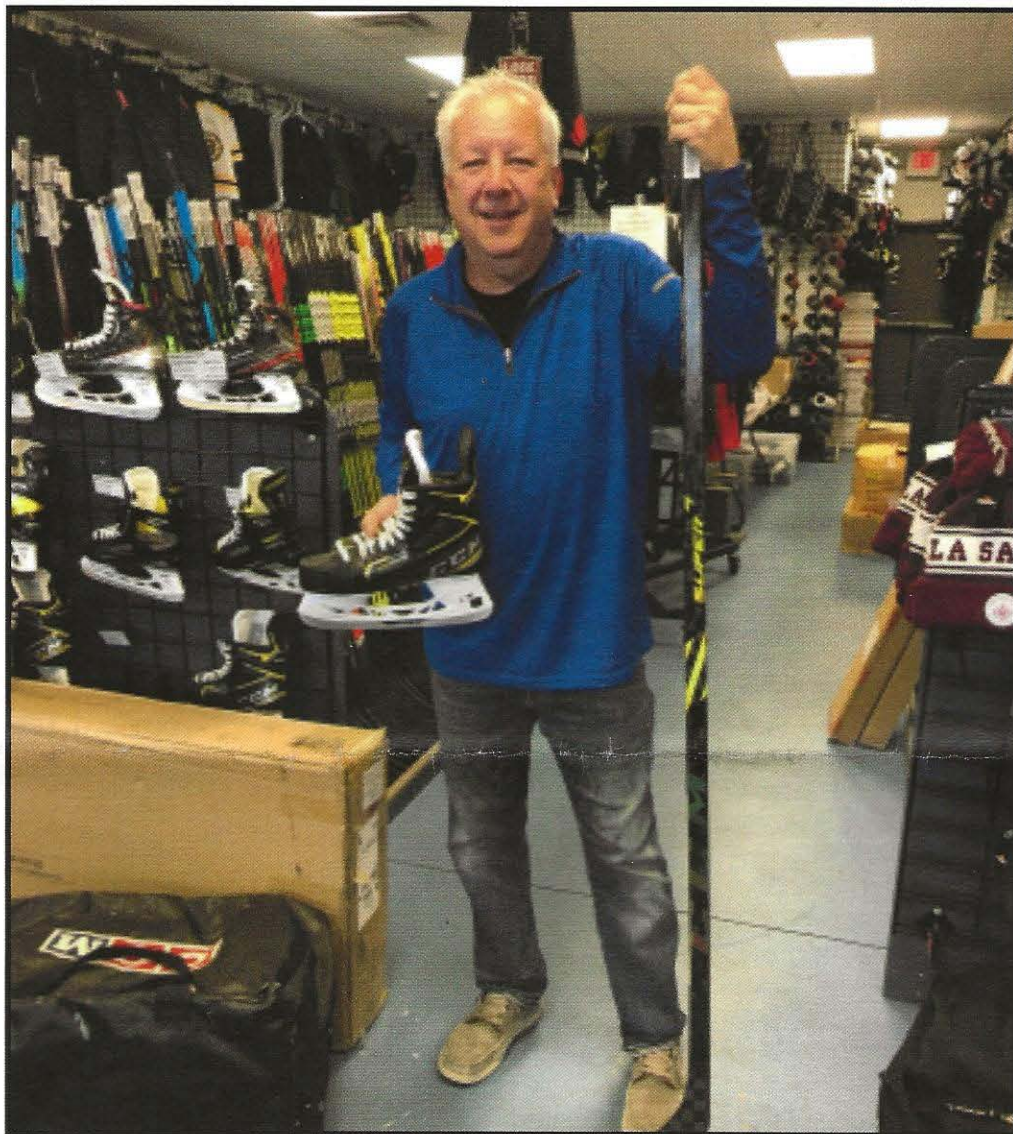
Hockey gloves now have shorter cuffs to allow more wrist action. They are also much lighter than the old leather ones.

Hockey players now wear Jock Shorts with a cup and Velcro on the outside to hold the socks up. No more garter belts!

Over the years, hockey equipment has actually changed the style of the game.

For example, the curved stick led to the use of goalie masks. Because the curve on a stick made it harder for the goalie to read a shot, it led to incorporating the "butterfly" style of goaltending.

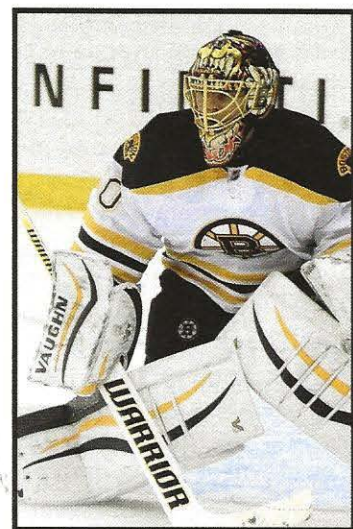
The lightness of the equipment and the flex on a stick made the game faster.



Thanks to Ray Reniere of "Rays Hockey Shop" in Smithfield, R.I., for giving us the lowdown on how equipment has changed the game.



Before synthetics and composites found their way into the game, goalies, especially, labored under the weight of equipment. Back-to-back games added to the weight as leather, horsehair-filled pads remained water logged for days. In the 1950s, it was reported that goalie Harry Lumley, left, wore 36 pounds of equipment. Modern materials allow Tuukka Rask, right, to wear much larger and more protective pads.



ANIMAL HOUSE?

Ida Reniere Opened her House to Hockey Players, and the Stories are Tamer than You'd Think

Andre Mayer
Heritage Society President

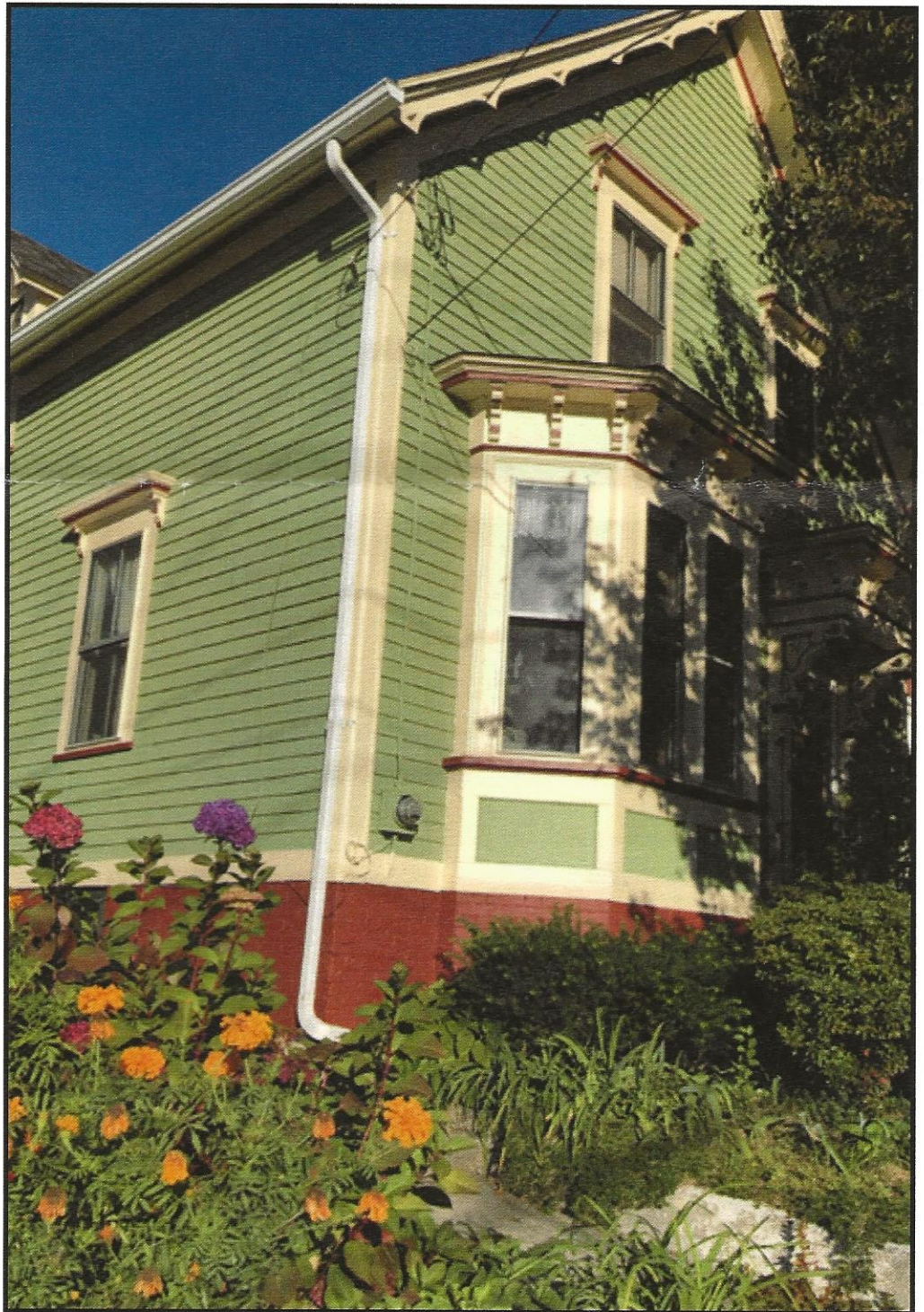
What do you get when a bunch of young American Hockey League players – many single, many rookies – all living in the same house in the 50s and 60s? All of these guys were trying to eventually make it to the NHL when only six teams existed and the competition was tough. This was also the era of the Gordie Howe hat trick: “when a player had a goal, an assist, and a fight in the same game.” Let’s face it, comedy flicks like “Slapshot” have some truth to them, eh?

A beautiful lady, Ida Reniere, owned a large house a few blocks away from the RI Auditorium. Was she crazy for renting out four or five bedrooms to these ice hoodlums to help pay the bills? After all, the newbies needed lodging and it sounded good on the surface. So, she gave it a try.

Well, do I ever have stories about that! But it’s not what you might expect.

Let’s start with Serge Boudreault who roomed with Bobby Leduc – both still close friends to this day. I was 7 when my mom and dad, Gil and Marielle Mayer, arrived in RI to play with the Reds and moved into Ida’s house. I recall playing alone with my army toys in the back yard. Serge was going out and saw me. I said “Hi”. He sat down with me for about 30 minutes playing army with me. Thanks Serge.

Dick Reniere, Ida’s son and one of the founders of the Reds Heritage Society, recalls that Ray Ross was the cleanest living man he has ever



Ida Reniere rented out her house near the Auditorium to Reds teammates and their families.

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Ida Reniere Opened her House to Hockey Players, and the Stories are Tamer than You'd Think

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seen. Didn't drink and had a great heart. He would even write to Ida in the off-season to keep her up to date with the local news in Hamilton, Ontario. He always added, "Don't forget to save my room."

Bob Robertson, Ray's roommate, dated several local women and introduced each of them to Ida. Several of them continued to keep in touch with Ida even as Bob's relationship with them morphed. No wonder Ida was called "Mom" by the players.

Dick recalls a time when he asked Zellio Toppazinni to do a shooting demonstration for his Hope High hockey team. Zellio complied and hit a 4"x4" metal target consistently at least 10 or 12 times at the Hope High gym.

One evening after a game that ran late, Reds coach Johnny Crawford slept on "Mom's" couch and the game's referee slept on the floor.

As the baseball season was winding down, the players would gather at "Mom's" after practice to watch the World Series. Also of note, the wives and girlfriends would gather at "Mom's" for coffee and talks while the guys practiced at the rink.

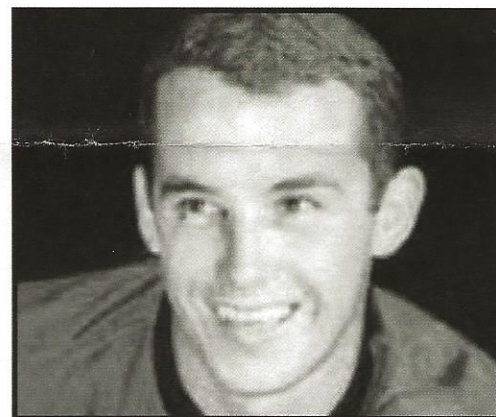
Dick tells me that there was never a problem with any of the players. They would watch TV, go to movies, live a normal life. After games, Al Goyette would have a buffet set up for the guys at the First and Last Café, which most of the players attended.

Whaat!! No broken furniture, no punched-in walls, no fights in the halls, no police visits, no broken bottles in the driveway. Is this what you imagined? Lol.

Side bar: The false "image" of hockey players being fraternity idiots affected my family's ability to secure housing both in Cleveland and here in Rhode Island. But in Cleveland and elsewhere, the players proved different and made a positive impression on the local community. In



The Reniere house was a few blocks from the R.I. Auditorium, home of the Reds.



Among the housemates were, clockwise from top left, Bobby Leduc, Serge Boudreal, Ray Ross, and Gil Mayer.

fact, in Cleveland, our landlord was so impressed at the condition my parents kept his house in that he wrote a thank you letter to my mom and sent a copy of it to the Barons. We held

onto that letter for skeptical landlords, some of whom we encountered here in Rhode Island, and it helped secure the housing we wanted.

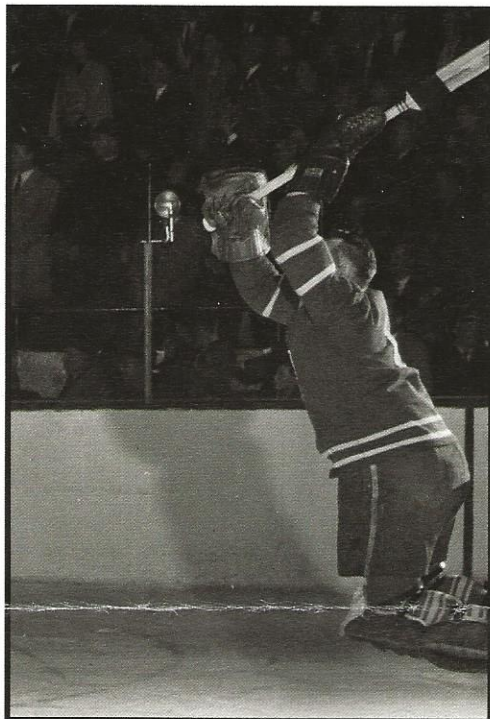
Did You Know?

By Vin Cimini
Heritage Society Board of Directors

Johnny Bower

Did You

Know...after his playing days with the Reds, Johnny was asked how he got the scar on top of his eyebrow. He explained that after the Maple Leafs had won the Stanley Cup in 1964, he threw his stick into the air in elation. Momentarily distracted, he forgot about it. It came crashing down and hit him in the face, cutting him for six stitches!

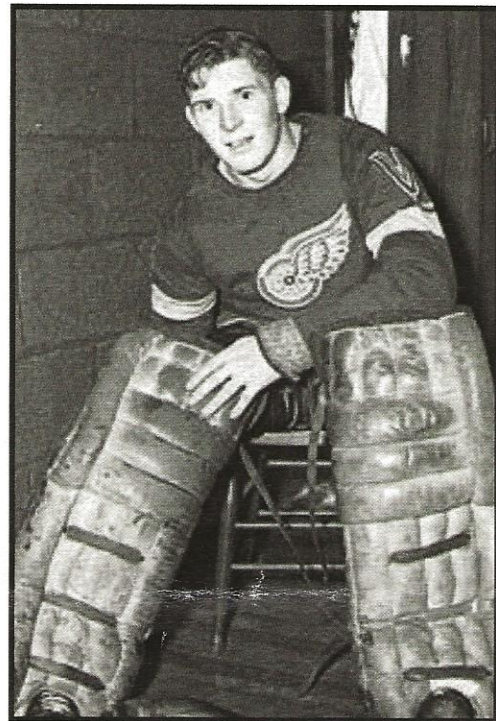


Harry Lumley

Did You Know...before joining the Reds from the Bruins in 1959, Harry had a Vezina Trophy, two first-team All-Star

selections, and his name engraved on the Stanley Cup in 1950 with Detroit. "Apple Cheeks", as he was known because his cheeks turned rosy red when he was embarrassed, was almost washed up in 1944, when rheumatic fever laid him low. Doctors told him at that time to sell his goalie equipment and get out of the game. But, of course, that's not what hockey

players do. Harry engineered an improvement in goalie pads by making a pocket at the shin so pucks would drop straight onto the ice instead of deflecting to an opponent.



Emile "Butch" Bouchard

Did You

Know...Like many fledgling pucksters in the early "Original Six" era, Emile "Butch" Bouchard initially played hockey without the benefit of skates. He slid around in overshoes learning the game. Bouchard had to borrow a pair of skates in order to make the local high school team. At age 13, he asked his brother for the loan of \$35 so he could buy his own. He repaid that loan when he received his first paycheck from the Verdun Seniors Club.



The First Hockey Pucks

Did You

Know...according to legend, the first hockey players made use of frozen cow dung as pucks. Images from European artworks depict the cork-like "bung" used to seal barrels being shuffled along on crude sticks. From around 1860, a rubber ball was the object used in hockey. Because the ball bounced too much, a square disc of wood was sometimes used instead. The modern hockey puck was invented

around 1875 at about the same time that the official rules of hockey were established at Canada's McGill University.

