

Orval 'Red' Gravelle served his country not with a gun, but on the ice with a stick in his hand.

Gravelle, now of Trenton, played on Canada's gold-medal team in the 1948 Olympics. He was the youngest player on the podium receiving a medal for hockey in St. Moritz, Switzerland, that year.

Gravelle grew up in Aylmer, Quebec, in a family with a long tradition of serving their country. Both his grandfathers were injured in the First World War, and his father was gassed in that conflict and hit with shrapnel in the Second World War. Gravelle's childhood was anything but easy.

With a wife, nine children and only a disability pension, Gravelle's father was unable to provide for his family.

"There was nobody silver-spooning me. ...At 13 I was out in the workforce."

After shovelling snow, fielding golf balls and caddying, Gravelle scored a gold-mine job.

"I went as a pageboy at the Chateau Laurier. I was a freckle-faced kid with fiery red hair and I had a smile for everybody. I would make \$3 to \$7 a day — that was big money," Gravelle brags.

Every free moment he had, Gravelle played hockey. Because he was just a little gaffer, his brothers made him play between the posts. But, his pageboy job almost led to another career that would have put hockey on the back-burner. A dead-ringer for a young Mickey Rooney, Gravelle was asked to try for a part in a biography about the movie star. The picture was never made, and another movie offer — called "Snow Goose," the life story of Jack Miner, Canada's famous bird-lover and naturalist — fell through as well.

So much for life on the silver screen. Gravelle continued to dream of hockey and of following in his grandfather's footsteps.

From as early as he can remember, Gravelle wanted to be a machinist just like his grandpa. "To go into machinist school I had to have Grade 8."

However, the French-educated Gravelle left school in Grade 6 to work. For a year, he spent evenings and weekends sharing hockey time with correspondence and night school until he had his Grade 8.

When he was accepted at a machine shop, Gravelle quit his lucrative job at the Cha-



Photo by Don Webb

**Orval 'Red' Gravelle still plays hockey today.**

teau and started learning right away. During the days he studied, and at night he worked for the shop.

Hockey was still in his blood. Whenever he could, Gravelle dug through garbage cans looking for corn syrup labels which he collected to send away for hockey books.

"The only coaching I had was from school teachers."

Listening to hockey commentator Foster Hewitt on Saturday nights and French broadcaster Kenny Cavaliere taught Gravelle to love the game. Also, his cousin, Leo Gravelle, played for the Montreal Canadiens. Gravelle started to dream about being a hockey star.



Gravelle's hockey career began in Aylmer, Quebec, between the posts. This 1940 picture shows St. Paul Primary School's hockey team — with Gravelle front and centre.

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P.3