

FORMER IFP SPORTS EDITOR'S BOOK HIGHLIGHTS OLYMPIC, INTERNATIONAL HOCKEY EXPERIENCES

TIM WHITNELL
twhitnell@metroland.com

He worked on-site at seven Winter Olympic men's hockey tournaments, travelled to Europe several times with a number of Burlington youth rep hockey teams and now has a new book out about all those experiences - not bad for a boy from the little town of Acton.

Denis Gibbons, former sports editor of the Georgetown Independent and Acton Free Press, one-time writer and editor with The Hockey News, and international hockey expert and aficionado, is the author of the new book *Hockey: My Door to Europe*.

The 240-page publication details the many high-level hockey excursions Gibbons has taken since the 1970s, as either a researcher for American broadcast TV men's hockey crews at Olympic Games or, in the case of following travelling youth hockey squads, as a reporter/photographer and sometimes language interpreter.

Hockey: My Door to Europe is the first solo book for Gibbons. He was one of 14 authors of the massive hockey encyclopedia *Kings of the Ice: A History of World Hockey*.

The 1,023-page tome came out in 2002.

In his latest literary endeavour, Gibbons touches on many aspects of European hockey and its players, some of the more memorable games he's seen in person, the difficult lives of some of the European players he's covered or known, and the financial and personal hardships some of them endured.

He also talks about some of the many funny and sometimes harrowing situations he's found himself in while immersing himself in the international hockey scene.

The book also provides Gibbons' eyewitness accounts and his viewpoint of significant hockey and political events that transpired while he was in Europe.

Among the more memorable events were: his scary detainment by the Czechoslovak secret police in 1983 during his trip with the Burlington Cougars AAA midget team; the nuclear plant explosion in Chernobyl, in the Soviet Union, while he was attending the 1986 World Championships in Moscow; the defection of Soviet hockey star Alexander Mogilny following the 1989 World Championships in Stockholm, Sweden; and the upris-

ing in Kyiv, Ukraine during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, leading to Russia's controversial annexation of Crimea.

Gibbons's book offers anecdotes about his times as a researcher with U.S. broadcasters, at the 1988 Winter Games in Calgary (for ABC), his first Olympic assignment, at the 1992, '94 and '98 Winter Games in France, Norway and Japan, respectively, for CBS and the 2002, 2010 and 2014 Games in Salt Lake City, Vancouver and Sochi for NBC.

Missing on that list is the 2006 Winter Games in Torino (Turin), Italy. Gibbons had a heart ailment prior to the Games yet still planned to go overseas, but his wife Chris and the family doctor convinced him it was not wise so he didn't.

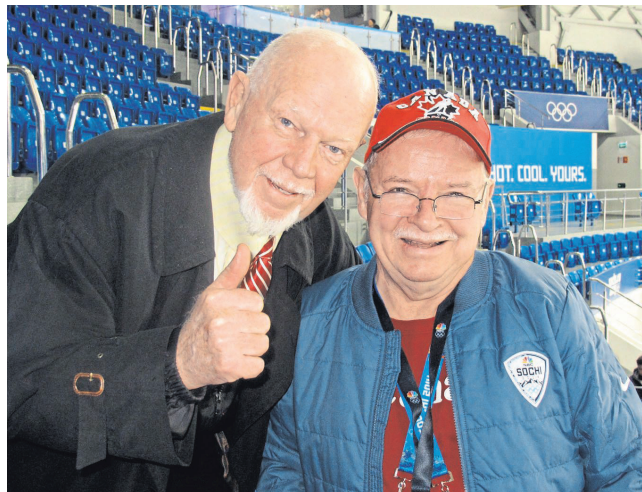
He ended up having a triple bypass operation.

Gibbons said the long days in the broadcast booth and running around Olympic venues tracking down people and information is too difficult for him to do now.

"Mike Emrick and I made a pact after the Sochi Olympics that it would (each) be our last ... I'm just too old for the 12-hour days," he said of the deal he and NBC's Olym-



Denis Gibbons/photos



Denis Gibbons at the 2014 Olympics in Russia, and with hockey analyst Don Cherry.

countries from the end of the Second World War in 1945 until around 1991, the latter not long after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union into Russia and many separate, smaller countries.

Gibbons says he worked on Hockey: My Door to Europe off and on for almost four years poring over notes he had kept since the '88 Olympics.

"My (original) idea was to illustrate the hockey and the (Olympic) Games between 1988 and 2018 but then you grow and learn more about the living conditions and the customs and language of other people of other nations.

"As you travel, the hockey (aspect) becomes less important and the people become more important," he observed.

The book can be bought directly from Gibbons by calling 905-632-6101. The hardcover book retails for \$32 while the softcover is \$25.

pic hockey and NHL national play-by-play man agreed to after the 2014 Winter Games.

However, Gibbons was involved in this year's Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea, although not in person. He was hired by NBC to do his usual men's hockey tourney research from the comfort of his home in Burlington.

"My job (was) to get as much information to the announcers as quickly as possible."

His Olympic, junior

championship and world hockey championship assignments have seen him work alongside famed TV broadcasters like Emrick, Al Michaels and Gord Miller as well as game analysts like ex-NHLers Ken Dryden, Ed Olczyk and John Davidson.

During his globe-trotting days, Gibbons regularly ventured behind the Iron Curtain, the name given to the symbolic boundary dividing Europe into Soviet Union-controlled (Communist) and Western (non-Communist)

Disney
BEAUTY
And The
BEAST

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!
Nov. 23rd, 24th, 29th, 30th,
Dec. 1st at 8pm
Nov. 24th, 25th,
Dec. 1st, 2nd at 2pm
John Elliott Theatre
Box Office:
9 Church St., Georgetown
Phone: 905-877-3700
PRESENTED BY
GLOBE PRODUCTIONS

theifp.ca

hilltop
TREE CARE

- Tree Pruning • Removals • Storm Damage • Small Shrub & Hedge Trimming
- Tree Cabling & Bracing • Stump Grinding

Free Estimates • Fully Insured

905-877-5279

Cell: 416-996-9338
jay@hilltoptreecare.ca
www.hilltoptreecare.ca

It's Lonely at the Top!

2018 Halton Hills READERS' CHOICE Platinum

f t