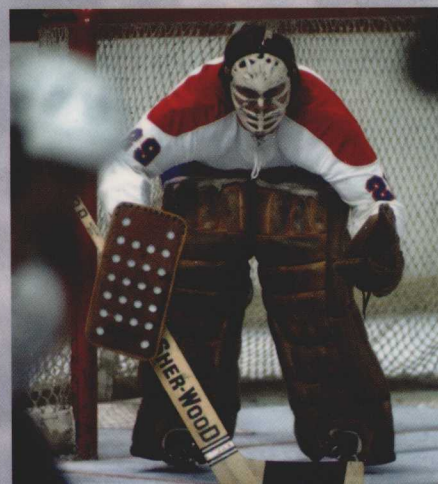
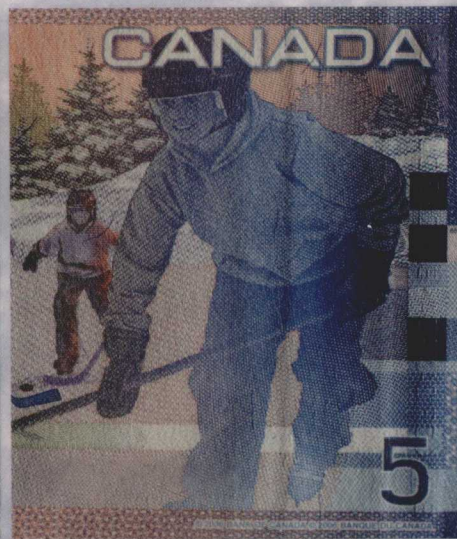
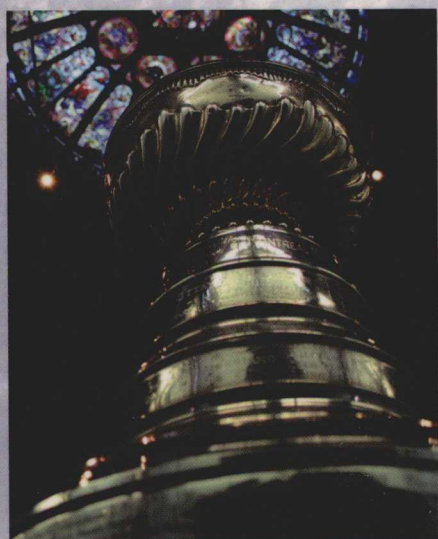


• THE SPORT THAT DEFINES A COUNTRY •

HOW HOCKEY EXPLAINS CANADA

PAUL HENDERSON

with **Jim Prime** • *Foreword by Prime Minister Stephen Harper*




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To my wife, Eleanor, who lives life better than anyone I know as a wife, mother, and grandmother. She is my hero.

To our three daughters (Heather, Jennifer, and Jill) and their husbands (Alex, Mike, and Bryan). They have given us our grandchildren: Josh, Jacob, Brandon, Zachary, Charlotte, Alton, Brynley, and Logan. All are in my heart, thoughts, and prayers daily. —P.H.

To our beautiful daughter-in-law, Jung-Hyun Park Prime. Since arriving in Canada from Korea just over a year ago, she has soaked up our culture and language at an alarming rate. One of her first rites of passage to Canadian citizenship was embracing the game of hockey. We watched the 2010 World Junior Championships together on TV and despite lacking any previous knowledge of the game, she was immediately hooked.

To my grandson Finley Canton, a two-year-old with the irresistible charm of Jean Beliveau and the endless energy of Alexander Ovechkin. He wears his Toronto Maple Leafs jersey with pride and already knows how to shout "Goal" whenever he picks up his little plastic hockey stick. With his wonderful parents Catherine and David, and his loyal sidekick Frankie, he is destined for greatness in whatever field he chooses. —J.P.



FOREWORD

by Prime Minister Stephen Harper

I HAVE TO ADMIT that my memory of when I first got interested in hockey is misty. I was born in 1959, and when I was very small my parents followed the Toronto Maple Leafs very closely. I know that more from later stories than from much actual memory of the time. Living in New Brunswick, my mother—and in particular my father—grew up rooting for the Maple Leafs. That was their team.

My father's first cousin was married to Leafs defenceman Carl Brewer, so my parents knew most of the Toronto players of the great 1960s teams. They obviously didn't know them well, but they had met them. They followed those teams very closely, but when you're following a championship team and suddenly they're no longer a championship team, you lose interest. That's really what happened to my parents after Brewer's first retirement and after the Leafs stopped winning the Stanley Cup. Even though I knew they'd been big fans, they never really introduced me to the game. I vaguely remember when the Leafs won the '67 Cup, but I wasn't following it that closely at that point. I actually started following it the next year, in 1968 with a schoolmate. We'd watch the games on TV. That's how I really got into following it. I was about 9 or 10 years old at the time.

I didn't play ice hockey until I was 10, and I still can't skate well. I did play for three years, but I was pretty marginal. I played a bit of pond hockey but not nearly as much as road hockey. I played a lot of road hockey! We played from the time school was out on Friday afternoon until we were back Monday morning. All we did was play road hockey. A while back some

ex-school chums threw a little reunion for me and they reminded me of a game we used to play in the schoolyard. It was invented by me and a friend named George Cribb. We called it "foot hockey." According to my friends this game had extremely elaborate rules, but I don't remember it as being all that elaborate. We played with relatively small nets—the size of a real hockey net—using a tennis ball. You just played with your feet, like in soccer. That's what we played at recess and before and after school for years. That was my contribution to Canada's game, "foot hockey."

The rest of the time we played road hockey. We played from the time I was about 9 until I had almost graduated high school when I was 17 or 18. I've played it quite a few times since. In fact when I was Leader of the Opposition, we used to play every weekend with the local kids at Stornaway. We haven't played much at 24 Sussex—we just haven't had time for it. Frankly, the kids are a bit older now and I can't keep up with them, but when I used to play a lot I was actually a pretty decent road hockey player.

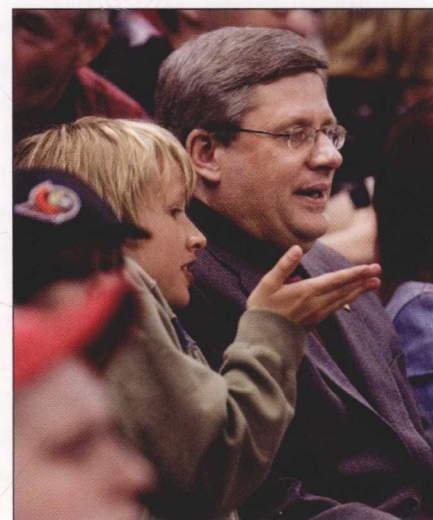
We had a pretty well-understood rule among those of us who played regularly and that was "no contact." But we went even further; not only were you not allowed to play the man, you were not allowed to play the stick either. You had to play the ball, so you couldn't lift sticks or hack at the stick, and the reason was simple—because with no gloves the guys got their hands injured. Basically, you had to play the ball at all times and for playing the stick the penalty was essentially that you were kicked out of the game for a while. Still, even though you could not play the stick, somehow we managed to have brawls every so often, I don't know why.

When a vehicle came down the road we'd yell, "car!" and there was always one old lady who didn't like us going across her lawn. But

you always have to navigate those things. It was good practice for politics. Those incidents are the exceptions. The fact is that kids are often very inconsiderate but with a little bit of consideration you can place the net to avoid the lawn that wants to be avoided.

As a kid my favourite player was Dave Keon, who I later had a chance to meet. It was a great thrill when he came back to the Leafs reunion in 2007, a very special moment. I loved all those guys but he was my favourite player. When I was a teenager it became Borje Salming, who I also got to meet a couple of years ago at an International Ice Hockey Federation event. Salming is also a very nice man and a very tough guy! You sometimes hear the knock on Europeans that they're not tough or they don't play in the clutch. Salming was one of the toughest players in the NHL. He was not necessarily the best fighter but he certainly could take a punch and he wasn't afraid to block shots.

Later on, I actually was a big fan of the Oilers Cup teams and I loved Jari Kurri. Jari Kurri scored more clutch goals than any player I can remember. Look back at some of those Oilers victories when they were down and they came back and scored a last-minute goal and see how many times it was Jari Kurri. Interestingly, he was successful not because he was a player who played with great passion, it was actually the opposite. He was so cool that even in the most high-pressure situations he never seemed flustered. The stereotype about Europeans is like all generalizations. There may be a small element of



Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his son, Benjamin, watch the Ottawa Senators host the New Jersey Devils during Game 3 of the 2007 Eastern Conference semifinals.

AP Images

truth in it, but if you look at it closely it is as flawed as any other generalization.

I consider my area of hockey expertise, if you can call it that, to extend from 1875—which is founding of the modern sport—up to 1926 when the NHL consolidated its control. My real focus within that span is the 1900–1910 period—the early professional era. The birthplace of hockey is a hotly debated topic, especially in those communities that have legitimate claims to the title. Windsor and Halifax–Dartmouth, Nova Scotia; as well as Kingston, Ontario; Montreal; and Deline in the Northwest Territories all have made persuasive cases. I am a member of the Society for International Hockey Research and the Society’s view is that the modern sport was founded in Montreal. What distinguishes any modern sport from its “folk pastime” status is the formal codification of rules by James Creighton, the fixing of dimensions, the fixing of numbers of participants, and time frames. And that was clearly done in Montreal in 1875. It’s also possible that it might have been done in other places as well but it’s clear that the sport we know today evolved from that 1875 event.

There are some who turn this notion on its head and argue that Montreal in 1875 was then Canada’s most important commercial centre. It was because of its importance that the game was founded there. In other words, what they are saying is that because Montreal was the country’s most important city—and most important sports centre at the time—it was almost inevitable that that would be the place that determined the rules, just by sheer weight of influence. There were certainly distinctive rules in Halifax. Creighton, the father of hockey, was after all a Haligonian, but there’s no doubt that eventually the Montreal rules, the so-called McGill rules, came out on top of the Halifax rules and to a large extent this is because Montreal is a

much more powerful centre. I’m currently exploring this theory in greater depth.

If you could look back prior to 1875, I think you would find the immediate antecedents of hockey being engaged in by various different cultures—meaning guys on skates playing with hooked sticks and batting around a ball. Nevertheless there seems to be no doubt that prior to the 1850s and earlier in the 1800s that English-speaking people were definitely doing that. In all parts of the country where there were English settlers or British troops, there is some evidence that this game was being played. Obviously we know about Windsor and Halifax. It’s also true in the Kingston area; it’s also true in the Northwest Territories. That’s not to say that aboriginals and French Canadians and other European immigrants didn’t have ancestral games similar to hockey, but my own read of the evidence is that the precursors of the modern sport were played in virtually all parts of the country where there were English-speaking people. There were clearly some Englishmen in most settled parts of the country, and in the case of unsettled parts like the Northwest Territories, there were British soldiers.

Hockey is one of our greatest exports, and it’s played by Canadians in all parts of the world. I’ve delivered a speech at the hockey rink in Kandahar, Afghanistan. I’ve also been to the rink in the United Arab Emirates—although I’ve never seen anybody doing anything on it, understandably because every time I’ve been there it’s been 50 degrees. What I would say is this: anytime people are relaxing and having fun in any society, sports and cultural entertainment play an important role. All societies do that in their own way. One of the things that makes us unique as Canadians—and it’s true whether you are aboriginal, English, French, or multi-cultural—is that we play hockey. So when you go to a foreign country and you see

the game being played there it *means something*, and it's not just soldiers in war zones who play. I've seen Canadian hockey teams in Hong Kong and other unlikely locales. When Canadians go to a foreign country and they're relaxing by playing hockey, they aren't just having fun. They are also experiencing being Canadian. That is a deeper need when you're away from home. The pastime is deeply engrained in the Canadian psychology, and it is one of the things that transcends all regions, all classes, and all ethnicities within the country.

Hockey is a unifying activity that defines the country. At the same time, it has historically helped to add to our pride of place within Canada. In the past there certainly used to be distinctive styles of play in each region of the country. I can remember 20, 30 years ago Quebec was known for offense, Ontario for balanced traditional hockey, and western Canada for a tougher style—even for the goon side. You see some differences even today. You still see the disproportionate number of goaltenders from Quebec, which is a funny consequence of a more wide-open style. I should not pretend to be an expert because I'm really more of an historian, but my casual observation is that as the game internationalizes, as players move around, less and less do players even at the junior level come from the locale or even the region. They are often foreigners, or they've moved long distances. And as the feeder system for the professional sport they become more and more disciplined and kind of heavily structured. My own feeling is that those differences are narrowing in the game.

The Summit Series in 1972 was where it started. If you look at the style of hockey played in the NHL today, even by the most disciplined teams, no one plays a straight up-and-down style anymore. At the same time, no European team plays the pure Ice Capades style that you once saw in countries

like Sweden. I think there has been a tremendous narrowing of these differences. That's also consistent with the planet itself.

When newcomers arrive in Canada they not only embrace the game, but for many immigrants, the participation in hockey and in community hockey very quickly becomes a strong sense of their belonging in the community. NHL owners in Canadian cities have told me that when immigrant families become ticket buyers, they actually become more passionate. In a way I guess what's partly at play is the support of a convert.

I'm not as sure about the participatory levels in the game. In terms of following it and being enthusiastic supporters, that's all there. Although the game is followed by as many people—if not more—than ever before, the number of participants among young people and children, specifically in percentage terms, has been falling dramatically. When I was a boy, I'd say 75 percent of the young kids in grade school played organized hockey. Today in my son's experience it would be no more than 10 or 20 percent playing organized hockey, and the fact of the matter is that some groups—like many Asian groups where people tend to be smaller—are not very well represented at the elite level, so I just don't know whether they have the same kind of participation levels that you used to see amongst the more established ethnic groups. I think that's something to watch. It doesn't diminish their interest in the game or their support for it, but whether they are actually playing or participating in the same numbers, I'm not sure.

Even within the National Hockey League, there's a big difference between the support for Canadian franchises and those in the northern states compared to farther southern US. We have reason to suspect that a disproportionate number of fans in a lot of southern NHL buildings are actually displaced Canadians.

Obviously that's not universally true but certainly very few of the Americans who are there have any direct contact with the game.

Hockey in Canada today is everyone's game, regardless of race, creed, or gender. I'm a big fan of elite level women's hockey and really enjoy watching it. I think in terms of calibre of play, the women's game has come a long way. It still probably has a ways to go, but there are some great female players at the top level. As a historian my observation is that there's a bit of a myth that women's hockey was taboo or repressed for decades and then gradually came into its own with feminism. That story doesn't actually hold up. If you look at the history, women's hockey has had periods where it has flourished and periods where, inexplicably, it has all but disappeared. It's been a cyclical thing. In the early decades of western Canada, the sport was quite common on the frontier and then for whatever reason it died out. If you look at the period I'm studying—late 1800s, early 1900s in eastern Canada—there was very little women's hockey. It became much bigger around the First World War and for some time after and then interest seemed to wane again after the Second World War. There is no doubt today that women's hockey is played more and at a much higher level than any time in history.

Canada is known throughout the world as the hockey nation. I meet with many world leaders and representatives of foreign governments and invariably the subject comes up. Many have observed to me that we Canadians are seen as generally a pretty modest, quiet, unassuming-type people—but they notice with Canadians that when the subject of hockey comes up we get very loud and start waving our arms around. It's a bit of a standing joke. Everybody notices this!

I've met a number of leaders who are familiar with hockey. The president of Slovakia, for instance, follows it closely. President Obama

and I have never talked at length about it. He's certainly familiar with the sport but it's not in his top one or two. President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia is extremely knowledgeable, follows it, knows the players, and has strong opinions on the game. He is a passionate fan, and I recently got a Russian national team jersey signed by all the Olympic participants, which was a great gesture.

When people ask me about Canada's greatest moments in international play, I have to answer carefully because to some extent it's a generational thing. I don't want to take anything away from the Sidney Crosby goal or the 2010 Olympics victory. It had a huge significance, especially for any Canadian that was much younger than I am. This was the moment of their lives in hockey. It also happened to coincide with Canada reaching a record number of 14 gold medals that day. That was a pretty special thing for the country, and the hockey win was the centrepiece. But I think so many of us that are from that older generation would argue that the 1972 Summit Series was different in two ways.

Of course what were similar were these big Canadian victories in significant international encounters with a massive percentage of Canadians captivated by them. Those two occasions—that 1972 Game 8 final and the 2010 gold-medal game—were watched by virtually everyone. They shut down the entire country. In those two ways they were similar, both huge moments, both exciting, and both thrilling victories. The differences are at the bigger level. The first is that in terms of hockey, the game between Canada and the United States was a game between two teams of players that, while all the passion and competition was there, compete with each other in the National Hockey League and essentially play the same style of hockey. The game in '72 was between two hockey *worlds*, featuring

athletes who did not know each other and didn't approach the game in remotely the same way or play the same style.

It was a different experience and maybe one that could never be repeated. I've tried to explain the bigger context of that series to my kids and other people who were not alive then. As the series progressed, the intensity rose. In particular the experience of Canadian fans with the police in Moscow became a kind of symbol of the Cold War. It actually became a confrontation of systems, a confrontation of values. It became a microcosm of the fact that Canada was allied with the West against Communism and the East in the Cold War.

My memory of that period is particularly sharp about things that were happening in the stands, things like the mugging of Alan Eagleson. It really became a proxy for war and that puts it on a completely different level. The Cold War has been over for 20 years now and no one who was not alive in 1972, and certainly no one who was not alive during the Cold War, could know the feeling that existed between the two different ways of life in the world at the time. It was as if the freedom of Canadians versus the repression of the Soviet system was being showcased in the individualism of the Canadian players as opposed to the regimentation of the Soviet players. It was there for everyone to see.

In fairness to them, there was some significant artistry to what they were doing and in criticism of us, although there was a lot of individualism, there was in fact a lot of pretty unimaginative play. But that said, even the way they wore their hair showed the individualism of the Canadian players as opposed to the cog-in-the-machine approach of the Soviets. For everyone alive at the time, it became more than just a game. It wasn't really about whether we were going to win at hockey. What it came down to was whether the system of a free peo-

ple was going to triumph over the system of one that had no respect for individuals. Now, if you weren't alive then, that sounds almost bizarre. I was 13 years old at the time and obviously wasn't anywhere near as political in those days as I am now, but I was of that time. For someone who was right of centre, it was an event that reminded Canadians of why we were in the Cold War. It was a pretty important moment in history.

You didn't need a classroom to learn this history lesson. You could see it happening right before your eyes, the whole concept that because fans were too boisterous at a game they could be arrested for cheering too loud. We had our apologists trying to say that we weren't really that different—and then you see that.

I used to be a hockey dad. My son retired from hockey the year before last. He played for eight years, but now he's gotten into other sports and competitive volleyball is now his thing. I miss it, but it was always his decision to play. I never pushed him into it. I enjoyed watching his games—he was the player I wanted to be but never could be. He was just a better athlete and a better hockey player. I was an energetic fan, but generally speaking, even at my most boisterous, I'm more restrained than most people. I'm not a yeller.

There's probably a lot I'd change about today's game, but probably most fundamentally, if I had my perfect world, I would make the ice surface somewhere between the NHL and the international dimensions. I think it needs to be expanded. I think the international ice is too large but we could use a bit of alteration—that's probably the most fundamental.

There are many other things. I guess the thing on my mind these days continues to be this problem with the equipment and head shots. This Sidney Crosby thing really has me just furious. I saw the hit in the Washington

game and I couldn't believe it—no penalty, no suspension, no complaint from the Penguins. I find this amazing and as someone who followed the Oilers Cup teams, I couldn't imagine someone doing that to Gretzky, I just can't. I'm mystified by it, but I hope the powers that be wake up. I'm concerned that Sidney Crosby is not back. This is the best player in the game today, and if this is as serious as it's starting to look, then I think the game has to really look at itself. You cannot allow this kind of thing to happen!

I've been asked if I have ever considered using the floor between the Government and Opposition benches for a floor hockey game to decide some of the issues of the day. I think it would be great fun. It would be more fun for me to have a floor hockey game than a real hockey game. Of course I also realize that whether I'm good or not, if I got in that kind of environment, I'd be Gretzky—I'd be a marked man. Actually there is a Conservative Party of Canada hockey team, and no they are not all right wingers, not on the ice anyway. We play a handful of games every year, mostly for charitable causes. Occasionally I "coach" them. The truth is that when I'm available I stand behind the bench with a clipboard. I am *not* a good hockey coach. It's one of the toughest jobs anywhere, so hard that I can't imagine doing it for a living.

Until recently we used to get together every year to play the Liberal Party of Canada. We played for something that we called the Hec Clouthier Memorial Trophy. Hector Clouthier is a fedora-wearing former Liberal Member of Parliament. I don't know why we called it "memorial," because Hec Clouthier is still alive and well. I guess because he's no longer a Member of Parliament. The games were fun and while there was competition it was a good exchange. It's a bit of a myth of Parliament—I think that people think that

because the politicians are always going at it on issues that there is a lot of personal animosity. The truth is that there are *some* personal animosities but not anywhere near what people would think. These are political disagreements. A lot of times on committees and other situations these people have to work together. What finally happened was that every year the Liberals kept dressing more and more ringers. It was supposed to be Members of Parliament. In fairness they never dressed Liberal MP and former Montreal Canadiens goaltender Ken Dryden or Senator and former NHL winger Frank Mahovlich so that was good for us, but they started dressing more and more sons who were Triple A midget players, so we haven't done that in the last couple of years.

Hockey is a game of memories and milestones for many Canadians. When people found out that I'm a big hockey fan and historian they started sending me all kinds of stuff, in particular books. As a result, I've now got a veritable library of history books, including some short-run first editions.

In the Harper household, we've got the so-called hockey room upstairs where we keep various souvenirs—national club jerseys, things like that. I've got a lot of special stuff up there. Vladislav Tretiak gave me one of his hockey sweaters, which he autographed for me. Bobby Orr gave me a Bruins baseball cap, also autographed. I could go through the list, but I think the most special was in 2007 when I got the 1967 Stanley Cup team. All the living members gave me an autographed jersey from that Maple Leafs team.

It doesn't get much better than that.



—Prime Minister Stephen Harper



PREFACE

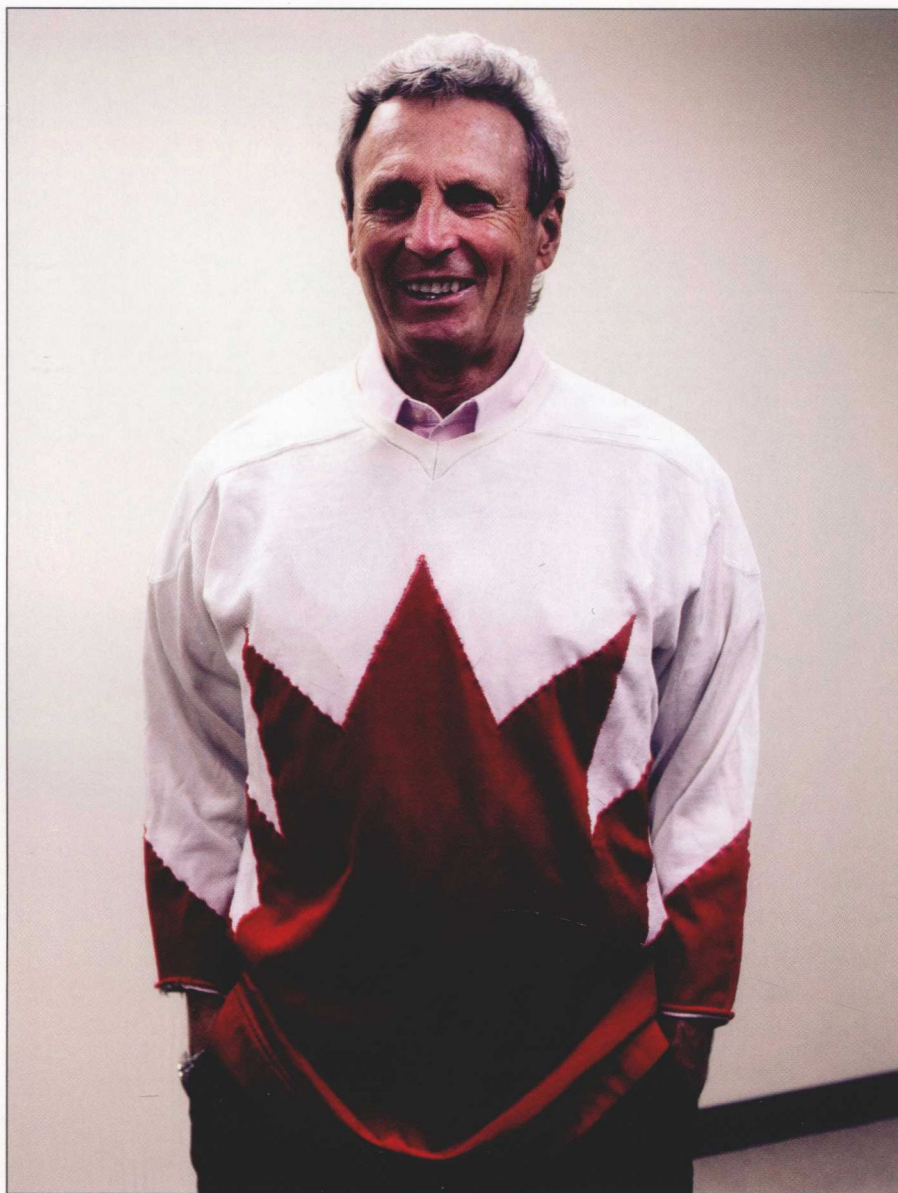
by Paul Henderson

I HAD A PASSION for hockey that surprised me, even though I didn't get a pair of skates until I was nine. We just couldn't afford them. It all started with road and floor hockey. That's when I had my first taste of what the game's all about. In Lucknow, Ontario, where I grew up, we didn't have artificial ice. We played hockey out on the street, and I used to go to Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts mainly to play floor hockey. I couldn't wait to get a hold of the stick and play. It was just such a wonderful sport. I was fast, I was good, I was strong, and I could dominate.

When I started to play on ice I had trouble sleeping the night before a game. And then I'd go to school and have trouble concentrating on the classes. I was always thinking, *Oh, we're going to play hockey tonight!*

Little did I know back then that I would be involved in one of the most famous hockey series in Canadian history, let alone score three winning goals. It's been almost 40 years, and I'm still asked about it frequently. There have been countless media interviews, retellings, and retrospectives. I'm approached all the time by fans on the street and in restaurants. Pretty much everywhere I go. They want to thank me, shake my hand, and let me know what an important moment it was in their lives. Even people who weren't alive at the time want to ask me about it.

Just the other day I had a conversation with an Asian gentleman. He told me that although his family didn't immigrate to Canada until 1975, he got into hockey and became entranced with the '72 Summit Series. He went on and on, just bubbling about the role I played, and this guy never



Paul Henderson wears his original 1972 Canada jersey from the Summit Series in a Mississauga, Ontario, office in June 2010. Henderson authenticated the jersey, which he had not seen in more than 38 years, before it was auctioned off. The winning bid for the jersey was more than \$1 million. AP Images

crazy with joy and felt an immediate kinship with his adopted country. That goal, he said, helped to transform him from a transplanted Brit to a proud Canadian. It's humbling to think that I played a part in something so profound.

I was talking with this guy recently who told me that his high school chemistry teacher wouldn't allow his class to go down to the gym to watch the final game, even though the government of Ontario had encouraged every school to do this. Talk about someone with no foresight whatsoever. The teacher couldn't stand hockey, hated the game. As he was telling me about it, the veins in this guy's neck started sticking out and his face got redder and redder. Finally he said, "I've hated that teacher ever since. I missed one of the greatest sports moments in Canadian history because of this SOB!" I mean this guy was still very angry all these years later.

People want to know everything about the series. They want to know why I called Pete Mahovlich off the ice so I could get out there in the dying seconds of the final game. People ask me that all the time. I feel embarrassed that I can't really answer the question properly. It was so totally spontaneous

... saw me play until he watched the tapes of the series.

... A man from Cape Breton recently told me he immigrated to Canada from England in 1965. At first he felt like a Brit living in Canada. There was no connection to his new country. But when I scored the goal, he said that he went

... that it even surprised me. I never, ever, did it before in my life, and I never did it again. Professionals just don't do that. It's the only time that I stood and started yelling at a teammate to come off the ice. It still amazes me. Wow! Wow! Wow! I must have felt that I had to get on the ice. I just started yelling at

Peter Mahovlich. "PETER!" Thank goodness Pete thought it was the coach yelling at him!

I do know that the goal had a huge impact on me and on the country I love. I do know that it changed my own life. I know that I didn't deserve as much credit as I got, and I know that fame alone can't fulfill you or make you happy. I know that I grew close to an amazing group of men in a very short period of time and that we were all altered by the experience, as were countless other Canadians.

When people praise me for scoring the goals, including the Game 8 winner, I know it's not me that they want to honour. It's hockey. It's Canada. Sometimes the two things seem interchangeable because hockey is Canada and Canada is hockey. The sport has that kind of impact in this country. It's our point of pride. It's within our Canadian psyche. It's in our DNA.

We as a country can be so divided—by politics, by language, even by geography. There is so much potential for division in a country as broad and culturally diverse as ours. We really have five distinct countries within the one nation. Even when it comes to hockey, if Toronto is playing Montreal, it is more than just a game. It's as if it's one country battling another. That's just the way it is. But with Team Canada '72, there was none of that. Suddenly, we were all Canadians. That was the commonality. It was the first time and maybe the only time—except in war—when we all got together and all the other contentious issues were cast aside. We were Team Canada and all of Canada was united behind us.

I think if you look across the whole spectrum of the country—from Newfoundland and Labrador to British Columbia and into the northern communities—there are many more people who follow and relate to hockey more than any other aspect of our culture. Hockey is the one thing that a majority of Canadians

embrace. Is everyone into it? No, they're not. That's the wonderful thing about our Canadian society. People grow up in certain situations, and that's where their interests lie. There are a lot of people who just aren't sports-minded, but when Canada plays hockey in the Olympics, even they become fans.

Music and art and dance are all parts of the fabric that make a country great, and we rightly celebrate these things. You need a cultural identity that recognizes accomplishments in the arts. Music, art, and dance are all expressions of us as Canadians. They are a proud part of our culture and our national fabric. But they can never unite us. God bless their souls but ballerinas are never going to bring our country together. That's the difference. It is likely that more people can name seven stars in the lineup of the 1967 Leafs than name each of the artists in the Group of Seven.

Recently, people have asked me how my goal compares with Sidney Crosby's overtime goal at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. Whether his is bigger than mine or mine is bigger than his is the wrong question. In terms of the impact of the goals... both were certainly felt across the country. Crosby's goal is an identifying marker for this generation. For my generation it was the same thing. People sometimes say, "Don't worry, Paul, your goal is still *the goal*." In my mind, which goal was bigger is incidental. They are two goals that need to be celebrated and remembered. Hockey defines us. When we win on the ice most Canadians feel *they've* won.

International hockey aside, look at the annual battles for the Stanley Cup. Even when no Canadian team is involved, people are still totally engrossed. But if you ever get two Canadian teams in the finals—man, oh man, oh man! Everyone's talking about it—and it doesn't matter where you are—in every little village and town, people are into it.

As great as Canadian hockey fans are from coast-to-coast, I've come to believe that some of the most knowledgeable hockey people I've ever met are those from Newfoundland, a place without an NHL franchise. I don't know why it is. I've gone down there so many times and they will tell me things about my hockey career that I don't even know. You talk about passionate people! "Do you remember this...? Do you remember when...?" I find them just great, and loyal to a fault. Maybe they're so used to adversity that they hang tough in their support of the Leafs!

Like all aspects of our country, Canada's hockey culture changes and evolves. A lot of people go to Tim Hortons and don't know that he was once a hockey great. Aside from being a man with an entrepreneurial spirit, he played the game the way it was meant to be played, with passion. He was one of the strongest men in hockey but, thank goodness, without a mean streak. It's amazing how fleeting the fame can be. You better learn to laugh at yourself. Laughter is therapeutic and fame is fleeting. After I first retired, someone would look at me and ask, "Are you Paul Henderson?" And I'd jokingly say, "No, I'm Gordie Howe," and it always got a laugh with, "No, you're not." Well there's a point when it made no sense saying Gordie Howe anymore so then I said, "No, I'm Darryl Sittler." Then that got to be passé and I was Wayne Gretzky. Now Wayne Gretzky is out of the spotlight so it's, "Are you Paul Henderson?" "No, I'm Sidney Crosby." And obviously I say that tongue in cheek but I do that all the time. Can you imagine the prayers that would be answered for the people of Ontario if Crosby were ever traded to Toronto? The point is you have to pick a current star because players move on quickly.

What remains is the respect that

Canadians have for their hockey heritage. We have so many hockey icons in this country. That's one thing about Canadians—people recognize and celebrate hockey greatness. The Hockey Hall of Fame recognizes them as members, but even if it didn't exist, Canadians have a place for these guys in their hearts.

If you want to talk about players who represent the sport well, I would start with one man—Jean Beliveau. Beliveau carried a stature that is unequalled. If you asked the players from my era who they admired and respected, I'm confident that Beliveau would win by a country mile. The way he conducted himself on and off the ice was exemplary. To me, Beliveau was one of the great heroes of the game and would be high on my list of heroes—period. As a former Leaf, I get a lot of flack for saying that, but it is my bias because I had so much respect for him as a person. He'd have made a wonderful Governor General because he represents the best of Canada.

The wonderful thing about hockey is that you can lose and get booed off the ice and all you need to do is come back and win the next game and score a couple of goals and you're the toast of the town again. Life is somewhat more complicated.

Your life is a journey. As a youngster I made several decisions about what I wanted to do with my life, things I wanted to accomplish. First, I hated being poor, which we were. The lack of money caused great stress for my whole family. I vowed I was not going to live like that as an adult. I wanted to be financially secure and even independent. I wanted to have a career that I was passionate about. I wanted to look forward to going to work each day. My ultimate dream was to be an NHL hockey player. I also wanted to find a great wife and build a family that would enjoy "the good life" as I imagined it. I felt that if I

had these three things, life would be almost perfect. I know how fortunate and blessed I am today. I had an 18-year hockey career, married the greatest woman in the world, and now have children and grandchildren who we enjoy immensely.

When I was selected to play for Team Canada in 1972, I never for a moment thought about scoring winning goals, let alone “The Goal of the Century.” I was a good hockey player but that one goal put me in the ozone layer in the minds of Canadian hockey fans. The fame came so quickly and, as I look back, I was ill-prepared to handle it properly.

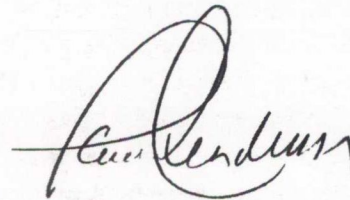
I had no spiritual dimension to my life in '72. As a result, I started to become someone I was not very happy or pleased with. When you start to believe you are somehow special, it opens the door to arrogance and pride. These are downright ugly elements in a person's life. I knew there was an emptiness inside me. I was frustrated and unsatisfied, with many questions and no answers.

It was at this point that Mel Stevens, who ran Teen Ranch near Orangeville, Ontario, introduced himself to me. He encouraged me to examine the spiritual side of life. I was very skeptical at the beginning, as I was not into religion. I thought it was only for the weak people who couldn't make it in the world, that they were the ones who needed God. From my perspective, religion caused more problems than it solved. But because I was restless and knew I needed something, I started meeting with Mel weekly. I became a student of the Bible, spending hours reading it and other Christian books. It was only after two years of intense investigation that I decided to become a follower of Jesus—a Christian.

I have had some wonderful mentors along the way who have deeply impacted and shaped my life. One mentor encouraged me to write a purpose statement for myself that would define the man I wanted to become and what I wanted to do with my life. It took almost a year to fine-tune it, but today when I wake up, I know what I want to do with my life and the type of man I want to be.

I was diagnosed with lymphocytic lymphoma chronic leukemia in November 2009. Although there is no known cure, today I live each day expectantly without any angst or fear. This is because of my faith.

Recently, I've travelled across Canada with the jersey I wore as a member of Team Canada in '72. People of all ages and backgrounds come out to meet me and see the jersey. I know that the sweater has come to symbolize something much larger than just a hockey series. It is as if it is another Canadian flag, one that instills pride in our country but also pride in our country's game. These people had really come to see a piece of their history and their heritage. They were coming to remember a time when Canada stood on the world stage and staked her claim as The Hockey Nation. I will always be proud that I was a member of that wonderful team. I am even prouder to have played the game that I love, the game that has helped to explain Canada to the world and to ourselves.



—Paul Henderson, April 2011

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—Jim Prime

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—Paul Henderson