

Mom kept him humble

Neil Stevens

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When Bobby Orr was a boy with a brushcut gaining a reputation as a minor hockey marvel, he didn't have far to go to get grounded.

All he had to do was walk through the front door of his family's home.

Doug Orr was into sports, delivering the kids to practices and games, and Arva Orr was full of loving common sense as they raised their five children in Parry Sound.

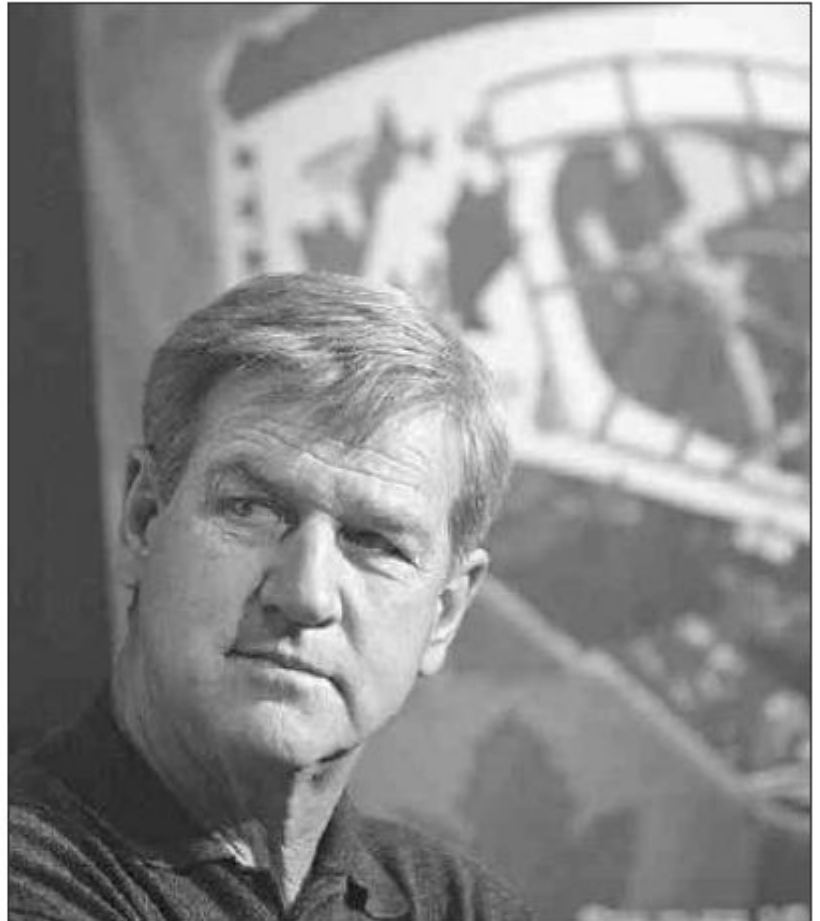
"My mom never asked me about hockey," recalls Orr, the hockey hall of famer who is 59 now. "It was always, 'Did you have fun?'"

"She never asked me, 'Did you win?' Her concern was that I should be having fun."

The memories come flooding back as Orr gets ready to help select Canada's Hockey Mom of the Year in a MasterCard Canada contest that runs through April 30.

Linda Staal of Thunder Bay, whose four sons are either playing in the NHL or on their way to the big league, and David Branch of Toronto, president of the Canadian Hockey League overseeing the three major junior leagues in Canada, are also judges.

Three finalists will be flown with family members to Vancouver during the Memorial Cup tournament. The grand prize winner will be recognized during a presentation at the championship game. Contest details are available at www.mastercard.ca.



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IN SEARCH OF A MOM. Hockey legend Bobby Orr is one of three judges who will be reading young players' essays to find Canada's best hockey mom.

Hamilton Spectator File Photo

"There are times when mothers are taken for granted when it comes to sport," Orr said. "The big thing we want to get across in this contest is to encourage kids to sit down and to write an essay about their mother's role.

"They'll see that their mothers have made a major contribution to their participation in minor sports. That's the main reason for this contest."

Arva Orr died in 2000 at age 78 from cancer. Douglas Orr died last February at age 82. Their famous son can no longer thank them personally, but he urges youngsters to pause and reflect.

"I'll look at kids and say, 'When was the last time you said thank you for the sacrifices your parents have made?' Through this contest, we're trying to get the kids to think about their moms and the contributions they make.

"Growing up, my mother was so supportive. She never said, 'You're going to be an NHL player.' It was all about having fun."

Orr was 14 when he began playing junior hockey in Oshawa. His mother made sure she was satisfied with the family with whom he would billet, that he would be attending school and that there were rules to live by.

"She had a lot to say, but nothing about hockey -- zero about hockey," Orr recalled.

"My dad was a hockey guy. My mom was the one who held it all together. She would put the foot down."

Orr entered the NHL in 1966 at age 18 with the Boston Bruins, was rookie of the year, and he helped the Bruins win the Stanley Cup in 1970 and 1972. He was named best defenceman eight consecutive seasons and he won the scoring title in 1970 and 1975.

Orr was MVP of the Canada Cup tournament in 1976, just before knee injuries prematurely ended his playing career at age 31.

"My parents knew I had a great love for the game and I know they felt the same as I did -- disappointed -- when I couldn't play any longer," he said.

The career ended, but the life lessons from his parents helped make him the man he is today.