

Edna and Harry and hockey

On Nov. 22, 1927, Olympia Stadium offered its first professional hockey game.

In the audience that night was one Harry C. Nubbs, a telegrapher at American Telegraph and Telephone's Motor City office.

Detroit's brand new National Hockey League entry, the Cougars, the late Victoria Cougars, were beaten by the Ottawa Senators, 2-0.

Last Sunday, when the Red Wings lost to Boston, 6-4, the same Mr. Nubbs was seated in Olympia's balcony.

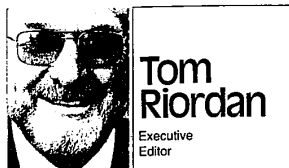
Most amazing is the fact that during the 51 seasons pro hockey has been in Detroit, Harry has seen almost every game played by the Cougars, which later became the Wings. He estimates that he has missed only about 40 games during the half century plus one year, while the club performed about 1,500 times on the frozen surface of Olympia.

THAT'S SOMETHING. But this story has another fascinating element — Edna Nubbs, Harry's wife. From the time they were married in 1928, she has been at his side at almost every game.

These two hockey nuts, both 74, live in an apartment in Farmington.

Harry retired in 1966 as AT&T telegraph service chief after 40 years and nine months. But he never will be retired from being a hockey fan — and neither will Edna. Their entire winter schedule is built around home dates of the Red Wings.

In the beginning, the entire balcony was open seating at 50 cents a head. When the club introduced



Tom Riordan
Executive Editor

reserve seats upstairs, the Nubbses became season ticket holders. That mainly, explained Edna, was so they would be able to claim tickets for Stanley Cup playoffs.

Ask the pair what their greatest thrills have been over the years and they'll say seeing the Wings win the coveted cup. It happened seven times, 1936, 1937, 1943, 1950, 1952, 1954 and 1955, dates they'll never forget.

HARRY HAS STRONG negative opinions about the way hockey is now played.

"We didn't have that rough goon stuff, we have today," says Harry as he looks back at the great teams of the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

"Take a guy like Larry Aurie. He could rag the puck so well you'd swear it was tied to his stick — he had more moves than anyone."

Harry doesn't reserve his memories for Red Wings only. "Cooney Weiland, he was a center for Boston, would lay down his stick on the ice and stop passes or hook the puck off a guy's stick, you know, a poke checker. It was beautiful to watch.

"King Clancy of Ottawa and then Toronto, he had a way of slowing down the game when he'd stop and tie his skate. And those rushes of Eddie Shore, the old Boston Bruin defenseman."

Harry savored his grand memories.

THERE'S ONE NIGHT at Olympia that still can make Harry and Edna cringe. It happened a few years after the end of World War II.

Says Harry, "I thought my heart would stop when Gordie Howe was injured on the boards."

Howe, then a relative newcomer to the NHL, was rammed off his feet and his skull was crushed against the top of the boards. For days he hovered on the brink of death. Few expected he would ever play again. But he made it back and amazingly is still performing at age 50.

Hockey players like Gordie and fans like Harry and Edna seem to have a longevity about them that defies explanation.

ASK THIS PAIR to select their all-time Red Wing team and a rush of names fills the room. Harry and Edna agree in almost every case. Here are their final choices:

GOALIE

Terry Sawchuck (1949-50 and 1968-69)

DEFENSE

Bucko McDonald (1934-35 through 1939-39)
Doug Young (1931-32 through 1938-39)
Ebbie Goodfellow (1929-30 through 1942-43)
Black Jack Stewart (1938-39 through 1942-43 and 1945-46 through 1949-50)
Leonard "Red" Kelly (1947-48 through 1959-60)

FORWARDS

Ted Lindsay (1944-45 through 1956-57 and 1964-65)

Gordie Howe (1946-47 through 1970-71)

Larry Aurie (1927-28 through 1938-39)

Herbie Lewis (1928-29 through 1938-39)

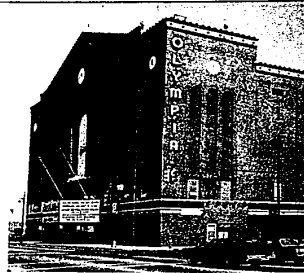
CENTERS

Sid Abel (1938-39 through 1942-43 and 1945-46 through 1951-52)

Marty Barry (1935-36 through 1938-39)

DISCUSSING HOCKEY in Detroit you never get far without mentioning the name of Jack Adams, the man who sold a city on a foreign sport. Of course he didn't have to sell Harry Nubbs, who migrated from his birthplace in Blenheim, Ontario to Detroit in 1925.

Harry holds Adams in the highest esteem and he loved it when "Jovial Jack" guided the Red Wings to the club's first Stanley Cup as Detroit broke out of the Great Depression.



"The Old Red Barn" has been the site for half a century of thrills for Harry and Edna, two of the Red Wings' most devoted fans.

They might have called Adams "Jovial Jack" but he was a stern taskmaster whenever his players took to the ice.

In those days Detroit had a minor league team called the Olympics. Harry remembers, "They played Monday nights. You'd see the Wings on Sunday and then never know who might be suited up Mondays with the Olympics."

Harry explained that if Adams was not pleased with the performance of a Red Wing in a Sunday game, Jack would order the man to play for the Olympics the next night.

THEN THERE WAS the referee Moose Jamison, who occupies a warm spot in Harry's memory book. In the early days there was only one official on the ice and he stopped play with a bell he would have strapped to one hand.

That was fine with Moose because he loved to chew tobacco while officiating. But Moose's mood changed in the early 1930's when the league introduced whistles to signal offsidings and penalties. The game was just never the same for Moose.

Harry's skills as a Morse code expert sometimes gave him an extra dimension while attending games when Western Union and Postal Telegraph operators would transmit the action back to the offices of Associated Press, United Press and International News Service.

Often as a hush settled over the audience, the dots and dashes from the telegraphers' keys would float up into the balcony where Harry could "read" about the action he had just seen.

RED WING HOCKEY at Olympia is scheduled to end this season. The Wings will play in the new Joe Louis Arena along the Detroit River starting next year—if the building is ready.

So there is the chance that when Les Canadiens of Montreal come to Detroit Sunday, April 8, it could be the Red Wings final appearance in what has lovingly been dubbed "The Big Red Barn."

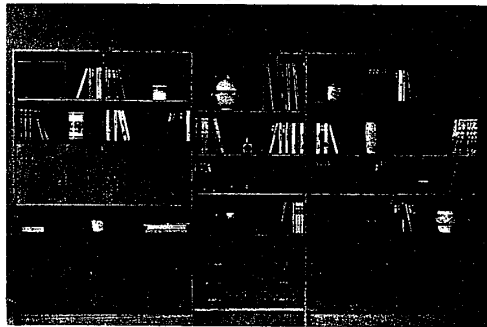
And Harry and Edna will be there, in Section 27, row B, seats 5 and 6.



Edna and Harry Nubbs share 50 years of marriage, with hockey a major element. Among their souvenirs is a goalie stick once

used by Terry Sawchuck, who naturally has a place on the couple's all-time Red Wing honor squad. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

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