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New book featuring local hockey stories to benefit KidSport

From the dedicated moms and dads who climb out of their warm beds in the wintry dawn to get their child to the hockey rink, to the players who can remember their first goal like it happened a day ago, Dr. Gordon Hunter, a University of Lethbridge Faculty of Management professor, wanted to give a voice to people's everyday experiences with hockey in his new book.

"There are books about Gordie Howe and Ron MacLean and Ken Dryden and those are good books, but there aren't any books about normal folks and their experience with hockey when they're growing up," says Hunter, who's already the author of four academic books. "When I told my younger son Robb he said 'Finally, a book that someone will read.'"

He started collecting stories from people with a southern Alberta connection and compiled them into a book titled after one of his favourite sayings: *The Older I Get the Better I Was*.

"There are stories about guys who didn't go very far in hockey, there are stories about some of the guys who played in the NHL or played professional in Europe and they are businessmen, lawyers and doctors here in Lethbridge," he says.

The 40-chapter book includes contributions from Lethbridge Mayor Chris Spearman, who tells the story of going to the Montreal Forum to watch the Montreal Canadiens play, and Steve Craig, a fellow Management colleague, who vividly recalls the phone call he got at age 15 inviting him to play on a AA team.

"I was playing on a Midget B team when I got a call from a Double-A team. I remember walking up to the phone, a rotary dial phone in the middle of the hallway at home. I was pretty excited; it's all relative, but for me, that was just like being called to the pros," says Craig.

Other contributors include U of L President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Mike Mahon, Brent

Brooks, Mark Campbell, Rajko Dodic, Clint Dunford, and Darrin Harrold, a U of L grad and the head coach of the men's national ice hockey team in Singapore. Several women also contributed chapters, including Cheryl Neufeld, commissioner of Coaldale REC hockey, Brook Paisley, goalie for the Pronghorns women's hockey team, and the first chapter recounts experiences from local hockey moms.

Hunter's own experiences with hockey have formed a thread that has run throughout his life. He grew up in Saskatoon and has always played goal. He played hockey throughout the years he was a student and then became a coach when his sons started playing.

"Seven years ago when I turned 60, I played one game and it took me two years to get into shape for that one game," Hunter says. "I had a ball."

The game was organized by Jeff, the Hunters' older son, who had also arranged for the game to be recorded on video. Stories like these are peppered throughout Hunter's book.

"When I sat down and talked to some of the people who are in the book and they got talking about their stories, I could see their eyes glistening over," he says.

A book launch is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 10 from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Paradise Canyon Golf Resort. Copies of the book, at a cost of \$30, will be available to purchase at the launch and through the U of L Bookstore. Proceeds from the book will go to the Lethbridge branch of KidSport, a national non-profit organization that provides financial assistance to children who want to play sports.

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