Gus Leonard, 97, had

been second oldest

living Peterborough

and District Sports Hall

of Fame inductee

**MIKE DAVIES**

EXAMINER SPORTS DIRECTOR

Gus Leonard was at the

Peterborough and District Sports

Hall of Fame for their Tuesday morning coffee crew as the 97-year-old has been doing for years.

That's why it was surprising for

many to learn on Friday that Mr.

Leonard died Thursday night. Only

Fraser Dunnfield, at 100, was older

among the Hall's living inductees.

"I don't know anyone who didn't

have tremendous respect for Gus as

a person and a hockey player," said

long-time Hall of Fame chairman

Don (Red) Wasson. "If the world

was full of Gus Leonard it would be

a much better place."

Mr. Leonard grew up in Marmora

but Peterborough became his home

when he moved here in 1941 to play

junior B hockey and soon after begin

basic training at Morrow Park during

the Second World War. He built

a home on Donegal Street he lived in

until his death.

In December 1997, Examiner columnist Don Barrie wrote an extensive piece on Leonard's career. Barrie quoted a 1951 Examiner article

which said of Leonard: "The Petes

star took the rubber at his blue line,

and in a beautiful display of weaving

and stick handling, eased his way

through the entire team to score a

picture goal."

Wasson said Leonard was one of

the best senior hockey players of his

era

"He was a wonderful hockey player,"

he said. "I can't believe he didn't play

at a higher level than he did."

A combination of the War and

Leonard's love for hunting and fishing may have contributed to him not

having a burning desire to pursue

professional hockey.

As Barrie wrote, a team mate of Gus

from his junior days said of him, "He

was a hockey talent with class and a

real gentleman to boot."

He played his minor hockey in

Marmora and gained a reputation as

a teenager playing in the Trent Valley

League. He joined Peterborough's

junior B team in 1941 and joined

Joe Rochetta and Ron Horton on

the team's top line. Examiner sports

writer Fred D. Craig wrote: "This boy

Leonard who hails from Marmora

is a real find for the juniors. A rangy,

fast lad, he is good going both ways, is

a fine team player and handles himself

nicely at all times."

Following his basic training he

was posted to the Canadian Provost

Corp in Ottawa and played in the

Interservice Hockey League. He was

recruited for an Armed Forces team

of select players who were to travel

to entertain the troops. He trained

with Red Tilson who was later killed

in combat and for whom the OHL's

Most Outstanding Player Award is

named.

"He was as good a player as was in

camp," Leonard said. "He was not

very big but he was outstanding with

the puck"

Before the team was to go on tour

all the players were sent back to

their local regiments. After the War,

Leonard resumed playing hockey in

Marmora until Red Creighton called

to see if he was interested in moving

to Peterborough and play for the senior

B Petes.

Barrie wrote that Leonard's first

job, he remembers, was "sweeping

out the old Centre Theatre each

night after the last show."

He later worked at the Dominion

Woolens and the Toronto

Peterborough Transport Co., from

which he retired.

The fondest memory of Leonard's

hockey career was winning the Jimmy

Drummond Trophy. This award was

given to the most outstanding player

in hockey in Peterborough in 1951.

His best game memory was from

his high school days. The high

school in Marmora had 35 boys, in

total, from which to choose a hockey

team. In the 1938-39 season, this

small school made it all the way to

the Ontario finals in Ottawa.

Mr. Leonard was elected to the

Peterborough and District Sports

Hall of Fame in 1993. Visitation

and funeral arrangements were not

immediately available.

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