

B I L L W A I S E R

GORDIE'S SKATE



I L L U S T R A T E D B Y

L E A N N E F R A N S O N

Thistledown Press

Gordie's love of hockey began by chance when he was five.

One winter night, a neighbour knocked at the door.

Her husband was sick.

She was desperate.

She told Mrs. Howe she needed money and wanted to sell a sack filled with some of her family's belongings.





AUTHOR'S NOTE

Gordie's Skate was inspired by Howe's autobiography *Mr. Hockey: My Story* (2014) and his memories of growing up in Saskatoon during the 1930s. The story about Gordie's mom buying the sack with the old pair of men's skates has been regularly featured in newspaper stories about Howe. Her kindness resonated with me, reminding me of my own parents who came of age during the depression and who taught me the importance of helping others.

Gordie Howe (1928-2016) was just eighteen years old when he began his National Hockey League career with the Detroit Red Wings in 1946. He would help lead the Red Wings to four Stanley Cups (1950, 1952, 1954, and 1955). During his twenty-five seasons with Detroit, Gordie would be named the NHL's most valuable player (the Hart Memorial Trophy) six times. He also once held the NHL record for most goals and most points. Howe was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1972, but came out of retirement two years later to play with his sons on the Houston Aeros in the new World Hockey Association. He spent his last season with the NHL's Hartford Whalers in 1979-80. When Gordie finally hung up his skates, he had played professional hockey in five decades. It's little wonder that he was affectionately called, "Mr. Hockey." But that all might never have happened without his mother's kindness.

—Bill Waiser

*To the wondrous joy
of learning to skate
at nearby playgrounds,
hockey arenas,
backyard rinks,
and frozen sloughs.*

—B. W.



*For all the members
of my family
who grew up skating on
Saskatchewan sloughs.*

—L. F.

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