

GOWER REMEMBERS

Private Herbert Augustus Herder

(1887-1934)



Herder in his Crescents' team uniform with the Boyle Cup.

Herder “*became the first Newfoundland hockeyist to master and bring to a plane of perfection what was then referred to as ‘the lift’*. He brought that accomplishment to such a stage of proficiency that he could send a puck flying to its target with amazing accuracy. He became the acknowledged star in an era when hockey teams involved seven playing members and no ‘relief players’. But Gus could do more than just shoot the puck; he was a dedicated and talented hockey player. (Uncredited newspaper reporter quoted in Herder citation at NL Hockey Hall of Fame)

Herbert Augustus Herder was born in St. John's on May 24, 1887, the fourth of seven sons and fourth of 12 children of Elizabeth Barnes and William J. Herder. His father, a native of Old Perlican, was the founder of the first daily newspaper in St. John's, *The Evening Telegram*, in 1879. In addition to her full-time occupation as a wife, mother and homemaker, Elizabeth Herder, also found time for church and other charitable work, including a period as president of the Ladies' College Aid Society during the First World War.

Gus, as he was commonly known, attended the Methodist College in St. John's, where he was an average student and excelled as an athlete, especially in hockey. Upon graduating from the College in 1902, he entered the family business, *The Evening Telegram*, eventually becoming Vice President and Circulation Manager. However, it was in hockey that his name became a household word in St. John's.

After playing for the Saints for a number of years, in 1907, Herder joined the Crescents, one of the four teams that made up the senior hockey league in St. John's, the other teams being the Feildians, the Victorias and St. Bon's. This was in the day when hockey teams had seven players on the ice at any given time, barring penalties. There were the standard positions that are still in existence today: goaltender, centre, right and left wing. The other positions were the rover, who played behind the centre, something like a centre-half in soccer; and the point and the cover, who played back near the defence line but had freedom to move around the ice. Herder played the point position and he played it very well. There was hardly a game in which he did not score at least one goal and usually several for his team.

During his ten years with the Crescents, Herder led his team to the Boyle Cup, signifying supremacy in senior hockey in Newfoundland, six times: in 1908 and in each year from 1910 to 1914. He had the good fortune to have one or more of his brothers playing with him on the Crescents during that period, Arthur, Will and Doug in the early years and

later Hubert and Ralph. Together, with their other team mates, they were a formidable presence on the ice.

While there were only four teams in the St. John's senior league at that time, there was opportunities for competition with teams outside St. John's. In February of 1909 a team from Brigus came to St. John's for a three-game series. Teams also visited from Nova Scotia: Truro (in 1909), Windsor (in 1911 and 1912) and Halifax (in 1913). The St. John's teams who played against these visitors were all-star teams made up of players from the city league and Herder was part of each one. The St. John's squads usually won all games played, but even if they did long the occasional game they won the series. A local 'poet' submitted a multi-stanza piece of doggerel to *The Evening Telegram* (published March 08, 1909) regarding the Truro series, which contained the following verse in praise of Herder:

*Now the point is Gus Herder, the Crescents bright light,
That shineth on ice from all points near and far;
How he lifts with precision, and baffles all foes
When he sallies, then tallies, as puck to net goes.*

After ten years with the Crescents, Herder joined the Terra Novas, a new team in the league and led them to league championship and the Boyle Cup in 1918 and 1919. He played for the Terra Novas until the end of the 1921 hockey season. Later that year, on November 30, he became the team manager. The following year, on November 10, 1922, he was one of the founders of the Methodist Guards hockey team, which became part of the city league, and was elected its first manager, a position he held until he retired from the sport in 1930.

When war was declared in Europe in the late summer of 1914, two of Herder's brothers, Hubert (No. 3) and Ralph (No. 34), were among the first join the newly reformed Newfoundland Regiment. They went overseas as part of the First Five Hundred in October 1914. His brother

Arthur, who was practicing law in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, at the time joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force on December 29, 1914, but was permitted to transfer to the Newfoundland Regiment in February 1916. Their oldest sister Elsie also went overseas as part of the Voluntary Aid Detachment. With three brothers and a sister already in uniform, it may be surprising to some that Gus Herder did not attempt to enlist until June 1916. Perhaps he knew beforehand what the outcome would be; or perhaps he was goaded into enlisting by the taunts of the White Feather Campaign that attempted to shame young men whom they perceived to be able-bodied to join up by having young women pin a white feather on their lapel, usually at a public gathering or event. Or perhaps it was just that he wanted to join his brothers in fighting for the cause.

Whatever the reason, on June 21, 1916, Herder enlisted in the Newfoundland Regiment. He was assigned Regimental Number 2898. He had obviously been planned to do this for some time, as there is a medical report in his Regimental file dated May 11, 1916. Once the Regimental brass had time to review that report they quickly realized that he was not suitable for service overseas. He was discharged from the Regiment on June 23, after having serving only two days. The reason given was that he was medically unfit; a closer examination of his medical report indicates that he was deaf in his right ear, perhaps the result of an errant hockey puck. Interestingly, there is also a notation in his file that he was issued Rejection Badge No. 73 on October 05, 1916. This was a metal badge, about the size of a 50 cent piece that had the words "I HAVE OFFERED" emblazoned on it, given some credence to the idea that he had been coerced into enlisting knowing full well that he would be rejected.

Just a week after he was discharged from the Regiment, Herder's three brothers were part of the Newfoundland contingent that went over the top at Beaumont Hamel. Hubert was killed and Ralph and Arthur were both wounded. They both recovered but Arthur later died of wounds received while received in fighting at Marcoing on December 04, 1917. It must have been doubly tragic for Gus, knowing that he had attempted to be with them but had been rejected.

Herder's Attestation Paper also provides personal information: he was 5 feet 10½ inches tall, weighed 159 pounds and had a chest size of 34½ inches which expanded to 37½. He listed his occupation as an accountant, with an annual salary of \$1,200. He was unmarried.

The following year, Herder changed his marital status. On January 11, 1917, he married Marion (Mollie) Rendell Carter of St. John's, at St. Thomas' Anglican Church. They had one son, named Hubert Howard (1918-1980), the first name in honour of his uncle who had been killed at Beaumont. He served as a flight lieutenant in World War II.

Gus Herder died at St. John's on December 28, 1934, after a short illness. The cause of death was pneumonia. A long-time member of Whiteway Masonic Lodge, a Guard of Honour from the lodge walked along side his coffin on its way his home on Forest Avenue to his place of burial at the General Protestant Cemetery.

Today it is common to see and hear sports figures advertising a wide variety of products and services, and they are usually paid large amounts of money in return. Gus Herder may have been one of the first of these athlete *cum* salesmen but it is unlikely that he received any remuneration for his services. On January 02, 1914 and for several issued following *The Evening Telegram* carried an advertisement for P. E. Outerbridge, who operated an insurance business. It read:

HOCKEYISTS!

When the referee, Mr. W. J. Higgins, M.H.A.,
and a player like Mr. Gus Herder both take out
an Accident Policy you may bet your last dollar
there's something in it.

I also insure the Spectators.

Costs you a Five Spot and it's worth it.

P. E. Outerbridge 137 Water Street Telephone 60

On Sunday, November 16, 2014, Gower Street United Church initiated a program of commemoration that will last for approximately four to five years. On roughly every second Sunday through to the end of 2018, a brief write-up on one of these individuals, similar to this one, will appear as an insert in the Bulletin and there will be a reference to that person in the service. In this way, we hope to recognize their contribution to the war effort, the many sacrifices they made, some with their very lives, and the debt of gratitude we owe to each of them.

We also hope to learn more about them from their descendants or other relatives, thereby fostering a link between our past and our present, as we begin our 203rd year as a faith community.

If you know of any relatives of these servicemen and women please contact Bert Riggs at briggs@mun.ca or at 726-6169.