

# Wayne Gretzky, global ice hockey legend, dies at 61

\*\*\*This obituary is fake: it is just a practice.

By Shui Hu

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Mr. Gretzky smiled before the playoffs in '81. (Tony Triolo)

Wayne Gretzky, widely considered the best professional hockey player to put on a pair of skates, died Sept. 8 at his St. Louis home. He was 61.

The cause was heart attack, said his wife, Janet Jones.

In the sporting world, players who set and break records abound, but those with talents and achievements like Mr. Gretzky, are extremely rare. Throughout his 20-year career, he played for four teams: the Oilers, the Kings, the Blues, and the Rangers. He won the Hart Trophy (most valuable player) nine times, the Art Ross Trophy (scoring championship) ten times, the Lady Byng Trophy four times and the Conn Smythe Trophy (outstanding player in a playoff) twice. In total, he held 61 NHL records and most career points of 2,857.

Mr. Gretzky never disappointed.

"Mr. Gretzky led the Oilers in scoring each of his first eight years with the team. In 1981-82, he scored 92 goals in a single season. Later, as the captain of the Oilers, Mr. Gretzky led the team to four Stanley Cup championships in five years and won the title of Most Valuable Player for four consecutive years from 1985 to 1988.

In the summer of 1988, Mr. Gretzky left the Oilers for the Los Angeles Kings. Thereafter, he scored his 1851st career goal in the 780th game of his career, and set a playoff assist record (31 assists in 19 games). Time and again, he set new records.

From 1996 to 1999, Mr. Gretzky played for St. Louis Blues and New York Rangers. Although he continued achieving, the former glory has gradually come to an end because of the lack of superstar teammates.

In April 1999, Mr. Gretzky skated in his last game as a New York Ranger at Madison Square Garden. Following the 2-1 loss to Pittsburgh, Gretzky remained in uniform as he met with the media.

"Probably, subconsciously, I don't want to take it off," Mr. Gretzky said. "I'm not going to pull it on ever again. It's hard. It's hard to take it off right now. I have to be honest with you. I don't want to take it off."

Immediately after his retirement, Mr. Gretzky was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame. The following year, his jersey number 99 was retired league-wide, the first in history to have this honor.

Since retirement, he held positions as minority owner and head coach of the Phoenix Coyotes, executive director of 2002's Gold Medal-winning Canadian Men's Olympic Hockey team, owner of the popular Toronto bar and restaurant Wayne Gretzky's, winemaker with the celebrated Wayne Gretzky Estates Winery, and philanthropist with his own Wayne Gretzky Foundation and countless other charitable endeavors.

Mr. Gretzky's passion and dedication for ice hockey all began at an early age. "I was a boy that happened to love a game and got lucky, and the good Lord gave me a passion for it."

As a child, Mr. Gretzky learned to skate with his father in the family's backyard. While other kids of the same age only knew to play at the amusement park, 6-year-old Gretzky was already joining the league to compete against older players. By the time Mr. Gretzky turned 10, he had scored a staggering 378 goals in an 82-game season. Afterwards, Mr. Gretzky's name quickly appeared prominently in the major newspapers and magazines, and reporters titled him "Hockey's Wonder Kid."

In 1977, Mr. Gretzky was just 16 years old when participating in the World Junior Ice Hockey Championships. Being the youngest player who had less game experience, he put up 17 points in the team's six games and was the leading scorer. Doug Gillbert, one of the most knowledgeable and prolific sportswriters in Canada, held high hopes for this talented young man: "There is no doubt Wayne Gretzky's future lies in professional hockey."

Mordecai Richler, a Canadian writer, once commented that Mr. Gretzky is an athlete's paragon: he was "modest to a fault, McIntosh-apple wholesome, dedicated, an inspirational model for young fans. He's an anachronism, rooted in an age when a date wasn't a disco, then your place or mine, but rather a double feature at the local Rialto, then maybe a banana split at the corner soda fountain."

In addition to Mrs. Jones, his wife of 61 years, Mr. Gretzky is survived by six children: Paulina Gretzky, Emma Gretzky, Trevor Gretzky, Tristan Gretzky, and Ty Gretzky; 2 grandchildren.

According to Mrs. Jones, Mr. Gretzky's grave is in Brentford, ON., his hometown. Visitation will be held from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday at Mount Hope Cemetery, 169 Charing Cross St, where a blessing service is scheduled for 10 a.m. Friday.

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