

Orval Dorscht

When a major fire in 1970 nearly destroyed Orval Dorscht's sporting goods business, he stood amid the firefighters and flames on that bitter February night and proclaimed he would start his business again, right away. "I'm not going to give up," he said.



This is what one would expect from a man who once wrestled under the name The German Terror and could lift 132 pounds with one arm – when he weighed a mere 132 pounds.

At 65-years-old, he was quoted as saying, "I'd murder most guys my age," while running a YMCA wrestling clinic for coaches.

Dorscht was a well-known personality between 1940 and 1960, as the owner of Dorscht Sporting Goods in downtown Waterloo and an accomplished athlete. He had a colourful life that included narrowly missing a berth on the 1936 Olympic wrestling team after riding to Montreal on the back of his brother's motorcycle. In 1950 he won an Ontario 130-pound wrestling title held at the Kitchener YMCA.

During the 1940s it is written that Dorscht did the carnival circuit for four months, wrestling under the names of Frenchie Lavoy, Otto Luger and the German Terrier or the German Terror.

While he is best remembered for his wrestling and weightlifting prowess, he was actually an all-around athlete who competed in rowing, boxing and baseball. He gave the community many years of entertainment as founder and coach of the Dorscht Ladies Softball team, an organization that won the Kitchener-Waterloo championship every year except one between 1949 and 1966. In 1964, the team reached the Ontario finals. Dorscht's team went on to become the Kitchener Kieswetters.

The St. Clements-born businessman also served the community as a Waterloo Family YMCA member and instructor for more than forty years. He was married to Ruth Meyer and together they raised four children.

He was a tenacious businessman who survived the sporting goods business for twenty-five years. Dorscht's obituary states he actually started out doing bicycle repairs in the basement of a house near the corner of Moore and Roger streets in the late 1940s. He then moved to the King Street location across from Harmony Lunch, before moving to Laurel and Erb streets after the 1970 fire. His final move before retiring was to a Weber street near Columbia Road location.

Dorscht, who lived at 199 Mansion Street in Kitchener, died on February 29, 1984 at the age of sixty-nine.

Photo courtesy of the Waterloo County Hall of Fame