

Robert Gendron



During the 1940s, it wasn't too hard to find **Roger Gendron**. You could usually find him on a football field, either in the backfield or, often times, the opponent's backfield. As a standout running back and linebacker for several teams, Gendron spent a lot of time in both.

Born in Sanford, ME, and raised in South Norwalk, Gendron attended Gilbert and Bennett School, Ben Franklin Jr. High, and Norwalk High School before his family moved and he graduated from Danbury High School.

He would continue his education at the National Farm School in Delaware Water Gap, PA, where, of course, he would also play football in 1941 and '42. But he really made his mark on the gridiron after he served in the Navy in 1943, excelling as a running back and linebacker for the Laurels and later the Norwalk Tigers.

One of the highlights of Gendron's football career came when he was playing for a team called the North Carolina Tigers in the Navy and they took on the heavily favored Charlottesville Cards. "We went down there with about 15 guys and the Charlotte Cards played mostly college players, Gendron recalled. "But we held them and ended up beating them."

But Gendron's athletic abilities weren't limited to just football. In the early 1950s, he was a player/coach and pinch hitter for the DeMolay baseball team in town, and also played basketball for the local YMCA team.

While in the Navy, Gendron also took up the sport of boxing where he compiled a perfect 5–0 record. Even after the service, he boxed in the Golden Gloves and then professionally for two fights, both victories.

But there's no question what sport his heart was always in. Even after his football days were over and he had moved to Westport, Gendron coached Pop Warner Football for 14 years in the 1960s and '70s. He later served as president of the Westport PAL youth football program.

Now retired after a career in sales, Gendron still lives in Westport with his wife, the former Shirley Mangels, the parents of three children. In addition to this past involvement with the PAL, the 73-year-old Gendron is a current member of the Knights of Columbus, 4th Degree.

And he's still a big football fan, regularly attending local high school games in the fall at Staples, Brien McMahon, and Norwalk High. The only difference now, however, is he can be found in the stands instead of the backfield.