

## Sketch of a West Pointer – John Evans



John Evans was born in Vancouver on October 20, 1955. Of his 67 years on the planet, he has lived within a 3 block radius for 60 of those, and that number is still growing. When he got married, he and his wife Christine had to move to Burnaby for a few years before gradually working their way back to the west side of Vancouver. He attended McKechnie Elementary School and Winston Churchill High School before enrolling in Applied Science at the University of British Columbia and earning a degree in Civil Engineering.

John spent his entire working career as a Professional Engineer for the City of Vancouver. It wasn't his original plan to devote all his working life to one entity but it was the best job offer where his wife, a teacher, had the likelihood of a job in the same region.

But it worked out well. He was given great projects and significant responsibilities that made the job fabulous. He spent his first 10 years dealing with all the major projects including Expo 86, BC Place, Canada Harbour Place and the Cambie Bridge. For the next 10 years he dealt with garbage and recycling – including introducing the blue box recycling program and green waste composting. Subsequent postings included finance and budgeting (“not fun”) and dealing with the external utility companies, which included forcing new national conditions under which the telecom companies paid to access City streets. In the end, politics changed and the job was becoming less satisfying, so he retired at the first opportunity, at age 54, with absolutely no regrets.

John and Christine have been together since their last year of high school at Churchill and married right out of university. That works out to 44 years of marriage and being together for 50 years. They have two children: son Cam, who is a local environmental engineer with one son of his own; and daughter Karen, who is a nurse but is staying home right now raising two young children. Both of their offspring live in the area; Karen just moved here from Toronto, her husband being the beneficiary of a very broad definition of ‘working from home’.

A large part of John's teenage years were spent playing the saxophone in the Kitsilano Boys Band, under the direction of Arthur Delamont, for whom Delamont Park at Arbutus and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue is named. *[You can Google ‘Arthur Delamont’ to learn more about this fascinating gentleman and his career.]* It was this same group that gave Jimmy Pattison and Dal Richards their musical starts. John was an active member as a teenager and still played reunion concerts every few years until their last one in 2015, when the group finally acknowledged the advancing age of the membership. John was the second youngest. As well as the obvious musical education, John relates that there was a lot of growing up done when the band toured the United Kingdom. There were approximately 40 boys, aged 14 to 18 on a bus for 8 to 10 weeks, staying in church basements, with billets, in army camps – basically anywhere that was cheap! Evenings were typically spent in the pubs, preferably the lounge side when that was available in order to access a piano or snooker table in return for a slightly higher price for a pint. This was where John first nurtured a taste for a pint of bitter.

John was fortunate to do two tours with the Kitsilano Boys Band: 1972 and 1974, the latter including 10 days in the USSR when it was not yet open for tourism. One of his highlights was sneaking out of their

hotel in Leningrad at night, finding a pub, and joining some of the locals. Remembering that this was the era of the Canada vs Russia hockey series, their conversations consisted of naming players from the opposing team. The Canadian boys would name Mikailov, the Russian youth would name Mahovlich. Every new name would result in great laughter.

Besides golf, John's other major athletic interest was skiing, until he ruptured his Achilles tendon playing lunch-time soccer – which put an end to his skiing days. He particularly enjoyed two cat-skiing (poor man's heli-skiing) trips around Golden and Revelstoke. He also gave back to the community by being a youth soccer coach and team manager for 15 years.

Getting hooked on golf is an intriguing story. When he was about 12, parents of one of his friends were trying to get their son interested in the game by having him caddy for his dad. To make it more appealing to his friend, John was asked to caddy for the friend's mom. Initially John was doing it for the \$2 per round but he liked what he saw. That led him to try the game and he became the regular caddy for another member. John played regularly at McCleery, paying \$6.25 for a monthly pass! These nice folks then sponsored his junior membership into Marine Drive when he was 14. Annual dues for unlimited golf were \$36 and John remained an active junior up until he reached 19. That's when the Club wanted real money from him! As an engineering student with no idea where in the world he would end up, he had to decline their invitation to join as a full member. *[And that's why WPGC is lucky to have him!]*

Playing full tournament rules, John achieved a 4 handicap when he was in his mid-teens. But he laments that once he got busy at university, his golf game atrophied - until he picked it up again about 10 years later. He says, "I am still a 'golfer', a subset of 'optimist', and have hopes of achieving that level again."

One of the usual questions for the Sketch project is, "Have you ever shot your age?" John's retort, "I shoot my age every time I play, but then I keep going and finish the round. The good news is that the milestone appears to be getting closer; once last year I could have walked off after 16 holes and made it." A second question relates to scoring a hole-in-one. John has played golf at a reasonably high level for 50 years and never had an ace. And yes, he is just a little bitter! *[I'm predicting that the day will come soon!]*

Memorable occasions in John's golfing history include golf trips to Scotland and Ireland, plus a regular spring trip to San Diego. As a teenager, he remembers watching Moe Norman play and caddying for a fellow who subsequently won a PGA event (he was a club-throwing lout so John was relieved that he didn't last on the tour!)

And now for a favourite golf story. In 2006, John and a friend went to Scotland to play golf – on a different course every day. Their focus was to play the Old Course at Saint Andrews. In those days, the likelihood of getting a tee time in the daily draw was 65%. So, since they were staying at a small guesthouse in the town for 5 days (that meant 5 chances at the draw), statistically their chances were better than 99%. Well, that didn't work out. When they arrived at their hotel at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> day, their host met them at the door and advised them that they had failed again, their last chance. The boys were gutted! Then their host smiled at them, told them that he and his son were members and had booked a tee time in members' time next morning – and invited them to join the foursome. They were saved! As they approached the end of a memorable round, John and his friend asked if they could take their hosts to lunch to show their appreciation for their kindness. The hosts agreed and suggested the St. Andrews' men's club, just off the 18<sup>th</sup> fairway. At the conclusion of the meal, when John asked how they could pay the bill, the gentleman and his son said they couldn't, saying, "It's a private club and the

bill has been looked after.” Seventeen years later, John still remembers the name of their host and his act of extreme hospitality plus teaching the young Canadian men the benefit of using a putter, the Mitchell wedge, from 50 yards out on the burned out, highly mounded approaches to many of the greens.

When asked which professional golfers he admires, John said he prefers the fellows who are both competent and gentlemen. Tony Finau, Shane Lowry and Jordan Spieth are among the guys he watches and cheers on. Having now watched the Netflix series ‘Full Swing’, he adds Joel Dahmen to that list. He also says that fortunately, on the other end of the scale, “Many of the arseholes have gone to LIV, so I don’t have to listen to them as much anymore!”

John likes golf courses that are challenging and scenic, with a wide variety of hole styles. Locally, he identifies Northlands and Northview Ridge. Overall, his favourite would be Royal Dornoch in Scotland. The gorse was in bloom, he was in the second group on a sunny morning and kept up to the two locals in front, playing in 3 hours. Consequently, he and his buddies were welcomed in the bar afterwards.

Since getting his first house, John has been an avid backyard gardener with a particular interest in tomatoes. For many years he grew his transplants from seed but now purchases them due to a bit of laziness and a much broader selection available in the nurseries. It’s still a multiway chase to get the ones he wants.

I always inquire about favourite vacations. John comments: “Should people reading that I have lived the bulk of my life within 3 blocks think that I haven’t seen much, I will point out that I was recently challenged to count the countries to which I have travelled. The total was 71. While 30 of those were only for a day from a cruise ship, the remainder included memorable visits to the Galapagos, Machu Pichu, Angkor Wat, and two canal barge and four bicycle trips in rural France.” His favourite trip was to east Africa – Rwanda to see the gorillas and Tanzania to see the migration on the Serengeti plains. John and Christine intend to add significantly to the list of countries visited.

John joined West Point Golf Club in 2016 and was invited to join the Executive as Director at Large in 2021. Having mastered dealing with the Bling, among other duties, John was elected to serve his first term as Treasurer in 2020. He has a wealth of local knowledge, loves his golf and is a very pleasant member of any foursome!

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