

#75 - Sketch of a West Pointer – Paul Kouri



Paul Kouri was born in Ponteix, Saskatchewan on August 16, 1947, and has lived in Regina, Saskatoon, Montreal and Vancouver. He attended Campion College in Regina, University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and University of Quebec in Montreal. Paul's varied working career has included being a truck driver, teacher, journalist, garment worker and steel worker. He taught English as a Second Language at two high schools (Pierre Dupuis in St. Hubert and Monseigneur Parent in Longueuil) located on Montreal's south shore from 1972-75. In 1978-79 he taught French to civil servants in Saskatoon and Sociology to adult education students from the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation in northern Saskatchewan. He worked in various steel manufacturing plants in the Lower Mainland, the main one being Tree Island Steel from 1999 to 2014 when he retired from full-time work. Most recently he works part-time as a marshal and starter at Northlands Golf Course.

Paul's road to golf began when he was in elementary school. His father was an avid golfer and Paul caddied for him and eventually started playing himself. His first official handicap was 8 in 2004, which was assigned to him by the Fraserview Men's Club when he shot 78 in his first tournament, an exceptional round for him! It was the first time he had broken 80 since his youth. The club was obviously on the lookout for sandbaggers and didn't believe that his handicap was closer to a 14. He reports that his handicap has continued to rise since then. Paul has had three holes-in-one, the first being in Waskesiu, Saskatchewan when he was only 16 years old. He scored his second ten years ago at the beautiful Country Meadows course. And in 2019 he aced the 16th hole at Fraserview.

One memorable occasion took place following his first hole-in-one when he was 16. The local Lakeview Hotel provided a steak dinner for him, his mom and dad – who had also made holes-in-one. The local newspapers did a story featuring the hole-in-one family!

In 1980 Paul vacationed in Veradero, Cuba, long before tourism in the area really got going. Before the revolution, the Dupont family owned most of Veradero and had constructed their own private course on their sprawling estate. It is now a public resort where many Cubans and foreigners can enjoy beautiful beaches. After a weekly baseball game between the Canadian tourists and the resort staff - where the losers (i.e. the tourists) bought the drinks - the talk turned to golf. The Cubans told Paul and his friends that they should check out the course up on the hill next to a fancy restaurant. The staff explained that the course was not yet officially open. However, they let them use the sets of clubs that they found stored in the kitchen area. Paul's group had the course to themselves. Some curious Cuban tourists came by to watch and one of them asked if he could try a swing or two. He got so enamoured with the game that he ended up playing the rest of the round and joined them for mojitos afterwards. Cuba presently has two golf courses; Paul hopes to go back some day to check them out. [Self disclosure: Paul has participated in several solidarity tours to Cuba along with actions locally to oppose the US embargo and other efforts aimed to strangle their revolution.]

When asked which golfers he admires, Paul immediately responded, "Tiger Woods, for his accomplishments, his knowledge of golf and its history, his efforts to grow the game particularly among youth, and his ability to overcome his mistakes and persevere through his multiple injuries." He is also fond of Freddy Couples and Jack Nicklaus. He likes Freddy's relaxed demeanour and his equally relaxed but powerful swing. He admires Jack for his abilities, achievements, interviews and commentary. Paul also appreciates Nicklaus' efforts to make golf more accessible to the public at large.

Paul has identified his three favourite golf courses. The first one is Waskesiu in Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan. It is carved out of virgin rolling forest next to Waskesiu Lake. Deer, foxes, coyotes and the

occasional bear are all part of the course. It was designed by Lord Thompson in the 1930's as a make-work project and has become home to the annual Lobstick Tournament, named after the famous Lobstick tree, one of which sits 100 yards out from the first tee box, in the middle of the fairway. For many years it was the largest match play tournament in North America and attracts more than 800 participants, playing in four divisions: Junior's, Men's, Women's and Senior Men's. The tournament was the main reason that the Kouri family holidayed there. It remains a favourite spot for family reunions for the surviving generations. Paul and his father both played in the Lobstick Tournament. His father finished first or second in his flight on several occasions and Paul won the first flight when he was in his early twenties, playing his best golf with most of his rounds in the 70's.

His second favourite course is Northlands, near where he resides in North Vancouver. He loves it for its natural beauty, excellent year-round conditions and reasonable pricing, especially for seniors. As mentioned earlier, Paul also works part-time there now. Dakota Dunes in Saskatoon rounds out Paul's list of favourites. The course is owned and operated by the Dakota First Nation and is carved out of rolling sagebrush country. It is well-maintained and 'challenging but fair' for all levels of golfer, with 5 sets of tees. Two of Paul's golf buddies in Saskatoon are members of the senior men's club, so Paul often gets to play in their weekly tournaments.

Paul volunteers for Pathfinder Press, an international socialist publisher that is based in New York. It publishes in several languages including French, which is Paul's second language. He translates from English to French, does proofreading and compiles the various elements in preparation for printing. Recently, he has embarked on learning how to produce accessible e-books for the blind and visually impaired. On the promotion side, he visits libraries and bookstores, helps out at book fairs, such as the Salon du Livre in Montreal, which he attends every fall.

Paul's favourite vacation is an annual one to Saskatoon, where he has family, golfing buddies and many fond memories of growing up there. He enjoys the drive through the Rockies and visits and plays golf with friends along the way in Christina Lake, Fernie and Calgary. Paul takes an annual 6-week winter vacation to Phoenix, where he has access to a family home and a wide range of golf courses. He breaks up the trip by spending a week in San Francisco with friends, including his stepdaughter and her husband.

He has a completed bucket-list of vacations. In 2013, he visited his French cousins in Brittany, Caen and Paris. He also helped out with the promotion of Pathfinder books at the Fete de l'Humanite just outside of Paris. It's a large annual festival which combines cultural and political activities during the day and concerts in the evenings. In 2017, he visited Tokyo and Kyoto with his stepdaughter and her husband as guides. His stepdaughter was born there and visits frequently; he says that "She has a nose for those hole-in-the-wall restaurants that compare favourably with those listed in the Michelin guide but at half the price or less." She also was able to arrange a golf game at a reasonably priced course close to Tokyo. It was Paul's first experience using a 4-person power cart! And in 2018, Paul spent a week in Cape Town, South Africa and then joined one of his three sisters and her husband in Maputo. They did a 4-day safari in Kruger Park and then drove to Tofo Beach, 400 kilometres north of Maputo, where his relatives have a house and spend a couple months each year doing work for an NGO that provides training for health care workers.

Paul joined West Point Golf Club in 2015 and if you check the Members Gallery, you will see that he has won a number of events, including Flight B of the 2017 Match Play Championship. Paul answered the call to serve his fellow members as our Social Director from 2019 to 2021, and he has coordinated Away games for us at Northlands.

After reading about some of Paul's occupations, volunteer jobs and exploits, I'm sure you will agree that he is a very interesting gentleman – and he's willing to share his experiences with you.

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