

Sketch of a West Pointer – Bill McNichol



On the last day of August 1933, Bill McNichol was born in Duncan, BC. His father owned an automobile dealership of new and used cars. Once the war started in 1939, it was the end of new cars, or new anything - stoves, refrigerators, household appliances, etc. The family decided that a move was necessary so Bill's parents and his older brother, Ron, crossed the strait to Vancouver when Bill was 8 years old. They settled on the west side of the city, living in a rented house at 5th Avenue and Dunbar. Bill attended Bayview Elementary from 1941 to 45. There were a lot of boys close to his age in the neighbourhood and Bill recalls the terrific times they enjoyed, despite hearing of the war and all associated with it. Brother Ron, 8 years older, went to Kitsilano Secondary for several years, but didn't graduate as he got a job in one of the shipyards in the False Creek area.

The end of the war brought many changes. Bill's dad, who had also found shipyard employment, was now out of work as a result of the closing of the ship-building program. Their landlord sold the house, Bill's parents separated and Bill went to Chemainus to live with his maternal grandparents, whom he loved, and attended school there for the year. His mother had worked at the David Spencer department store (forerunner of Eaton's) and in 1946 bought an almost finished new, modest house (using War Savings Bonds) in North Vancouver. During those years, a friend of his brother introduced Bill to his first golfing experience at Fraserview. In 1948, the green fee for a junior was 75 cents.

Following graduation from North Vancouver High in 1951 and into the late 1960s, Bill worked for the Standard Oil Company of BC, now known as Chevron, in the still-operating refinery in North Burnaby. It was a unionized operation, with an industrialized union, the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers, Local 610. The certification had been completed the year before in 1950. They had all the oil plant operations in the area organized. Imperial, Shell, British American, as well as Standard Oil, refined crude oil from the new Trans Mountain Pipeline. The other operations – remember Home and Texaco? – were just bulk plants. Each of the operations was organized, in individual units, with an executive in each unit. Bill was quite involved and was dedicated to supporting all issues since he and his new fellow employees received a 50% increase with the first contract-signing in late 1952. By 1964, Bill was the Chair of the Standard Oil Unit and became involved in a disagreement with management, which resulted in an illegal strike for several days. Bill states that it was an exciting time and quite an experience. The local's president, Fred Geddes of British American, and Bill were sought after by the RCMP to testify in court over the issues. They managed to avoid them for days with help, skill and athletic ability! Peace returned to the workplace in a week or so.

There were many fellows interested in playing golf then and as it was a 24-hour shift work operation, much time was available to plan and play golf on "off days" or afternoons. Through these years, Bill was married and the father of 3 children, two boys and a girl in the middle. The eldest now has 6 grandchildren, all living in Kamloops. Shift work was a difficult task, especially in those times long ago. Scheduling has been much improved over the years. Bill decided to go back to university part-time while maintaining his job at Standard Oil. In 1970 he left work to attend Simon Fraser University full-time, enrolling in the Education Department. He was fortunate to find employment in the North Vancouver school district, and enjoyed his second career from 1972 until retiring as vice principal of Queen Mary Elementary in 1993. He also worked at Lynn Valley, Plymouth and Fromme (remember that family name from Dave Marr's Sketch).

Bill's marriage of more than 25 years ended in the early 1980s. He remarried in 1986 and has been having a wonderful time travelling the world with Elizabeth Winn, who was an elementary principal in North Van. Bill credits her for doing the research for their travels. They have really enjoyed the RV scene and have journeyed above the Arctic Circle, to Newfoundland and Labrador, and made several trips to Acapulco. The two of them also enjoy touring Europe and cruising – both ocean and river.

In 2002, Bill joined West Point Golf Club, the same year as Ray Dujardin, Wayne Ferrey and Gary Sinclair. Favourite golf courses are Fraserview, Sun River in Kamloops and Talking Rock, east of Kamloops. Bill has had two holes-in-one; the first was at Birchbank GC outside of Trail and the second was on the second hole at Langara in 2003.

*Prepared by Lorne Lindsay from material submitted by Bill
August 2019*