

## Sketch of a West Pointer – Brian Montpellier



Brian was born in Vancouver (Grace Hospital). His father's ancestors first appeared in Quebec in 1632 and slowly moved west. His mother's family came out of the US, where they had been living since about 1750. All came to Alberta in the 1890's for that free quarter-section of land. Brian has 3 sons, all grown up (literally, they are 6'2", 6'5", 6'7"), born in Toronto, Spain and Vancouver. Brian's wife, Betty, died in 2020 after 27 years of bravely dealing with breast cancer.

Brian attended brand new David Thompson (first students in) and Magee Secondary schools, then UBC for an Honours Degree in Chemistry. Jim Trotter, a valued member of West Point since 2005, was one of his professors.

He had a timeout before university when his Dad accepted a 2 year assignment in Nigeria with Canadian External Affairs to develop social welfare systems in the Muslim north. His father put him to use in a community centre teaching English to local waifs. There was also a golf course with asphalt "greens" covered in sand. You could get quite a surprising bounce if you hit a thin spot. He recalls digging up a burrowing viper with his iron shot on a par 3 and remembers that he's never seen anyone run as fast as his young caddy did.

Brian went back to Nigeria after university and taught English, French, chemistry, physics and math to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> forms (grade 11 and 12) in a government boarding school. He managed to get a half dozen of the students through their university admittance exams, which was a first for the school. He travelled back to Vancouver via East Africa. Brian spent quality time in Ethiopia backpacking through that strange land. He hand-fed hyenas at night outside of Harar and was mildly nervous that the "hyena man" had lost most of his fingers.

Brian joined a local engineering company in 1974 that specialized in mine design. After a year there, the company sent him to Peru to work for a year on building what is now one of the world's biggest copper mines. "Paid to get to travel! What a deal." At the urging of the company owner, he upgraded his qualifications to Professional Engineer. Mines tend to be where the ore is, so Brian has travelled to about 60 countries on business and has been transferred to Toronto, San Francisco, Calgary and Spain. "Living in Spain for 3 years with my family was as good as it gets."

Brian started playing golf when he was about 12. As a young boy, he was in a group that delivered The Province at about 5 in the morning and then grabbed their clubs (3, 5, 7, 9, wedge, putter, driver) and snuck onto Fraserview at hole #2 (now #11). He doesn't recall what sort of scores they shot but admits the boys were definitely self-taught; they all played baseball, soccer and basketball endlessly, and were reasonably coordinated. The course marshal kindly told them to just not get in anyone's way. [*This statement has appeared in several earlier Sketches.*] And golf balls were free! They'd just go into the Fraserview woods and ravines and scoop them up.

Brian had a short hiatus of 40 years before he played regularly again. He was looking for a place to play and went down the line - Shaughnessy, Point Grey (both with highish price points) and McCleery, where Pat Dunn told him they had a weekend men's club. \$120! He joined right there. In 2014 he was playing as a single at McCleery and was paired with two gentlemen - Andrew Hobbs and Mike Carter - who suggested he join West Point Golf Club. And here we are.

He's had one lonely hole-in-one, on #13 at McCleery - off the whites with a 5 wood. Now it would be a 4 iron. Apparently his ball striking has improved. Or they moved the tee up. His lowest cap has been 11 (under the old system). Brian likes to keep busy, so he belongs to West Point, McCleery Men's, University midweek and

Savage Creek Men's Mondays. In his spare time he collects Canadian postage stamps 1851-1960; started that hobby when he was 8. He has a cabin on one of the islands in Howe Sound where he goes to relax.

Brian has had the pleasure of watching Bernard Langer win the Schwab Cup on the Cochise course at Desert Mountain in Arizona. It's a long ways out of Phoenix so no big crowds and you could get within 20 feet of the players and stand by the greens while they putted. Brian comments that Langer is a gentleman and a great player.

If he had to pick 3 favourite courses outside of McCleery, they would be Greywolf in the Purcell Mountains, Arequipa in Peru and Pacific Dunes at Bandon, Oregon. Greywolf for the fantastic job Doug Carrick did carving it into the mountain, Arequipa as it is at 8,000' elevation and rock hard so your ball travels for miles and Pacific Dunes as you can play true links golf without the inconvenience of flying to Scotland.

In mid-season 2017, Brian took over from Elliott Phillips as Vice Captain of West Point Golf Club and performed admirably as our Draw Master until 2020, when he was elected Club Captain, a role he continues to excel at. Brian adds, "You won't find a better-run golf club than West Point and it is a pleasure contributing to it all."

*All members are appreciative of Brian's many contributions to the Club.*

*Prepared from material submitted by Brian to Lorne - January 2022*  
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