

Sketch of a West Pointer - Chris Murray



Ask Chris where he is from and he will answer, "London, England" and then probably add, "but I didn't come to Vancouver directly from there."

Born in Beckenham, Kent in 1947, Chris spent most of his formative years living and studying in South London, initially in Mitcham and then Croydon. He attended Bournemouth College of Commerce and Technology (now Bournemouth University) for a Diploma in Business Studies.

After college he worked in London for a small US corporation. After 2 years he was offered the opportunity to move to Hong Kong to manage the small, but successful, office that the company had established there in 1968.

So, he packed his bags and arrived in Hong Kong in October 1969.

1970 was a busy year for Chris. He married his secretary, Amelia; got a new job with American Optical Corporation (AOC) and prepared to move to Singapore to take charge of AOC's operations in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Burma (now Myanmar).

The newly married couple moved to Singapore in January 1971 and for the next 18 months Chris traveled around SE Asia for two thirds of the time. He moved back to Hong Kong in late 1972 to take up a marketing role in the AOC Asian Region office. He lived in Hong Kong for the next 12 years and became the proud father of two children, Samantha and Justin.

Chris joined F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd, the Swiss pharmaceutical company in 1976 as Manager of the Pharmaceutical Division for Agency and Direct Markets in the Asian region. Subsequently he held management positions with Roche as General Manager in Indonesia; Regional Director in Switzerland; Regional General Manager for the Middle East in the United Arab Emirates; and lastly, as a Member of the Board and the Executive Committee of Roche's company in Japan, Chugai Pharmaceutical Company.

It was while living in Jakarta, Indonesia that Chris started his relationship with the game of golf. He had played rugby until a knee injury ended his enjoyment of that sport, squash until a herniated disc necessitated back surgery, and tennis until a long weekend of competitive play in Jakarta left him with a neck injury.

Sidelined from any activity for about a month and feeling totally frustrated, a good friend asked Chris and Amelia to join him "for a walk" while he played golf one Sunday afternoon. They agreed and did the same the following weekend at which time Chris putted a little and learned the difference between a driver and a wedge. The following week his friend sent him his reserve set of clubs "to practice with" and after that golf is the only sport Chris has played.

Amelia realized that the game was likely to be time-consuming and wanting to avoid being a "golf widow", she immediately took up the sport as well. That was in 1989 and they have been playing the game ever since. Many of their friends today are people they have met through the sport.

Their first “home course” was Jagorawi Golf and Country Club in West Java. The course (now “courses”, as it has expanded to 45 holes) was hewn from jungle and natural hazards included poisonous snakes as well as large lizards!! As Chris says, “One doesn’t go searching for balls in the rough without a club in one’s hand!”

The game became an integral part of their lives with their vacations and travel including, if not focussed on, golf. Whilst living in Asia they were frequent visitors to Europe and played in England, Portugal, Spain, France, Germany and Turkey. North America travel was mostly limited to Canada with golf in Ontario and Alberta as well as B.C.

In Dubai they lived a 5 minute drive from the Dubai Creek Golf and Yacht Club and both took advantage of the proximity to practice on a regular basis. In Switzerland their club was a 45 minute journey. In Tokyo, weekend golf at their club near Narita airport meant a 50 minute drive to the club, but a two and a half hour return journey because of weekend traffic! Dedication indeed.

Chris and Amelia retired to Vancouver in 2010 from his last assignment with Roche in Tokyo. Amelia has two sisters living in Vancouver and she had been visiting here regularly since the early 1990’s so when it came time to decide where to retire, Vancouver was at the top of their list.

Daughter Samantha lives in Hong Kong, whilst son Justin lives in England. Samantha’s three children are all in the UK so in the past, travel was to Hong Kong in the winter and Europe in the summer. Winter golf was mostly in southern China and Thailand.

COVID-19 disrupted their travel and they had to adjust to winter golf in Vancouver. By his own admission, Chris is a summer golfer, but as with many things agrees, “One just has to make adjustments.”

A WPGC member since 2014, Chris learned about the club after enquiring at the McCleery golf course. “We had been playing at many courses in the lower mainland and felt it was about time we played with a group, rather than just the two of us.” Amelia plays with the McCleery ladies on Tuesdays.

Asked if he had a favourite course, Chris replied that he does not. Having played in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and North America he enjoys the different types and styles of course and enjoys golf, wherever he happens to be playing.

His one-time ambition was to have a single digit handicap. He almost made it with his lowest being 10. But as he says, “That was some time ago.” He has had two holes-in-one; one in Portugal and the second in Ireland. He counts himself very lucky financially on both occasions - “When we finished the round there was nobody in the clubhouse.”

Chris is enjoying his time with West Point and has been keenly involved in organizing our Tuesday games at Riverway. He is a great guy to golf with and hits some superb shots.

*Prepared from material submitted by Chris to Lorne - February 2022
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