

## Sketch of a West Pointer: Don Rotherham

Don joined West Point in 2005 and is currently one of our more senior golfers, recently celebrating his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday! His golfing career began back in 1951 with his cousin, a golf enthusiast. They played on sand greens and he used a set of rental hickory shafted club; he parred the second hole he played and then broke a shaft on the 17<sup>th</sup>! Don played a lot of baseball in his younger days and was a switch-hitter, so when it came to golf he was unsure which side to hit from. He had more power right-handed but more control from the left side. His cousin suggested he play right-handed since most courses were designed for RH golfers. The first set of clubs he owned were second-hand and right-handed. He stuck with them for a few years and then went back to hitting from the portside, as he does today. Don's current handicap is in the low 30s but at one time, he played to a 14. This was achieved during the days when he probably played only 10 to 15 games a year, as his job took him to various locales, usually far away from golf courses.

Don was an exploration geologist in the mining field and served in many capacities, largely as a Regional Manager. He was born in Onion Lake, Alberta, attended the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon and has lived in Kimberley, Lake Cowichan, Whitehorse and North Vancouver and currently resides in West Vancouver. His work took him to many out of the way places in various parts of the world. Part of his standard equipment was an old Tilley hat which "kept the sun and rain off my balding head on four continents and the Greenland ice cap." Don often wore it while playing golf. One day at West Van's Gleneagles he joined three other singles. "When we were on the second tee a member from the foursome behind came up to us and announced he was playing with Mr. Tilley who asked him to tell us that Mr. Tilley thought that we 'were all properly attired for golf!'" Don looked at his playing partners and realized that they were all wearing different models of the Tilley hat.

Don has yet to shoot his age but would love to. He thought he might have a good chance last year but then had an accident in which he dislocated his shoulder and had to sit on the sidelines for the rest of the season. He admits to be fortunate to have three holes-in-one, all while playing with his wife on par 3 courses. The first occurred when his ball struck a sprinkler head, took a couple of wild bounces and rolled into the cup! At that point, he realized that there was considerable amount of good luck in getting a hole-in-one. On several occasions, some with West Point members, his tee shot has stopped just inches short of the cup.

One memorable moment in his golfing history occurred one Friday afternoon when he and three buddies left work a bit early to play the old McCleery course. They were joined on the first tee by a young man, Ray Stewart, a few weeks before he turned pro. Don was striking the ball fairly well, with drives reaching 230-240 yards. When it came to second shots, he would take a 7 iron and Ray would reach for a wedge. Ray only played 9 holes that day but he was 6 under par when he said good-bye to the foursome. Another favourite golf story happened about 13 years ago when he decided to drive to Gleneagles GC in West Van to play 9 holes. The starter asked Don if he'd mind playing with a junior and he replied that he was glad to play with anyone. On the first tee, the junior told him that he was 12 years old and needed to practice his 7 iron; did he mind if it was the only club he used? At the completion of 9 holes, the junior and his 7 iron had outscored Don by a stroke or two. The young golfer was Eugene Wong, who later won a golf scholarship to the University of Oregon, was NCAA Division 1 player of the year, #1 amateur in Canada and winner of the 2012 PGA Tour Canada championship.

Don doesn't profess to have a favourite golf course because his favourite is the one he is currently playing! He has many hobbies and interests, listing the main ones as lapidary, silver-smithing, bird-watching and archaeology. All vacations are good, but he finds it difficult to choose between London and Hawaii. When he got married, he told his wife there were two things he didn't want to do on holidays: mountain climbing and canoe trips. He later softened and bought a canoe which his family of wife and three children greatly enjoyed.

The golfer that Don most admired was a West Pointer, Ab Miles. Don had the privilege of having Ab for his captain for the first year and a half with the Club. He recalls that Ab had a beautiful short game and was very unassuming. Ab shot his age or better at least four or five times when Don played with him, and Ab never made a comment.

*Prepared by Lorne Lindsay  
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