Sketch of a West Pointer – Bill Titmuss

Bill was born July 6, 1952 in Detroit, Michigan, spent 18 years growing up in the suburb of Royal Oak and also lived in the city of Detroit for 8 years. He attended Royal Oak Dondero High School, located on Glenn Frey Boulevard, named after the singer, songwriter, actor and founding member of the rock band the Eagles. (Glenn had graduated a few years earlier with Bill's sister.) Bill started playing golf at a young age, winning a closest-to-the-pin contest at the local driving range when he was 10. His prize was a nice set of ladies' irons! He wasn't allowed on the local golf course until he was 12 and shot 54 during his first 9-hole round. Bill played on his high school golf team for four years.

Bill graduated from Michigan State University in East Lansing with a B.S. in Education and Early Childhood Development. Later he took Master's classes in Educational Administration at the University of B.C., earning his B.C. admin credentials. Bill participated in a work-study job at the MSU pre-school and then ventured to Amsterdam in 1979 to do his student teaching. This move introduced him to an interesting lifestyle; a few months later he applied for and got a teaching job. Bill met his wife, Jane, in Amsterdam and she was hired shortly after him. After teaching 5 years in the Netherlands, the young couple attended a London recruitment fair and were offered jobs in Jakarta, Indonesia. During 28 wonderful years there, Bill was an elementary classroom teacher, computer coordinator, administrator in charge of building the new Elementary School in Jakarta, and a Middle School teacher of English, Social Studies and Art. They retired to Vancouver in 2012 and Bill got his Canadian citizenship.

A favourite vacation included the opportunity to see Angkor Wat in Cambodia before it really became opened to the public; this was a genuine treat for Jane and Bill. They visited the main temple with a double rainbow towering over it with a total of 10 people that day. Some Khmer Rouge troops were still camped in the hills surrounding the temple grounds. That definitely added an interesting element to the experience!

We all know about Bill, the expert golfer, but do you know about his theatre background? While in Jakarta, he was involved in over 40 theatrical productions, doing set design, script writing, directing and acting in school and community productions. More recently, most of his opportunities in this field have been during the winter when Bill and Jane travel. But with the recent Covid-19 restrictions, work in the theatre has been almost non-existent. Bill plays a bit of guitar, sings in a friendly choir in non-Covid times and loves to work with his hands – doing carpentry, carving, ceramics, etc. He recently purchased an eBike so now he can get up the hills to UBC.

It is obvious to most people that Bill walks with a limp. He was 2 years old when he contracted polio and unfortunately missed the Salk vaccine by 6 months! His mother moved him out of the traditional hospital and into a Sister Kenny Clinic. [Sister Elizabeth Kenny was a nurse from the Australian Outback who made a name for herself in the early days of polio treatment. She helped people with polio, using her alternative approach utilizing Physical Therapy.] Bill recalls that those in the hospital ward were kept in wheelchairs or on gurneys. He learned to walk but most of the hospital patients did not. He says that he is a lucky man!

Bill's home course in Jakarta was Pondok Indah Golf Course, designed by Robert Trent Jones and the site of the 1984 World Cup. Bill relates holing a 150-yard 7 iron on the fly to the island green, par 3 17th hole. He scored

another ace on the 8th hole, a 185-yard par 3 that was protected by a large face bunker. The bottom of the flagstick was hidden so his foursome did not see the ball go in. He was playing with a regular Saturday group of mostly oil company guys who each put up $25 for skins, KP's, etc. On that day, he only got a KP for his hole-in-one but after that they changed the rule so that a hole-in-one would take all the money! Bill played to a 3 or 4 handicap for several years in Jakarta and may have been a 2 while in his early 20's.

A favourite golf story occurred while playing at Nirvana in Bali. The second hole is a 175-yard par 3 with highly contoured greens. Bill and his playing partner waved the group behind to hit up while they stood watching at the back of the green. "My, that looks like a good shot!" Bill said as the ball landed, rolled along the contour and into the hole. The golfer who struck the tee shot was playing in a Japanese foursome. Later in the clubhouse Bill and his partner saw the "hole-in-one man" walk toward the locker room, cussing, throwing towels on the floor and kicking them. He appeared downright ticked off! Bill could only imagine how much that hole-in-one was going to cost the man when he had to pick up the tab.

Commenting on golfers he admires, Bill selects Lee Trevino as a great iron player, steady and one who didn't fit the mold; he was one of the few who could stare down Jack Nicklaus. He likes Jim Furyk (even with his ugly swing) and again, sees him as one who does not fit the mold. Tiger Woods rounds out his trio. Of the younger guys on tour, Bill enjoys watching Justin Thomas.

Favourite golf courses are international in scope. Nirvana Golf in Bali, Indonesia is number one. Designed by Greg Norman, it features spectacular views of the Indian Ocean, Tanah Lot Temple, rice paddies, towering palm trees and a volcano. The course offers lots of risk rewards. The par 3's along the ocean can vary in club selection depending on the wind; on one of these holes, Bill has hit anywhere from an 8-iron to 3-iron from the same tee. Arnold Palmer's Signature Course, "The Preserve" in Fenton, Michigan (north of Detroit enroute to Flint) also has great risks and rewards. It sprawls over 400 topographically diverse acres and boasts a number of classic sad-faced monsters among its 74 bunkers. Arnie said it was "the ideal inland golf site. It has unique rolling terrain and stunning native trees found in a naturally beautiful setting." Bill rounds out his favourites with Langara, saying that if he ever shoots his age, this is where it might happen. A couple of years ago, needing a 67, Bill stood on the 18th tee at three under par. He bogeyed for a 69.

Bill joined West Point in 2013. During my second year as president, Bill was recruited and elected to the Board, serving as Membership Director for 2 years. After a brief one-year hiatus, he returned as eHandicap Advisor for a year before accepting the reins as Club Captain for 2018 and 2019. Bill is currently lending his experience to the Club as Handicap Advisor, among other duties. Bill is a very proficient golfer, winning the Ed Angel competition his first year, the Club Championship Match Play in 2016 and 2018 and the Stroke Play Championship four consecutive years from 2015 to 2018. A memorable occasion for Bill was playing the 2020 WPGC Match Play Club Championship final round at Langara. He and Gregg Hook traded birdies all day. Bill moved a ball on the 15th hole for a penalty, then birdied the 16th. Gregg birdied #17. Bill's putt to tie the match on the 18th went over the edge of the hole. Gregg shot 1-under on the back nine, leaving Bill to exclaim, "It was a great match! By the end we were both completely drained!"

Prepared from material submitted by Bill to Lorne - January 2021
Published August 3, 2021