

## Sketch of a West Pointer: Al Williams

Al Williams joined West Point Golf Club in 1990 and transitioned to Associate Membership several years ago. He served on our Executive as Social Director for seven years, 1992-98. Al is a true Vancouverite, born at VGH in 1924. His mother was the first baby born in Sidney, BC, after it became a township in 1891, and his father was born in Esquimalt in 1888. Al attended Lord Byng High School and recalls his rugby-playing days.

Al's early memories of golf go back to the days when he caddied at the old Jericho Golf Course, as a 16 year old in 1940, earning 75 cents a round. The Caddy Master, Ernie Brown, took a liking to Al, gave him some clubs and also some good players to caddy for. One of them was Poldi Bentley, then the owner of Canadian Forest Products. Al remembers the Club Championship when Mr. Bentley was playing against a lawyer. The lawyer's approach to the 18<sup>th</sup> green left his ball ahead of Poldi's (who was then stymied), who said to Al, "Give me a 9 iron, son." Mr. Bentley promptly chipped his ball over the lawyer's and into the hole for the victory.

Al worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway for a couple years and learned how to fire coal. He then spent three years in the Canadian Navy, serving on both the West and East coasts. He had signed up as a signalman but transferred to be a stoker. He travelled up and down the coasts, instructing others how to fire coal. After leaving the navy he returned to the CPR for a short time before deciding to attend university. Al's father was a teacher and a good friend of the Principal of Normal School at university. Al went to UBC with the idea of being a teacher. He taught English, Math, Socials and Science to grade 7 students in Prince Rupert and was responsible for many of the sports in town. Moving to Nanaimo, he taught Physical Education (grades 7 to 12) and coached basketball; he also played lacrosse, basketball and rugby. Upon realizing that there wasn't much money to be made teaching, he quit.

He worked for Mac & Mac (a big department store chain in those days, for those too young to know), travelling throughout BC. After getting his license to drive a big rig, Al was sent to retrieve a truck and trailer that an employee had abandoned in Lytton. While driving it to Lillooet, Al looked in his rear-view mirror and noticed that the tires were partly over the edge of the canyon road! Al's job was to take this trailer around the province as it was set up with samples of many items; he also sold men's and ladies' clothing. He later got a job with Mead Johnson, a company that was just getting into the distribution of Tylenol and Ibuprofen. (It is currently a major nutrition firm and its owner was co-founder of the legendary Johnson & Johnson.) This job allowed him the opportunity to call on doctors, play golf with them and get samples and learn about new products as they came on the market. At this time, Al played to a 9 handicap and experienced a hole-in-one at the Travelers Tournament at the Horseshoe Bay course.

Al married in 1953; he and his wife had three daughters, Louise, Catherine, Carol and a son, Dan. He and his wife frequently visited family in Osoyoos. His Okanagan cousin was a realtor and got Al into the real estate business. When Al returned to Vancouver for his father's funeral, he attended a Vindex gathering (of rugby players from Byng) where he met Bob McGillivray, who talked him into joining the development world. Some of their projects included the Scottsdale Mall in Delta, Lougheed Mall in Burnaby and options on much of Davy Street. Al ended up owning a hotel on the coast of Vancouver Island and then into the fish business, when he acquired Sidney Fish.

*Prepared by Lorne Lindsay  
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