

## Sketch of a West Pointer – Jack Burak



Jack Burak was born 6 ½ weeks premature on February 1, 1949 in Calgary. His mother was a newly-minted Registered Nurse, working on a maternity ward, and his father was a WWII Army Staff-Sergeant veteran, who was employed at Burns Foods Ltd. as a salesperson for the meatpacking firm. Jack's mother took him out of hospital after 3 days because she disagreed with the hospital's policy to put all preterm newborns in incubators with 100% oxygen. She turned out to be right as it was later discovered that subjecting newborns to constant 100% oxygen led to the high likelihood of permanent eye retinal damage. Jack thanked his mother forever for advocating for him!

The family moved to Swift Current, Saskatchewan for Jack's father's work and stayed there for five years, during which time two brothers and a sister were born. His father then re-located to the

West Kootenays in '55 and the family settled in Nelson for a year before moving to Kinnaird, now known as South Castlegar. Jack attended elementary school and high school in Castlegar, graduating from Stanley Humphries Senior Secondary School in June '67. He enjoyed being active in the small community, playing ice hockey, high school basketball, Little League baseball, skiing at Rossland Mountain near Trail and learning how to golf. He also loved creek fishing and learning to water ski on Christina Lake.

One of his favourite recollections was being able to watch the 1961 Trail Smoke Eaters play an exhibition game against the famed Montreal Canadiens. Jack was mesmerized watching his favourite professional hockey team and his hockey idol, Jean Beliveau, in action. He got Jean to autograph his shirt – and then wore it a full week before taking it off! Later that year, the senior men's hockey team, the Trail Smoke Eaters, represented Canada and were victorious at the 1961 World Ice Hockey Championship – winning the gold medal in Geneva and Lausanne, Switzerland, defeating the Soviets on the final day of the championship. The Smoke Eaters were the last Canadian amateur team to win the World Ice Hockey title.

Another favourite high school memory was being chosen as a Rotary Centennial exchange student in grade 12. He travelled with other students by train across Canada to Montreal and spent two weeks in the beautiful and historic city with his host family.

Jack moved to Vancouver to attend UBC in September 1967 and lived in Totem Park residences for three years. He had time to play intramural ice hockey while he was enjoying campus life and getting adjusted to the big city. He graduated with a B.Sc. degree in honours Math and Chemistry before entering UBC medical school in '72. Luckily, he met his future wife, Susan, in the Woodward Library on campus during his first year of med school and married the love of his life towards the end of his 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Upon obtaining his MD degree in 1976, Jack and Susan re-located to the University of Western Ontario in London where he completed a 2-year family medicine residency postgraduate training program. Susan worked part time as a dental hygienist while completing her B.A. degree in honours Psychology and English. Jack worked for two weeks as the onsite physician for the Canadian gymnastics team and the

Canadian water-skiing team at Lake Temagami in Northern Ontario. The highlight of that experience was learning how to bare-foot water-ski from a dock, which he has never been able to replicate! They also loved staying in a log cabin and swimming and fishing in the beautiful lake.

Moving back to Vancouver in 1978, Jack joined a family practice on Commercial Drive at East 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and worked part-time as an ER physician for 10 years, primarily at Mount St. Joseph Hospital. He also did occasional shifts at St. Paul's as he built his medical practice, and provided obstetrical care to his patients, delivering babies for the next 30 years. Upon retirement of his senior practice associate in 1992, Jack joined a new family practice clinic with three colleagues at City Square, and practiced there until January '08.

Jack had become involved with the BC Medical Association (now known as Doctors of BC) in the late 1980's, advocating for BC physicians and especially for family physicians. He served as President of the Society of General Practitioners in 1995-96 and later served as BCMA president between 2004 and 2005. He says he was fortunate to be a BC delegate to the Canadian Medical Association's Annual General Council meetings for several years. Their two children were able to visit all 10 Canadian provinces and the Yukon with the family, "a definite highlight as we grew to know the depth and breadth of our beautiful and diverse country."

In February '08 Jack became a Deputy Registrar with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC and learned a great deal about medical regulation in our province and the vital role the College plays in advocating for patients and protecting the public. He was privileged to oversee registration and licensure for all new physicians wanting to practice in BC. He was a BC appointed Board member of the Medical Council of Canada for several years. Upon leaving the College in early 2016, he was set to retire, travel and play more golf. But a sudden illness of the interim Clinical Director of Practice Ready Assessment (BC-PRA) resulted in Jack agreeing to be the Clinical Director for one year. On March 31, 2023 he finally retired. He is fond of saying, "I have been privileged and blessed to have four careers in medicine: family medicine clinician, advocate for my profession, medical regulator and medical director of the PRA-BC program to assess foreign physicians seeking to live and work in BC (whom we desperately need at this time)."

Susan and Jack have two adult children, Michael and Carolyn, and 3 wonderful young grandchildren. Michael played professional rugby in Australia, France and England, as well as internationally for Canada's 15's, achieving over 50 international caps. He played in the 2007 World Cup in Cardiff. He works for Grosvenor America in Vancouver. Carolyn is a business entrepreneur and teaches yoga part-time. Susan is a lawyer with a master's degree in clinical counselling.

Jack's father was an avid golfer who played to a single-digit handicap for years so Jack started the game at about age 7, playing on the Castlegar Golf Course. His father wanted his four children to experience the joy of playing golf with good friends in the great outdoors. While Jack was in high school, the Castlegar course was redeveloped. His father was one of 18 Men's Club members tasked with the responsibility for the development of a specific hole. Jack gained so much knowledge of what is required to build and maintain a golf course. He assisted with raking topsoil from tee to green, planting turf seed, manicuring the ground – great experience in team-building! If you play the "Nelson back 9", that's the hole Jack played a small part in developing as a young lad.

Jack has not shot his age yet but is encouraged by a couple of 79's in 2023, and would be grateful to achieve this feat in the near future. His lowest handicap was 7 when he played lots of golf as a teenager

in the Kootenays. Like most of us, he didn't play much golf for many years as he focused on work and raising a family. His hole-in-one occurred in 1989 on the 7<sup>th</sup> hole at the Waialua Municipal Golf Course in Lihue, Kauai. It played about 195 yards from the back tees. Jack recalls striking a 3-iron over the sand trap in front of the green and having no idea if he was even on the green. However, the group in front of them began jumping up and down, shouting "hole-in-one!" His foursome played the final two holes in near darkness so that his ace would be legitimate. The clubhouse was closed by the time they completed their round, so Jack was relieved he wouldn't have to buy drinks for the clubhouse members. However, the foursome and their spouses went out for dinner to celebrate – and Jack didn't mind picking up the tab.

Jack's had at least two drives close to the pin – missing Fraserview's 16<sup>th</sup> hole by 2 inches and #12 at Langara, 4 inches away from the cup. He's hoping to get lucky again while playing with West Point.

He has played many BC courses, several across Canada and has fond memories of golfing in Hawaii, especially at the Kapalua Plantation course with its monster par 5 18<sup>th</sup> hole. He and Susan also enjoyed the Royal Ka'anapali course on Maui and several courses in Mexico. Jack travels north of San Diego with a group of friends each year, playing about 6 courses and enjoying the constant banter, laughter, trash-talking, daily bragging rights and tasty food and beverages. West Point member John Evans is a longstanding member of this group and tries to keep them in line while recommending which local beers to sip on. This year the destination was St. George, Utah, where they played The Ledges and five other local courses.

One of Jack's favourite golf stories occurred while playing the 18<sup>th</sup> hole at the magnificent Stanley Thompson designed Banff Springs Golf Course several years ago with his son. There were at least 75 elk roaming the fairways or lying down on the grass. "We prayed we would not hit one and we managed, by fate, not to do so! We had to navigate the considerable number of fairway and greenside bunkers as an extra challenge." A second favourite memory is playing golf with Susan in Portugal on a Jack Nicklaus designed course in the Algarve, with its stunning and challenging layout. He remembers scoring an eagle on the par 5 sixteenth hole at Glen Abbey Golf Club in Oakville in 2004.

At the top of the list of golfers whom Jack admires is Jack Nicklaus for his golf prowess, charity work and legendary course design and construction operations. He will never forget the 18<sup>th</sup> and final major championship win at age 48 in 1986. Jack likes Tiger Woods for his superb golfing skills, thrilling victories, motivating by encouraging and inspiring young golfers to become interested and excited to play golf, and now for his leadership roles in the PGA. Like other West Pointers, he names Freddie Couples for his "smooth as silk" swing. Rory McIlroy is a favourite for his powerful swing and the entertainment he provides with imaginative recovery shots. Finally he cites the Canadian role models for making us proud of their accomplishments: Adam Hadwin, Mike Weir, Nick Taylor, Cory Connors, Mackenzie Hughes, Taylor Pendrith, Adam Svenson, Lori Kane and Brooke Henderson.

Favourite golf courses are: Castlegar Golf Club because he grew up as a kid learning to play golf on this fine track; Fairmont Banff Springs Golf Course for its magnificent setting in the Canadian Rockies; The Links at Crowbush Cove, PEI for its challenging layout and amazing scenery; and the Fairmont Whistler course for its stunning beauty, elevation changes, challenging layout and possible encounters with bears and other wildlife.

Apart from golfing, Jack enjoys reading a variety of good books, ice hockey (played for nearly 60 years), going to Canuck games (as part of a seasons ticket group), attending opera, symphony, live theatre and travelling with Susan and their family.

Jack and Susan have enjoyed vacationing in Hawaii and now occasionally go to the Palm Desert area. Favourite travels took them to Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Ireland, Mexico and the UK.

In conclusion, Jack has many things to say about WPGC. He enjoys the members' camaraderie, friendliness, interest in learning about each other and being pleasant and supportive when any of us are having a difficult round. "I also appreciate and enjoy the Club's mantra of cultivating a social-first attitude while challenging each of us to play competitive golf for occasional short-lived bragging rights! Most importantly I have gotten to meet, play and converse with our legendary, inspiring and most-senior golfer Mr. Hugh Marshall. He will be sorely missed with his recent move to Victoria." Jack appreciates and values the tradition of our foursomes stopping for a sandwich and beverage together after each round. He enjoys playing weekly on our three Vancouver municipal courses each season with amazing tee times, thanks to the tireless work of our Club executive members.

*Prepared from excellent material submitted by Jack to Lorne - February to July 2024  
Published August 10, 2024*