

Sketch of a West Pointer - Andrew Hobbs



Andrew's father left the family farm in Gloucestershire, rural England in 1930 to take a position in Agriculture for the British government in Kenya. Andrew was born in 1944 in Kitale, Kenya and lived with his elder brother and parents in Nakura and Nairobi. At the age of 6, he was sent to boarding school in Nairobi and told to get on with it! The family then moved to Uganda, pre-Idi Amin's time, living in Entebbe and the capital, Kampala. In those days Uganda was known as the "jewel of Africa". His father then accepted a position as chairman of the Tanganyika Agricultural Corporation in Dar-es-Salaam, whilst Andrew flew south and back 3,500 miles every term-time to senior school

just outside Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe). He felt extremely fortunate to live his childhood travelling colonial east and southern Africa, experiencing all its unspoiled nature on safari and the wonderful African people.

Andrew's records in javelin and shot putt still stood when he left senior school, but he has no doubt they have been severely broken by some subsequent burly south African rugby player. While rugby and cricket were favourite team sports, tennis and squash were held in passionate regard. Playing squash in 100-degree temperatures in Dar-es-Salaam against his father on an open-roofed court with a concrete floor and having to drink a glass of salt water afterwards to replenish fluids will be forever in his memory!

Having gone to England to university when his father retired in 1963, Andrew subsequently lived in "swinging" London, then Windsor, whilst working as a research chemist for Imperial Chemical Industries, Paints division.

After marrying in 1972, Andrew and Anne lived in Nutley, south of London, and he landed a job as Manager of Wood Preservation for a well-known Pest control company, Rentokil. In 1979 an opportunity arose to join a friend in a private industrial wood preservation company on the other side of the world in Vancouver. Having flown out to assess the situation for a week, he was surprised to see buildings, decks and fences built of raw wood with no wood preservation, and coined the phrase in his conversations with those back home, "They just use the wood as though it grows on trees", and let it prematurely rot. The growth of pressure-treated wood was thus a given.

In August 1980, Andrew and Anne packed up their belongings into a 20-foot container, sold all electric, house and cars, collected their young son and daughter and flew the coup to Vancouver. "Go West young man and seek thy fortune." Well, barely!

So, the venture in introducing pressure-treated wood to BC began with Andrew joining his friend who had already set up a small industrial plant in Port Kells, Surrey. The growth was exponential and 5 years later they sold to a US company. Andrew joined a Canadian building materials distribution company, Taiga Building Products, and built a

state-of-the-art Wood Preservation plant on Annacis Island. This was the first of four such industrial plants which he installed across Canada and continued to run as General Manager for Taiga until retirement in 2009, after consulting for them for a couple of years. He's glad to say that pressure-treated wood is well-used across Canada today.

In the mid-80's Andrew's good friends and fellow squash maniacs, Mike Carter, Richard Martin and David Haddleton introduced him to golf, a game with vastly different hand-eye coordination to squash and tennis. They persuaded him to join West Point Golf Club in 2010. As a beginner playing with these good friends on their annual golfing trip to Vancouver Island, they advised he could have a "gimme" in place of a short putt. It was only later when the score mattered that they advised him that he had to count it as a stroke!

Since then, his lowest handicap is 12, but admits that he is too young to shoot his age!

Andrew has shot one hole-in-one whilst coordinating an Away game at Northview's Canal course for WPGC in 2012. He remembers it well, but never saw the ball enter hole 14, 157 yards away. It was even more memorable with his friends Carter and Haddleton looking on in the group, and that it was before the Club executive had sanctioned an insurance for beer tabs up to \$120! He is still smarting over the bill! And he also still must catch his wife, who has two holes-in-one!

One of the most memorable moments in Andrew's short golfing career was while playing a round in Palm Springs. Incredibly, having played the perfect approach shot to the green, his ball became lodged 40 feet up in the fronds of a palm tree. The question arose as to how to play the ball as it lay?!

Andrew is another of our members who has had the good fortune to attend The Masters, doing so before he retired and he reports, "The TV doesn't lie. It was magnificent and made all the better by watching on Member's Day, Palmer, Nicklaus and Player playing together, whilst listening to the banter going on between them only 10 yards off the green! Watching Nick Faldo and Payne Stewart play was also pure artistry, and one must admire what all of them have contributed to the game of golf."

His favourite golf courses are Bandon Dunes in Oregon for its links layout, Shuksan for its variety and interest right in the shadow of Mt. Baker, and Northview - Ridge course for its complexity and grooming.

Andrew's interests continue to be all sports for the friendships and the mental and physical challenges they give life, although he is biased towards English ones for some reason, particularly rugby, tennis and squash. He also enjoys repairing antique furniture and gardening, which in retirement have now been joined by rebuilding a 65-year old MG vintage car from the 'ground up' to 'show condition'. Retirement has also naturally brought golf to the fore, but helping and nurturing family and 6 grandchildren is a constant delight.

Holidays are mixed between spending time with family, but also enjoying and discovering Europe. The Hobbs family was fortunate by living in the UK to be able to motor easily over to France with their young children and just camp in beautiful spots,

generally without having to book. Of anywhere that they have been, New Zealand was heaven, noting that the Kiwis have catered so well for the tourists in their beautiful country.

Since Anne had not been to Africa, Andrew wanted her to experience the wildlife and ambience he grew up with. So, a visit to South Africa with its game reserves, happy natives and gorgeous "Garden Route" down the east coast to Cape Town is to be recommended. To cap it off, they took the 3-day luxury train journey back from the Cape to Pretoria on Rovos Rail (purported to be the most luxurious rail journey in the world with its steam locomotives and beautifully restored 1920-30 mahogany carriages!)

Andrew's final thoughts are these: "Golf gives us wonderful scenic walks, whilst challenging our minds and bodies. Add to this, priceless camaraderie, friendships, and exercise and you have almost a perfect pastime in retirement, if you ignore the occasional frustration!"

As previously mentioned, Andrew joined WPGC in 2010. He quickly fit in with all the members and was encouraged to join the Board, serving as Vice Captain-Draw for two years and subsequently was elected President in 2015, completing four more years of valuable service to the members. The "Class of 2010" includes two other presidents, Doug Blackman and Colin Mallet.

Andrew relates that West Point Golf Club has given him fulfillment in giving back on the executive and will always provide these benefits in spades with its eclectic mix of characters, and he is grateful to be part of it.

*Material submitted by Andrew to Lorne
May 2020*