

## Sketch of a West Pointer – Chuck Kotzo



Chuck was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1947. He lived there for his first 9 years before emigrating in 1956 with his mother. He recalls the extremely poor situation in Eastern Europe at the time and that leaving and coming to Vancouver was a great move; they could not have come to a better place. He has resided in Burnaby, Squamish, Europe in a VW camper for a year, New Zealand North Island for a year and the remainder of the time in Vancouver, mostly the Kits area, for 44 years. A special remembrance is meeting his wife, Josie, at Oil Can Harry's nightclub, recalling that it was love at first sight! They were married for 47 years until Josie died 1 ½ years ago. Chuck has a physiotherapist son and a daughter who until recently was a COO for a restaurant chain. Due to Covid 19, she is now looking for a job in HR. Chuck is blessed with a grandson, Charlie, 3 years old.

He has extended family on both sides (his and Josie's) - in Vancouver, Montreal and Budapest.

Chuck was a Professional Engineer (Chemical) and worked in the chlorine and co-product caustic soda industry, which are the second largest chemicals produced, in terms of tonnage, next to sulphuric acid. Chlorine is used in the manufacture of approximately 100,000 chemicals, including many pharmaceuticals. Chuck notes that we would remain an early 1920's technological society without it. Although chlorine can be dangerous if not handled properly, it is extremely useful and widely produced, so working in that industry was a rewarding career. He traveled to many parts of the world on business and also for pleasure.

When he was 51, a supplier took him to The Masters in 1998. Until then Chuck had been a tennis player and considered golf to be an old man's sport. But his tennis injuries were piling up and The Masters was such a captivating experience. The game looked soooo easy! The pros were hitting the ball long and accurate, swinging easily and smoothly – Chuck had no doubt that he would be a scratch golfer in no time. Twenty-two years of frustration (but fun) later.....

Soon after Chuck took up golf, he realized that it was not at all an easy game. Out of desperation, he attended a John Jacobs Golf Academy in Mesa with two friends. They shared a room the first night but not thereafter because 5 minutes after the lights were out, a Harley Davidson entered their room. The Harley was actually one of the guys snoring at 150 decibels, with long pauses (sleep apnea) and lots of revving. Chuck did not sleep a wink and the result was that the friend (a former WP member) got a new nickname, Harley. During the 5-day course, Chuck diligently hit hundreds of balls every day, staying on the driving range for hours after the lesson had ended. He was determined to master this "old man's" game. It was rather deflating when he was told after the course was over by one of the pros who had been watching him, "I've never seen so many thousands of balls being hit incorrectly in my life." Although upset with this comment, years later Chuck realized he was right! He's still trying to hit the ball correctly. Chuck's lowest index has been around 13, so he's not done too badly. He has also had two holes-in-one, both about 110 yards. He remembers feeling good but also lucky and considers scoring eagles on par 4 or 5 holes much more exciting because you have to hit one or two good shots before your lucky shot or good putt.

Counting the births of his children and grandson as special experiences, he also enjoyed the year of travel with Josie throughout Europe, Israel and Morocco in their VW camper. Other highlights include the 1998 trip to The Masters and shooting 75 at the Westin Mission Hills Gary Player course in Palm Springs (2014). He must have been unconscious that day as he hasn't been able to come close to 75 on that course in several attempts.

As a masochist, Chuck likes Furry Creek golf course. Shortly after he took up golf, he played there, lost a couple dozen balls and quit after 9 holes. A few years ago, he gave it another shot and scored in the 80's and only lost 1 or 2 balls. He enjoys walking the Grouse Grind of golf, Northlands, and hopes to be able to do it for a few more years. He plays several affordable courses in the Palm Springs area, like Indian Canyon South, and also enjoys the Osoyoos-Oliver area, playing Fairview Mountain and others.

Golf is by far his favourite hobby but he says that he is a Jack-of-all-interests otherwise. He likes visiting Europe and particularly, and surprisingly, Hungary. It was a place to avoid most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century but it is really nice and has lots to offer now. His annual golf trips to Manzanillo, Vancouver Island, Osoyoos and Palm Springs are always fun. On his PS golf junkets, eight guys stay two to a hotel room. One year on a day off from golf, they walked downtown, looked around and walked back to the hotel. Several hours of walking. Next morning at around 2 am, they were awakened by loud banging on one of the room's doors. It was the police investigating a potential homicide or something. There was blood a long way down the hallway, on the door and in the room. The night manager had phoned this in and it became a serious police incident being played out as seen on TV or the movies. Fortunately, calm was restored when one of the guys in the bloody room was able to explain what happened. It turned out that he (a former WP member) has a condition which results in having no feeling in his feet. He had under-estimated the length of the day's walk and wore only flip-flops. Later in the evening, he went to get ice at the end of the hall and didn't realize that his feet were bleeding profusely; he left an incriminating trail. This incident must have really scared the night manager but gave us some good laughs for several years afterwards.

When asked about golfers he admires, Chuck says for raw talent, he likes John Daly. Daly and Tiger were his favourites during his time at The Masters. Now he likes to root for players like Adam Hadwin, Tommy Fleetwood, Tony Finau, Gary Woodland and Tiger. Don't ask him why but probably because they are nice guys – but then, so are many of the others. Chuck says that all the pros are in a different golf universe than him and are almost all decent, competitive, talented individuals.

Since joining West Point Golf Club in 2008, Chuck has really appreciated belonging to the Club and enjoys the friendship of its members.

*Prepared by Lorne Lindsay from material submitted by Chuck  
May 2020*