



I LAMBTON

A Celebration of our Past & Present

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Love & Love

This tennis tale starts with curling at Lambton Golf and Country Club, swings sweetly into golf and finishes on our popular tennis courts.

"The first time I drove down Lambton's cobble stone driveway was in the spring of 1966 when my dad (Norman Cruickshank) joined the Club's Curling Section, says Ian Cruickshank, who joined Lambton as a Junior Golfer 50 years ago in the spring of 1971. "Like today, it was a busy place. Dad joined the Curling Section to get into the golf side. The locker room in the old clubhouse wasn't very glamorous. There were old metal lockers with member's names in little plastic letters glued to the doors - but what great names they were. Across the aisle from dad's locker was Toronto Maple Leaf founder, Conn Smythe."

Ian's parents (Norm and Jean) loved to curl. They were 50-year members at The Boulevard Club. Curling continued as a popular sport at Lambton for many years before the Board of Governors decided to close it down in 1994 as numbers diminished and costs grew.

"I started out caddying for my dad on weekends when I was 14 years old. I'd get to play a few shots here and there, and then I would play the "little course" as we called it. My dad was the president of a textile company and a chemical company, and he used the membership to entertain clients and other business people," says Ian, whose brother John was also a Junior Golf member and brother, Neil was a Tennis member until a few years ago.

Ian played the Valley Course, as it's known today, for a couple of seasons before he passed the playing test and graduated to the championship layout.

"My dad played golf well into his eighties. We finished playing on the "little course", where he first taught me to play," Ian adds.



Ian and Heather Cruickshank on the Lambton tennis courts.

"Heather and I would go out there with him and simply enjoy the moment. He loved being at the Club with family and friends."

While chasing a little white ball may have been Ian's first passion in life, he soon found his life-long love while attending Richview Collegiate. Heather came onto the scene in high school where Ian played football, basketball, and track. They would occasionally bat tennis balls around on date night at St. George's Public School where he would lift Heather up on his shoulders

so she could scramble onto the roof to pick up lost tennis balls – it became part of the routine. They held their wedding at Lambton nearly 40 years ago!

In 1989, the couple sold their Toronto home, put most of their belongings on a boat headed overseas, and moved to the home of golf, St. Andrew's, Scotland, where they lived until 1993. They had travelled extensively up to that point and had dreamed of living abroad. Ian's grandparents were from Scotland, so he

was able to obtain a VISA and pursued his global career as a golf and travel writer. He contributed to publications ranging from the *Globe and Mail* to *Golf Digest* and teed it up on courses from the South of France to the South of China.

"We lived around the corner from the Old Course in a 150-year-old townhouse. We loved being there so much that after a year-and-a-half we bought a house that was built in 1817 in neighbouring Strathkinness," Ian says. "Back then, as residents, you could play the Old Course for practically nothing and we'd walk it together on Sundays when it was open to the public."

While in Scotland, Andrew and Kate bounced onto the scene as babies and kept their parents on their toes. Instead of chasing a white ball around the Old Course and other Scottish links layouts, the couple reignited their passion for tennis.

"We had a wonderful time playing tennis in Scotland," Heather says. "We joined a little club in town, met some wonderful people and would travel from local club to local club and play matches. Then we would relax after the games in these little tennis clubhouses and enjoy a pot of tea and cookies. I had never drunk tea after a match until then. It was a very social atmosphere that we enjoyed very much."

The Cruickshank family returned to Canada, so the youngsters could start school in Toronto. Heather and Ian continued to play tennis on local public courts for a couple of years before deciding to join the Tennis Section at Lambton, where they have now been for 20 years.

"When we were considering joining tennis at Lambton, I asked about court bookings, and I was told you could just walk on. Nobody was playing tennis back then. The courts were totally empty. It was quite different as compared to today, when you have to book a week in advance to play the game that we love," Heather adds. "We stay in Toronto for the winters and make good use of the bubble. We enjoy the competitive side of tennis, but it really is the social side of the game. The great group of friends that we have here at the Club, that makes Lambton special."

While Ian doesn't have his name inscribed on the "Wall of Champions" in the clubhouse, he has enjoyed watching Heather rack up a total of eight singles titles (2008 to 2014 & 2016) and eight doubles titles from 2009 to 2019 with a variety of partners including Valerie Teslia, Kathy



Cari Cummings, Nicole Tevlin, Tamara Colbourne and Heather Cruickshank participated in the Ladies' Tennis Doubles Championship last month.

Lloyd, Caroline Bachand, Michele Wilson, and Tamara Colbourne.

"We gave it our best shot this year in the final, but we never seemed to get any momentum on our side," says Heather, who finished second in the Ladies' Doubles Championship Division with Colbourne on a drizzle-filled evening earlier this month, as Nicole Tevlin and Cari Cummings earned the title.

Heather is an accomplished athlete. What you may not know about her, is that she won gold medals in both the Ontario and Canada Summer Games for field hockey and has run the Toronto Marathon.

"I've played in the senior nationals and provincials and always the Lambton Club Championships," Ian adds. "The results are nearly always the same. I get waxed and then mope for a couple of hours and vow to give up tennis and find a game that will love me back. But, by the next morning, the well is re-filled, and the passion returns, and I start figuring a way to get better."

His favourite player to watch is Heather. It's not about the trunk load of trophies she owns - it's her grit. When it gets to the sharp end of the set, she won't blink and plays without fear - same thing in real life. He has also been lucky to find a band of mostly younger guys to hit with. The competition is high, but it is really about the social side of the game, the moments between games and sets, when they congratulate and commiserate about things happening in their lives, that connects everyone.

"I've noticed a recent shift lately. At one time, I was known for owning a big forehand. Today, my greatest skill is trash talking - I instinctively know when to pump up the volume," Ian says with a grin. "I am a big fan of the Director of Tennis, Mark Paklepa and his staff. They are all terrific teachers, but I like their off-court side as well. No pretensions, just good guys, who want to welcome everyone to the tennis community and make you love the game as much as they do. Looking back over the past 50 years at Lambton, there's no place I would have rather been. So many great times, great memories. It remains the place to be in our hearts."



Mark Paklepa, Director of Tennis and Ian after a recent morning workout.

