

'Gentleman's game' keeps senior young

Theresa McManus

The Record

Saturday, July 26, 2008

Ed Gladstone is having trouble finding tennis tournaments to play in these days because not too many people his age still hit the court.

A longtime member of the New Westminster Tennis Club, Gladstone celebrated his 95th birthday in style - on the tennis court. Friends from New Westminster and Burnaby tennis courts joined Gladstone in celebrating his birthday.

"I don't mind playing with the younger people - as long as I get to play," he said. "I think it's one of the best games you can play. You don't have any of the roughness of baseball or football. You play as hard as you want without hurting anyone on the other side of the net. It is a gentleman's game."

The Burnaby resident plays at the New Westminster Tennis Club each Saturday and Sunday. He also plays in Burnaby three times a week.

"You would have to see him to believe how good he is," said New Westminster resident Audrey Barber, who plays with Gladstone at the local club. "He has terrific shots - spin shots, tricky things. He is hard to play against. Playing with people who are 60 and on, he can hold his own."

Barber said people are inspired by her friend's skill on the tennis court.

"They watch him with a great deal of amazement," she said. "There are tennis players in their early 80s, not a lot of them. It is quite amazing he has been able to do so much in the tennis movement all these years."

Gladstone takes the compliments in stride.

"I have played the game for a long time," he said. "I do have a bit of experience."

Gladstone believes his lifelong interest in tennis has contributed to his health.

"It definitely has. I would recommend it to anybody," he said. "It is not over strenuous. It can be as strenuous as you want it to be."

Gladstone was born in Middlesborough, England on July 11, 1913. Tennis has been a lifelong love.



CREDIT: Larry Wright/THE RECORD

Secret to a long life: Ed Gladstone is still playing tennis at the age of 95. A longtime member of the New Westminster Tennis Club, he celebrated his recent birthday on the tennis court.

"I have been playing it since I was about seven years old," he said. "My mother and father both played tennis. When I was old enough to walk, they took me to the tennis courts."

Gladstone moved to Canada with his parents in 1917.

"My father had been a manager of a steel mill. When the war started they converted the mill from making railroad tracks to munitions. When the war finished they didn't have these big contracts. He saw no future for himself there," he said. "He heard about this soldiers' settlement scheme. They had this opportunity for families to travel to Canada. They would be given a one-quarter section of land. This is what we did."

After coming to Canada by boat, the family got on a train destined for Regina, Sask.

"We got out and we didn't see anything. There was nothing there," he said. "We went back on the train and went to Vancouver."

After a brief stint at a boarding house in Vancouver, the Gladstones made their way to Burnaby. His dad had ideas for the large parcel of land.

"There was plenty of room at the back for a tennis court," he said. "He laid one down at the back of the house. It was the best tennis court in British Columbia."

Back in England, Gladstone's father had helped form a tennis club and put down its court.

"He had it (the brick) specially crushed to get the right size," Gladstone said.

"We had people coming from all over the world to play. He did practically everything himself."

In addition to playing at home, Gladstone joined the Vancouver Lawn Tennis Club and took lessons there.

"Mother played too. She and I were in the first Stanley Park tournament," he said. "We got to the semifinals. She was over 40."

Gladstone was an early member of the New Westminster Tennis Club, joining in 1931.

"It's a very social club. Always has been," he said. "It has afternoon tea on Sunday afternoons."

Growing up in Burnaby, Gladstone moved to New Westminster after marrying Lorraine. She used to play a bit of tennis but gave it up after breaking her ankle.

"Because she couldn't play tennis anymore, I joined the Vancouver Golf Club. For about 20 years I played more golf than tennis," he said. "She could walk but she couldn't run."

But tennis was in Gladstone's blood.

"I helped found, when I was a senior - classified as a senior, around 45 - the B.C. Masters Tennis Association," he noted. "That was just for seniors. I was president of that until just this last year."

Gladstone has attended many tennis tournaments in the United States, where more masters tournaments were held for players in his age group.

"There were a great many tournaments. Until I got to be about 80 or 85, they got a bit harder to find," he said.

"If I wanted to play with the 95s, I'd probably have to go to Florida."

Gladstone plays recreationally about five times a week. In the winter months, he plays at least twice a week at indoor courts.

"If there were tournaments in my age group, I could still play," he said. "I have enjoyed it. I have played some of the best tennis players in the world."

Gladstone once played against Donald Budge, a six-time Grand Slam winner who's considered by some to be the best tennis player ever. In 1938, he won the Wimbledon, Australian, French and U.S. championships.

"I played him - I didn't beat him," Gladstone said. "He showed me a few things. This was in the 1940s, early 1950s. That was a thrill."

Gladstone credits tennis for helping to keep him healthy.

"You could not name a child's disease I did not get - and a couple extra ones too, whooping cough, ringworm," he said. "In 60 years, I haven't had anything at all."

Gladstone, considered 'The Legend' by some fellow tennis players, has five children, 15 grandchildren and 25 great grandchildren. Only one daughter plays tennis, but he has no trouble finding competition on the courts.

"I like doubles now," he said.

"It is more suited to my physical level."

© The Record (New Westminster) 2008

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2008 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.
CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.