

"Why shouldn't Arthur take lessons . . . after all, golfing Veteran is only 97". This was the appropriate and somewhat ingenious heading that appeared a few weeks ago in the Victoria, B.C. Times and the gentleman referred to was Arthur Thompson who will be remembered by many residents of Lindsay and district as a one-time Manager of the Bank of Montreal in Lindsay.

He will be recalled as a tall, handsome military-bearing gentleman who roamed the golf links at Lindsay, greeted all bank customers graciously and was popular socially. His late wife was the former Miss Carol Beall, sister of George W. Beall, Albert Street.

The story slightly shortened is as follows:

By Doug Peden

Like most enthusiastic golfers who have trouble breaking 100, Arthur Thompson feels he can still iron out a few of the wrinkles that have crept into his swing and whittle a few strokes off his handicap.

This hope of better scores to come, his visits to the practice fairway at Uplands Golf Club and the lessons he occasionally receives from professional Johnny Wren would seem to place Thompson squarely in the category of "average golfer".

Don't you believe it.

People around the bunkers and greens at Uplands will tell you there is nothing "average" about the tall, courteous man in plus fours.

They are right. Any man interested in and eager enough to take golf lessons in his 98th year is a rare and remarkable individual.

And if you think the always-smiling man who celebrated his 97th birthday on June 30 merely plods along for a few holes now and then, forget it.

Summer or winter, Arthur likes to walk the fairways. In fact, he'll sometimes ask, "Who's for two more?" at the end of a round, wanting to replay the first two holes and make it a 20-hole excursion.

Eagerness Doesn't Help Scoring

It may be this eagerness for action that has prevented Thompson from matching his score with his age this summer for the first time in many years.

“Arthur could improve his score by several strokes if he would take more time”, says Wren. “He is so impatient to get on with the game that he is sometimes walking almost before he hits the ball.

“However, Arthur enjoys his golf, and that's what counts. He's a marvellous golfer for his age, and he's a wonderful gentleman”.

Nobody at Uplands needs to be reminded that the non-genarian, who walks as straight as an arm drill-sergeant, is a gentleman. At "Stag night" competitions on summer Thursdays, Thompson's courtesy, good humour and enthusiasm make him a favourite playing partner of duffer and low-handicapper alike.

He's also admired by the ladies, who appreciate his ready smile, pleasant words and the kind of consideration they don't always get from other male members.

Fine Performer in Several Sports

Thompson's humour comes easily. Like the time this summer while I was playing with him in a stag-night foursome.

Hitting to the green on the 280-yard 15th hole, a setting sun made the flag difficult to see and we told Arthur to aim for a cluster of golf carts and bags behind the green. He hit a crisp iron shot on the green but about 300 feet to the right of the cup.

"That", he quipped, "wasn't for the bags. That was for the birds".

Last summer, on being complimented on a newspaper picture, in which he appeared with pro hockey star Gordie Howe, he commented: "Thank you. But you know Victoria has always been famous for its antiques.

Born in Montreal in 1869, Thompson went to work with the Bank of Montreal at 14, and remained with that institution until retiring in 1932. He immediately headed for

Victoria, which he had visited 13 years earlier.

"It was September", he recalled. "The weather was marvellous and the city was beautiful. There was never any doubt after that where I would go when I retired."

Arthur Prefers Manpower to Motors

Arthur still has a huge appetite for exercise, like the time last summer when he went salmon fishing.

As befits a man who was once a crack oarsman as well as a fine tennis, lacrosse and hockey player. He prefers manpower to motors. On this day, he rowed his boat for three hours, caught a nine-pound coho salmon on trout tackle and returned, just before noon.

After cleaning the fish, Thompson was invited to share a bottle of ale by his neighbour, H. D. Armstrong, but declined.

"Thank you, but I have to hurry", said Arthur. "I have a golf game this afternoon".

During one of last winter's worst snowstorms, while most people were trying to keep out of the weather, Wren was surprised to see someone approaching the Uplands pro shop.

"It looked like a big snowman", recalls Wren, "but it was Arthur. He had walked three miles from home for exercise".

No, Arthur Thompson certainly doesn't fit in the "average golfer" category.

He has become a legend at Uplands and he is an impressive example of the benefits of moderation, exercise and living for tomorrow.



Legend at Uplands, Arthur Thompson has big appetite for exercise.—Bill Halkett photo, Victoria Times, B. C.