

Sinclair remembered as 'builder-extraordinaire' in tennis community

By Jake Courtepatte

A prominent member of the Canadian tennis community for over forty years, Ken Sinclair left a mark on the sporting community that will last well past his time.

The pioneer passed away peacefully in his sleep on April 3, after a long bout with Alzheimers at the age of 88.

'Ken didn't just play tennis well, he lived tennis well. He will be remembered as one of the most important contributors to the development and success of the Rogers Cup and he is the main reason our tournament is held at York University,' stated Michael Downey, CEO of Tennis Canada. 'When it comes to Canadian tennis, he was a builder-extraordinaire. I will personally miss his dedication to continuously bringing Canadian tennis to new heights.'

Mr. Sinclair joined Alan Dean and Mark Heese as the recipients of the green jacket at the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame's 2015 inauguration, nineteen years after his induction into the Canadian Tennis Hall of Fame.

Mr. Sinclair was instrumental in the development of the Timberlane Tennis and Country Club, a prestigious club that opened its doors in 1988 on Vandorf Sideroad. During his travels abroad as a tennis star, he was quite impressed by a certain club he visited in Austria, and decided to incorporate many of its features into Timberlane.

'It was the separation in the layout of the courts, the reception and treatment of members - including the way the tennis director ensured that members had court time and people to play with, the niceties of the interior, the dining room used by corporate members, and generally the feeling of the space that impressed me,' said Mr. Sinclair when Timberlane first opened its doors. He and his wife Betty designed the clubhouse themselves, on 23 acres and featuring a patio that fully wraps around the octagonal clubhouse.

'We wanted a space that would stand out from other clubs,' said Betty.

It soon became the venue for a number of high-profile tournaments, including the Gordon Trophy match for players over the age of 45 against competitors from the United States, and the 1990 Von Cramm Cup, a world tennis championship for men over 60. Betty said they were 'very proud' of the progress with the club.

It was also in 1990 that the club ventured into philanthropic work, when the first annual Timberlane Charity Classic was held to raise funds for Aurora's van for the disabled. Almost \$28,000 was raised that first year, and continued annually for twelve years raising a staggering \$270,000 for the Town of Aurora.

By the time Timberlane became a reality, Mr. Sinclair had already built himself quite a reputation in the tennis community. As the newly-crowned director of special events for Tennis Canada, he was put in charge of finding a new major sponsor in 1978.

With a goal of turning the Canadian Open into a world-class tennis event, a deal fell into his lap when he competed in the Canadian Seniors Championship and defeated Paul Pare, Chairman of Imperial Tobacco.

Pare invested half a million dollars into the tournament in the first year of the sponsorship, launching Canadian tennis to the world stage.

Mr. Sinclair held that position of chairman of the Canadian Open until 1983, and was a major player in the building of the first tennis facility on York University's campus in the 1970s.

He will be sorely missed by his wife of 65 years, Betty, as well as his four children Pat, Kelly, Bill, and Bob, and his eight grandchildren.