



MEMORIES

by Mary Mathieson

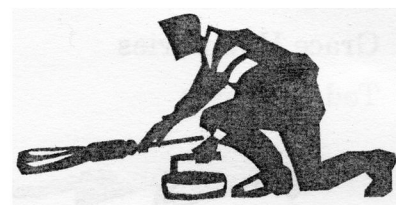


The history of curling is fascinating. Scottish stonemasons working on the Rideau Canal likely brought the game to Canada. Kingston had a club as far back as 1820. Napanee's (strictly male) began in 1896. Matches among communities were enjoyed, but because the Quebec rocks were different from the Ontario ones, when they played there was a curling "two solitudes". The winner had to be chosen by comparing scores of separate games played next to one another. The 40 Napanee members paid \$5.00 annual dues. A golden time was 1911-1912 when young Clayton Maybee, a wizard at the game, helped bring all the honours to Napanee: top personal score, (the prize a tobacco jar shaped like a curling stone donated to the club by Dr. Cartwright); The Chinneck Medal (still in a place of honour); and winner in the Eastern Ontario League. The first world war put a damper on

the sport and in spite of selling shares for "Napanee Curling-Bowling Limited" and even offering the ice for a women's league (a desperate move!), play came to an end.

The present Napanee and District Curling Club, begun in 1957, is celebrating 50 years in 2007, with year-long events. Sally Lambert, just short of an original member, smiles to remember what fun it was back in the late fifties curling at the arena, making do with the pairs of rocks acquired wherever they could be found, from Fergus as far as Montreal. Unlike today's beauties, some looked like teapots and some were heavy and flat. Fees to play Thursday nights for the 15 to 20 enthusiasts was a whopping \$7.00 a year. An extra game Sunday night meant \$10.00 for two sheets of ice...50 cents for each curler. There were cold winter trips to challenge their counterparts in Gananoque, Sterling and Marmora. Pat Riley was first president and there was always a rollicking family bonspiel to end the

season, bringing out older players and some as young as 8 and 9. Those youngsters have grown into the experts of today. Sally notes they had Dr. Bill Burns to thank for staking them to their own rocks to replace the leftovers. He knew



where in Scotland their granite specials were made and what ship would bring them safely home to Napanee. Those 64 rocks cost all of \$3600.00 and the club was able eventually to repay their benefactor. Now, says Frank Dunham, 32 rocks are insured for \$60,000.00! Sadly, the desired "blue" rock is no longer available in Scotland. A compromise is to fit the blue from old rocks on to the bottom of the new grey.

Fond memories...and warm congratulations Napanee on that 50th.