

This is part 4 of the NOTL Tennis Chronicles, recounting the story of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club at the time of its 50th anniversary celebrations in 2020. Parts 1,2 and 3 took us from the beginning in 1970 through to the end of the 1989 season and hopes for a pavilion.

Roy Page



As we began our third decade, Roy Page took the helm after two years as vice president. Carole Kanters became vice president, Sheila Gayman was the treasurer, Judy Rive retained the double-portfolio of secretary and juniors, Tom Braybrook continued to do the newsletters and manage publicity, Jill Braybrook took on membership, and Doug Boufford accepted the role of tournament director. Once again, the

social director position found no takers, so would continue as an ensemble effort by the executive committee.

But 1990 was all about the pavilion. When the idea was first floated, a fairly simple picnic shelter may have come to mind. But once Patrick MacNeill came into the mix, the vision expanded. Why not build something to last for 30 years or more, something eye-pleasing that would enhance the park experience for everyone. Patrick made exquisite drawings with abundant detail. Members with skills, and members with muscles, put up their hands to volunteer with the construction.

But nothing could have started without the help and support of Recreation Director Clive Buist. Clive had guided the club members through the process of winning Council approval in 1989, and had made the application to Wintario for a capital grant, but a great deal more was needed before construction could begin. Several documents, with many pages of details, were written by Clive that spring in order for the pavilion to meet all required criteria for taking its place among the Town's assets.

1990

Members : 219 adults + 93 juniors

Fee : \$40/65/15

Bank balance : ?

Clive began his career in Niagara-on-the-Lake in June 1984, and thus the building of the omni-courts was his first big project. Five years later on, he was supporting the tennis club with its next ambition. It's fair to say that without Clive's expertise, and his willingness to give the project exceptional time and effort, the pavilion may never have been realized.

The partnership between the Tennis Club and "the Town" had required considerable patience on both sides from the start. And the tennis club would add "persistence" to the patience. The mythical entity that we call "the Town" refers sometimes to the elected Council, sometimes to the recreation department and staff. But the Recreation Director is always a significant player. There were three directors over the period from 1970 to 1984 (Robert Sones, Al Downs and Jan Devantier), but then we had 29 years of continuity with Clive Buist in the position until his retirement in 2014.

Through those years, Clive was consistent in his dealings with the tennis club, always prepared to hear us out, and willing to grant our requests whenever he felt they could be justified. But it was a partnership



Clive Buist

in which the two entities were often looking through opposite ends of the telescope. Clive was charged with managing Town recreation facilities in the best interests of all residents, and maintaining a balance among the varied voices wanting to make themselves heard. The tennis club had a much more precise focus, striving to maximize a Community Tennis Centre with enough options to create meaningful access to the sport of tennis for as many residents as possible.

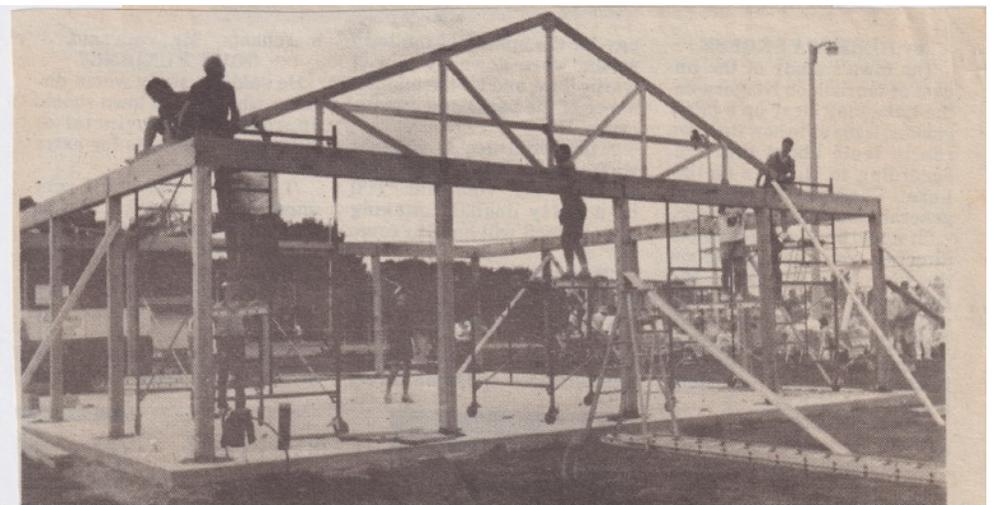
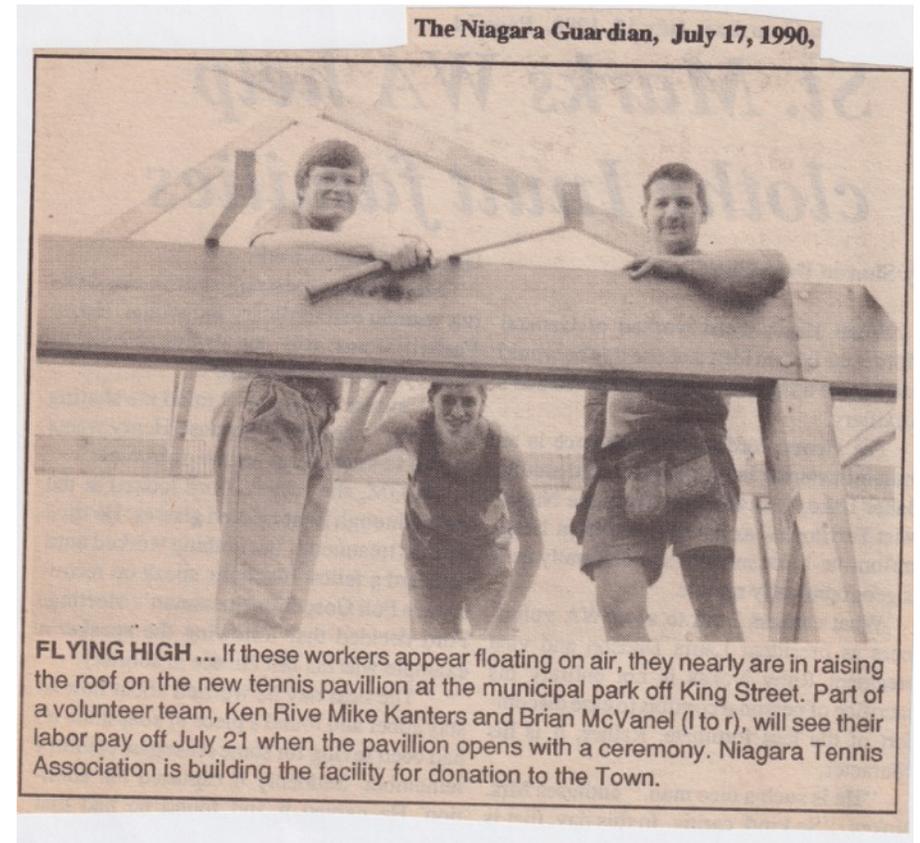
Having a productive partnership doesn't mean being in agreement on everything all the time. There was endless give-and-take on all sides over the years. But on balance the tennis club was well served, and a succession of club executives were very appreciative of Clive's diplomacy and his grace.

Once it was determined precisely where the pavilion would be located, a 1500 square foot concrete slab was poured. The pavilion could only be as good as its base and this was a labor-of-love for Hans and George Pauls, who gave us a deluxe floor that still serves us well 30 years later.

All volunteer time had to be carefully logged in order to achieve our contribution commitments. A total of 25 men have their efforts recorded on the time sheets. The all-stars have their hours shown with their names :

Tom Braybrook (175.5), Ken Rive (138.5), John Wall (98), Roy Page (79.5), Gerald Kanters (78.5), Brian Purdie (50.5), Helmut Hammerling (44.5), Andy Knauer (37.5), Peter Unger (35.5), Geoff Stead (31), Ken Grieve (30.5), Danny McCarthy (30.5), Larry Young (28), Clare MacDonald, Tom Diez, Brian McVanel, Harry Knauer, Doug Boufford, Fred Brens, Gerry Connolly, Dennis Georgieff, Gerald Pepe, Rick Sherk, Nick Wyslocky.

No one will ever know how much additional time was spent in coordinating all the logistics, in obtaining permits and in managing quality control. But the result has seen countless happy parties, so many friendships made and so much good food-and-beverage shared. We say thank you to Patrick, to Tom and Ken and John and Roy and Gerry, to the entire cohort, again and again and again.



To celebrate the construction of the pavilion, a Mixed Doubles tournament was played on July 21st. It was a wonderfully festive occasion, with a lavish buffet at the end of the day. How terrific it must have felt to be able to have an event with an on-site home base. Not-too-proud-to-beg was the motto as we raced to meet our financial commitments for it.

Here's the ribbon-cutting ceremony. From the left : Roy Page (NTA president), Mike Dietsch (MPP), Dave Lepp (NOTL Recreation Committee Chair), Tom Braybrook (NTA project coordinator)





There are too many players in these photos for all to be listed, but we hope many will be able to spot themselves or others they recognize.



The finale for the 1990 season was the Pavilion Junior Classic Tournament on September 29. It featured under-16, under-14 and under-12 divisions for boys and girls, with hot dogs and drinks for lunch.

We had collected \$8,470 in membership fees through 87 singles (\$40), 66 families (\$65) and 10 juniors (\$15). There were 219 adult players and 93 children/teens. We presented \$6,352.50 to the Town, to be added to \$1,705 in pay-as-you-play fees. Bank balance was we'll-get-back-to-you-on-that.



And that was the story of 1990 until this treasure was uncovered by Mary Pohorly : a 30-year-old newspaper clipping reporting the results of the club championships. Many thanks to Mary for sharing it with us!

As it happens, these are the last known photos of the old club trophies. In 1992, a new set of plaques was acquired, perhaps because these trophies were unaccounted for. If anyone spots them on a dusty shelf, we hope they'll be brought forward as well.



WINNERS OF LADIES A DOUBLES
Kim Munroe (l) and Mary Pohorly



Final serves net 1990 trophies

Chilly breezes didn't cool tennis fever or fervor when the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Association Club held its 1990 Championships. The Saturday tournament marked the close of the local summer tennis season. Despite the early-autumn nip in the air, spectators cheered on their favourites, according to tourney chairman Doug Boufford.

A and B Round winners respectively were Tom Diez and Joe Ramos, men's singles; Mary Pohorly with Kim Monroe and Barbara Lee with Paula Totman, ladies' doubles; Roman Korda with Tom Braybrook, and Joe Henderson with Sig Okrazewski, men's doubles; and Julianne Singh with Nick Wyslocky and Jill Braybrook with Tom Braybrook, mixed doubles.



WINNERS OF ROUND A MIXED DOUBLES Julianne Singh and Nick Wyslocky



WINNER OF MEN'S A SINGLES Tom Diez

1991

Members : 214 adults + 96 juniors

Fee : \$40/65/15

Bank balance : ?

In 1991, we seem to have developed a hangover. The club records are very thin. We know, however, that Roy Page continued as president, alongside Carole Kanters, Judy Rive and Doug Boufford.

The club collected \$8,560 in membership fees, with 29 juniors (\$15), 86 singles (\$40) and 64 families (\$65). There were 214 adult players and 96 children/teens. We presented \$ 6,420 to the Town.

In this happy scene are Irene Wall, Maggie Hammerling, John Wall, Jerry Kanters, Carole Kanters, Larry Young, Pat Young and Helmut Hammerling. [Many thanks to Carole for the photo.]

Life was good!

The Summer of 1991





In 1992, Carole Kanters took the helm along with a strong supporting cast. Marlene McCarthy shares the photo on the right, taken in April 1992, the first image we have of the completed pavilion. It seems to say "fresh start".

A significant change came about when Lezlie Murch was retained to be the club's first pro-manager. Her job description included attending all club

nights to organize matches and improve the rotation of play, and giving lessons. Lezlie ultimately became a legend in Niagara Region tennis, and at this young age her enthusiasm shone through : "I hope to keep teaching in the future, and I'm hoping that more people will get involved in tennis and share the love of this great sport."

New faces on the executive were Barbara & David Lee and Paula Lepp. Together, they were in charge of the NTA entry to the Niagara Peninsula Team Tennis League, which was organized by Rhonda Grenier of the Fort Erie TC. Besides these two, the other clubs involved were Niagara Falls Badminton & Tennis, St Catharines Tennis & Racquets, and White Oaks.

A Mixed Doubles Tournament was scheduled for July 17-18-19. Friday evening was billed as a "Picnic Hamper Social" at 6:00, and a Barbecue Lunch was offered on Saturday. The club's singles championships were held the last week of August, and the doubles was on September 18-19-20.

A big step forward was taken for the club's finances. The agreement with the Town was modified to be 75% of all fees to a maximum of \$6500 + \$300 for the pavilion. We raised the membership rate, so a total of \$10,030 was collected from 19 juniors (\$25), 57 singles (\$60) and 69 families (\$80). There were 185 adult players and 107 children/teens.

1992

Members : 185 adults + 107 juniors

Fee : \$60/80/25

Bank balance : ?



Lezlie Murch



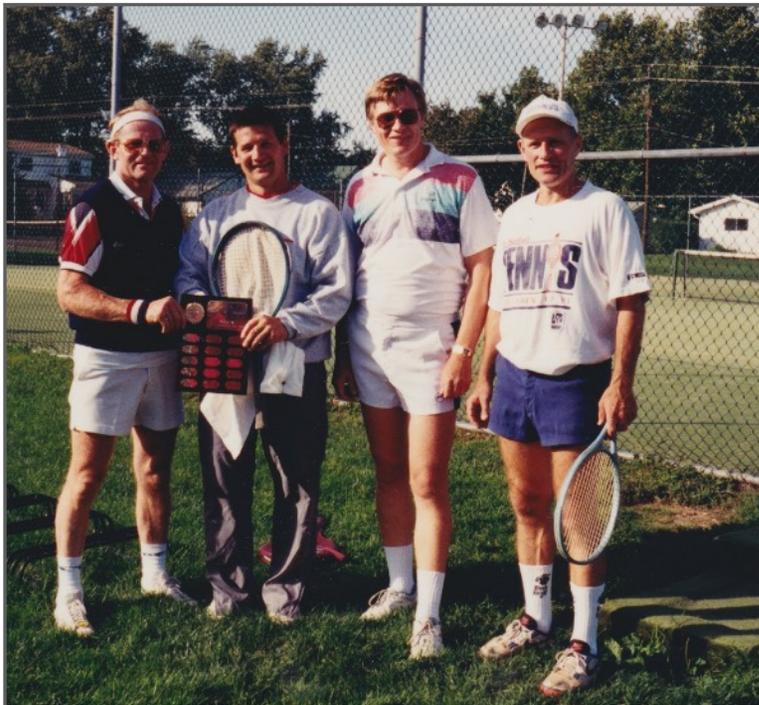
Sue & John Empringham, with Lezlie Murch



Patrick MacNeill; John Wall



John & Sylvia Christie, with Lezlie Murch



Gerry Kanters, Ken Rive, Brian McVanel, Rick Sherk

1992 CLUB CHAMPIONS



Paula Lepp, Judy Rive, Pat Young, Carole Kanters

Things were looking orderly and organized in 1993, with Carole Kanters continuing to lead a strong volunteer club executive. The pavilion became a de-facto clubhouse, with a phone and answering machine set up to create a home base for pro-manager Lezlie Murch.

Opening day was in the first weekend of May, and a welcome clinic was presented to the members by Lezlie on June 8. It was part of National Tennis Week on June 5-13, during which the courts were opened to the community at no charge.

An Open Mixed Doubles Tournament was held on June 11-13, with invitations to all players throughout Niagara Region. Nevada Bob's was the sponsor.

The Club Championships were planned for the usual pattern of three separate weekends : mixed doubles on July 16-18 (along with the Picnic Hamper Social); singles on August 27-29; doubles on September 10-12.

The executive continued to be concerned about involving all members in club programming. A questionnaire was again devised, and non-renewing members were contacted by phone in search of further feedback.

More improvements were sought for the courts, with windscreens being the highest priority and a hitting wall being next in line on the wish-list. Concerns were starting to arise regarding the omni surface. This was season #8, which is ordinarily the beginning of the end for most tennis court surfaces. Perimeter weeds were difficult to control, and extra rolling and sweeping were needed to manage sand levels on the omni. The forecast life of the surface had been "10 to 15 years", from which the tennis club had heard "10", but the Town had heard "15, if not 20".

1993

Members : 201 adults + 90 juniors

Fee : \$60/80/25

Bank balance : \$ 1,469.79

An "intermediate" membership category was added, whereby players under 25 could join for \$40, and 11 players took advantage of it. We also had 10 juniors (\$25), 44 singles (\$60) and 78 families (\$80), for a total of 201 adult players and 90 children/teens. A total of \$6,500 was presented to the Town, along with \$300 for the pavilion.

Sports

Ken and Judy Rive stand out in Memorial Park tennis tourney



Winners of the annual Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Club championship held Sept. 11 at Memorial Park are:

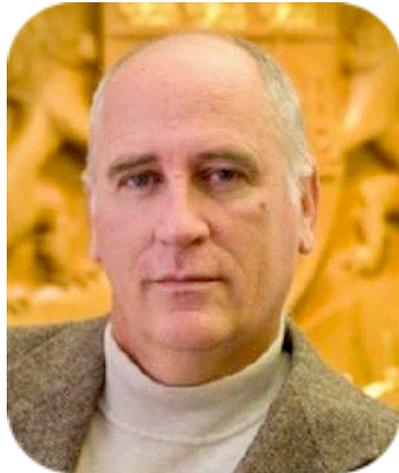
Single men's A, Clayton Bohne; single men's B, Mark Sorenson; men's doubles A, Alex Roman and Tom Braybrook; ladies' doubles A, Judy Rive and Pat Young; ladies' doubles B, Linda Dick and Terri Dick; mixed doubles A, Judy Rive and Ken Rive; and mixed doubles B, Susan Empringham and John Empringham.

Junior A winner is Jordan Caldwell. Junior B winner is Paul Empringham.

Mixed doubles A winners Ken and Judy Rive pose with tennis pro Lezlie Murch after the annual tourney at Memorial Park. The club pro teaches three evenings a week.

—Contributed photo

In 1994, the NTA was fraying at the edges. We had checked all the boxes that seem to be needed : four courts in 1986, a pavilion in 1990, a pro-manager with 5 years of continuity, a long record of communication services to members, a schedule of events and regular play. Nevertheless, things faltered, so Tom Braybrook accepted the responsibility of president in the absence of any other candidates.



Tom Braybrook

Tom had been a central part of all club operations since 1987, but his preference was for the action portfolios. Through our first 50 years, he's the only male club member to undertake creative programming and club communications on an extended basis. He arranged and organized innovative member events and produced many club newsletters. And by those alongside whom he worked to build the pavilion, he's given credit for being the key individual who made it happen. So it must have been difficult for him to see the NTA in a slump.

Lezlie Murch continued as pro-manager; events unfolded as before. But somehow the air was leaking out of our balloon. We registered 11 juniors (\$25), 3 under-25s (\$40), 35 singles (\$60), and 55 families (\$80). It made a total of just 148 adult players and 67 children/teens. Our 75% commitment to the Town yielded \$5,328.75, plus another \$300 for the pavilion.

With what remained, we paid \$1,200 for our pro-manager, another \$300 to maintain a phone line, \$400 for keys and shoe tags, and \$540 for mailings to members. There was nothing left.

But 1995 was to be our 25th Anniversary.
Surely there was much to celebrate ?

1994

Members : 148 adults + 67 juniors

Fee : \$60/80/25

Bank balance : \$683.62

1994



The Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Association
welcomes players of all levels and ages.

Certified Tennis Pro / Manager
Four Fully Lit Omni Surface (Synthetic Grass) Courts
Pavilion

Social and Competitive Activities
No Court Fees For Members

Junior Recreational Program
Lessons by Certified Teaching Professionals
Lezlie Murch
Maria Lirio

**Niagara-on-the-Lake
Tennis Association**
Memorial Park
King Street, Box 1355
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario
L0S 1J0
905-468-0387

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE TENNIS ASSOCIATION

REGISTRATION DAY FOR MEMBERSHIPS AND LESSONS

May 7 - Registration Day at the Courts, Memorial Park. Starting at 10:00 a.m. till 2 p.m.

Members registered by May 7, 1994, will be eligible for FREE membership draw!

May 8 to May 31 - Registration ONLY at Recreation Office, Centennial Arena, Virgil, Mon. - Fri. 8:30-12:00; 1:00-4:30

June to September - Registration at courts - during NTA hours

NTA RULES AND REGULATIONS

- 1** NTA Directors will enforce rules and regulations.
- 2** NTA Directors will patrol and monitor courts.
- 3** Compliance with NTA rules and regulations is a necessity, or membership will be revoked.

NTA CODE OF CONDUCT

The highest type of sportsmanship is expected from every player! Players are under an obligation to avoid acts which are unsportsmanlike or detrimental to the game of tennis.

- 1** Loud, abusive, or profane language, racket throwing, or hitting balls indiscriminately is prohibited.
- 2** Do not stall. The Rules of Tennis allow a maximum of 1½ minutes for changing ends of court on odd games and 30 seconds between points and between games when there is no changeover.
- 3** Intentional waving of a racket or arms or making distracting noises is prohibited.
- 4** Coaching, except during the break between the 2nd and 3rd sets, is prohibited. (Spectators, including parents, friends and coaches, should not interfere with or participate in on-court matters.)
- 5** Do not attempt to make a mockery of a match, whether winning or losing.
- 6** Do not withdraw from a tournament after the draw has been made or default in a tournament (whether during the course of a match or prior to its commencement) except for illness, injury or personal emergency.

THE TROPHIES

From the earliest days, the club had acquired trophies for annual competition. Rolly's Jeweller was a cherished local institution, and each year our trophies were engraved there in advance of yearend presentation festivities. Somewhere along the way, the trophies were misplaced, so in 1992 Carole Kanters undertook a project to acquire replacement plaques. Here is the list of the donors :

David & Donna Lailey
Gerald Kanters & Sons
Lezlie Murch Tennis Services
Roy Page
McVanel Communications
(Brian McVanel)
Niagara Battery & Tire Ltd
(Bill & Betty Singleton)
Niagara Motors
(Dave & Terri Dick)
NOTL IDA Pharmacy
(Roman & Maria Korda)
The Garden Works Company
(Tom & Jill Braybrook)
The Rive Work Room
(Ken & Judy Rive)

1990 - 1994

These were five momentous years in our club history, with exhilarating highs and a disappointing low.

What would a Silver Anniversary bring?

On the membership side, several members of longstanding made their first appearance :

Mary Pohorly - ~~1990~~ 1988

John & Sylvia Christie - 1991

Paula Lepp - 1992

Maria Budin - 1992

Jim Caldwell - 1992

Janice Schatschneider - 1993

LEZLIE MURCH went on to become co-founder, along with Doug Carter, of the Niagara Tennis Academy in Vineland. For 20 years, she guided young aspiring players from several countries to combine academic achievement with high performance tennis, with most graduates able to gain scholarship positions in US colleges. Lezlie is also a highly decorated Rotary Club member in St Catharines.