

This is part 5 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 through 4 brought us from the beginnings in 1970 through to the eve of the 25th anniversary in 1995.

The 25th anniversary was a powerful motivator for those who treasured our club, and a co-op-style group came together to make sure there was a celebration : Jill Braybrook, Sheila Gayman, Helmut Hammerling, Barbara Lee, Paula Lepp, Judy Rive, Irene Wall and Larry Young. But the one willing to accept the ultimate responsibility, and the one everyone was willing to follow, was Irene Wall. She would be the club's anchor for the next 13 years ... a truly remarkable record!



The special anniversary event was planned for the Kinsman Hall on July 15th. There was a fee for the hall, a fee for liquor permit, fees for tablecloths and dishes, and the main expense - the buffet meal. Jill & Judy would decorate; Sheila would organize music and the bar. Somehow they managed to pull it off for just \$10 per person, helped by having Marlene McCarthy take charge of the "dessert squad". Guests of the NTA for the evening would be Mike Dietsch, Clive Buist and Anne Kravchenko.

Anne had been recruited as the club pro for the summer. She had just relocated to Niagara from Toronto and came with a sparkling resumé. Penny Coles wrote, (in her first tennis article for the Niagara Advance, having started as a reporter 9 months earlier): *Anne brings a keen enthusiasm for the game and a strong sense of fun, which she feels should be the first item on every player's agenda.*

Anne ran the Mixed Doubles event from 12:00 - 5:00 on July 15th, then the 53 participants re-convened "for socializing and reminiscing" at 7:00.

**1995**

**Members : 186 adults + 51 juniors**

**Fee : \$50/\$65/\$15**

**Bank balance : \$1,081.58**

Join Us In Our Celebration!

1970 **NTA** 25<sup>th</sup> 1995

Saturday, July 15, 1995

**Mixed Doubles  
Round Robin Tournament**  
Memorial Park Pavilion  
12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

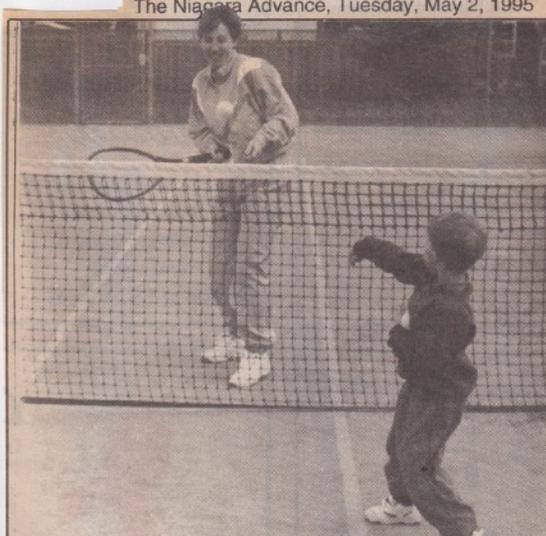
*followed by an evening  
of socializing and reminiscing  
at*

**The Kinsmen Hall**  
Mary Street, N.O.T.L.

**Buffet Dinner - 7 p.m.**

Total Cost  
\$10.00 per person - prepaid  
Cash Bar

The Niagara Advance, Tuesday, May 2, 1995



Anne Kravchenko, getting in some early practice with her son Duncan, is the new tennis pro who will be holding court for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tennis Association this season.  
Photo by Penny Coles

**New pro brings  
hot racket to NOTL**

The Niagara on the Lake Tennis Association celebrates its 25th



Sheila Gayman, Mike & Gail Dietsch,  
Gerry McIlhorne, Anne Kravchenko



Wes Glauser, Marian & Ed Kocsis, Oresta Simpson,  
Michele Darling & Michael Eagen , Ward Simpson



Peter & Gerry Tozer, Bev Lees, Marg Patterson,  
Jill & Tom Braybrook, Al & Helga Hussein



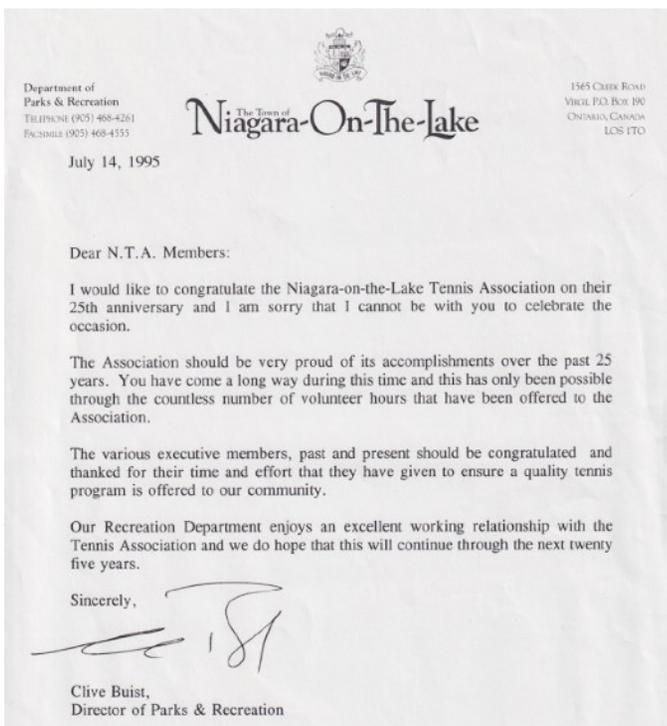
Larry Young, Danny & Marlene McCarthy,  
Linda & Wayne Gordon, Cliff & Audrey Tucker, Pat Young



Bill & Betty Singleton, Annie & Roy Page



Geoff Stead, Aline & Jerry Whittaker, Lorna Stead,  
Ann Boyer, Yvonne Playle, Joy Crellin



John & Irene Wall (in the foreground),  
Jim & Lorraine Wall, ? , Annie Page



A big part of the 25th anniversary celebrations was recognition of "the original five" players who had been members since 1970 :  
Aline Whittaker, Bev Lees, Marlene & Danny McCarthy, John Wall

The club seemed to be back on track. We had collected \$7,320 in membership fees and had 186 registered adult players. There were 51 juniors among the member families.

We presented \$5,490 to the Town, but the earlier additional fee for the pavilion quietly disappeared. We added an administration honorarium to our expenses and still finished the year in the black.

As we began our second 25 years, the schedule settled into a repeatable pattern : Players were invited to gather at the pavilion on the first Saturday of May for Registration Day, to greet friends and share a coffee and snacks along with some friendly tennis.

The routine of swapping Men's Night and Ladies' Night between Mondays and Wednesdays year-over-year was maintained. There was no longer an issue of less court time on one or the other, but the policy was seen as helpful for any members who had a conflicting activity, as this gave them a chance to add tennis to their schedule every other year.

Friday evening was billed as Mixed Doubles Round Robin, and daytime court allocation was Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 - 11:00 am.

There continued to be a midsummer Mixed Doubles event, and it was in the hands of the teaching pro. For 1996 and 1997, Anne Kravchenko billed it as an "Octogenarian Open". Anne also offered lessons and clinics, with various schedules and arrangements.

Membership edged downward. In 1996, we collected \$5,445 in membership fees, from which we presented \$4,083.75. In 1997, we collected \$4,370, from which we presented \$3,278 to the Town.

The omni-court was a significant issue : it was well past its best-before date. By the end of 1997, it had 12 years of wear coupled with a modest degree of maintenance ... and it showed. The club petitioned Recreation Director Clive Buist to advocate with Town Council for a replacement surface. Sportexe prepared a quote of \$71,400 + gst, with removal of the existing surface to be extra.

The club had presented \$67,000 in fees to the Town over the course of the 12 years, to which had been added at least \$8,000 in pay-as-you-play fees. So it was very disappointing to discover there was no interest whatsoever in Council making this a priority. Lesson learned : when an asset is created, begin making plans immediately for its refurbishment and especially for setting up a reserve account to accumulate annual allocations.

## **1996**

**Members : 135 adults + 39 juniors**

**Fee : \$55/\$70/\$20**

**Bank balance : \$1,813.20**

## **1997**

**Members : 111 adults + 34 juniors**

**Fee : \$55/\$70/\$20**

**Bank balance : \$2,170.30**

Despite the challenging court conditions, a determined effort was made to kickstart the 1998 season and reinvigorate the club. Coach Anne Kravchenko teamed up with Coach Peter Ryan in order to expand the club's instructional offerings.

They staged a Welcome Night on the final Friday of May, offering a complimentary clinic and mixed doubles round robin, which was well-received by 27 participants. Throughout June, they attended each Men's/Ladies' Night on Mondays and Wednesdays, offering a clinic from 6:00-7:00 and organized round-robin from 7:00- 8:00.

They proposed to organize club tournaments, with Men's and Ladies' Doubles on the second weekend of June, and Singles and Mixed Doubles on the final weekend of the month.

They offered junior clinics for the kids after school in the spring, with a Monday+Wednesday option or a Tuesday+Thursday option. And they offered "summer camp" lessons during the afternoons in July and August.

For the final Friday evening of August, the club organized a grand finale mixed doubles social with Pizza + Tennis. Irene's to-bring list included tablecloths, coolers, napkins, extension cords, lights, ladder, cups and ice. It was good to have the pavilion for hosting, but it wasn't easy!

At the end of the season, we had collected \$4,800 in fees, of which \$3,600 was presented to the Town.

*In the photo, from the left : John Christie, Peter Ryan, Irene Wall and Anne Kravchenko.*

## 1998

**Members : 121 adults + 34 juniors**

**Fee : \$55/\$70/\$20**

**Bank balance : \$2,517.92**



Irene was always quick to spot a success and build on it, and so it was with the combination of Pizza and Tennis at the end of the 1998 season. For 1999 and onwards, she scheduled this format into club programming.

To formalize the activity and provide it with financial support, she dubbed it a "Twoonie Social". The two-dollar coin had been introduced in 1996 and quickly came to the nickname. For 24 players, a fee of two dollars was enough to cover the cost of three large pizzas, some soft drinks and small extras. The photo captures the scene on June 11 1999.

Membership numbers nudged up a little and we collected \$5,230 in fees, of which \$3,923 was presented to the Town. And in a very gracious gesture, the club dipped into its small reserves to donate \$500 to the Town's swimming-pool rebuilding fund.

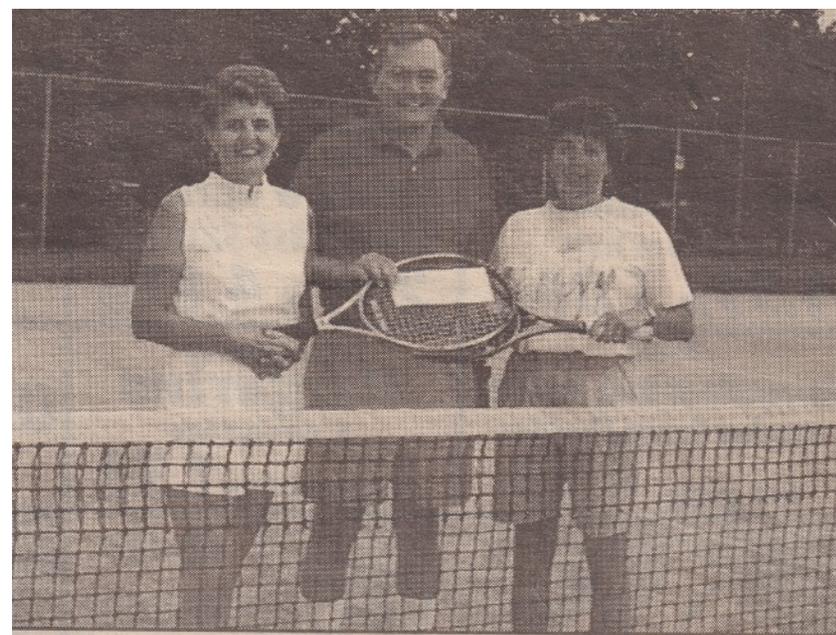


## 1999

**Members : 132 adults + 30 juniors**

**Fee : \$55/\$70/\$20**

**Bank balance : \$2,173.28**



### More pool money

Jim Collard, chairman of the NOTL Pools Fundraising Campaign committee, was delighted to accept yet another cheque, this one from Irene Wall, president of the NOTL Tennis Club, and Sheila Gayman, treasurer, donated to help fix the two NOTL pools.

The year 2000 was our 30th anniversary. Anne Kravchenko continued her coaching program for the 6th season, adding Adult Learn-to-Play series on Thursday evenings from 6:30 - 8:00 throughout June and July. For \$50, players received six hours of group instruction and became familiar with others starting out in the game. She also offered Drill Clinics on a weekly basis for experienced players in the club. Lessons for juniors were held during the afternoons for three weeks in July, with a total of 320 children being taught over the span of six years.

Anne's "Pro's Welcome Night" on the last Friday in May now featured Pam's Pro Shop, with Pam Seitz beginning a long association and support for the club. Together, the evening featured a complimentary clinic and round robin, with demo racquets and prizes added to the mix. A total of 27 members took advantage.

Anne also organized an Inter-Club Friendly with Welland Tennis Club in early June.

The "Twoonie Socials" were held on June 22 (with 22 members participating) and on August 25 (with 30 participants). Irene added garbage bags, towels, sponges, a pail and a scrub brush to her to-bring list.

For the first time since 1995, a new name was added to the executive roster as Janice Schachtschneider joined the ranks and took on the role of membership registration ... a position she has performed continuously to this day. The club collected \$5,120 in membership fees, and presented \$3,840 to the Town. We were now maintaining a running tally, and noted it had climbed to \$78,336.

As the season ended, the primary issue was the condition of the courts. Safety was now a serious concern. Once again, Recreation Director Clive Buist was petitioned for support and Sportex was consulted. The quote came in at \$114,975, a whopping 61% higher than three years earlier, perhaps mirroring the increase in the price of crude oil in the same time period.

**2000**

**Members : 132 adults + 22 juniors**

**Fee : \$55/\$70/\$20**

**Bank balance : \$2,449.27**



## 2001

**Members : 156 adults + 38 juniors**

**Fee : \$55/\$70/\$20**

**Bank balance : \$ 3,281.72**

By January 2001, the news was looking a little brighter. Finance Minister Ernie Eves had announced that \$300 million would be allocated in Ontario for “expanding and improving local sport, recreation, culture and tourism facilities, part of a \$20 billion SuperBuild strategy”.

Recreation Director Clive Buist agreed to make application for replacement of the tennis court surface, and had negotiated a price of \$96,000 for the project. If a grant would cover \$48,000, the Town would put the remaining \$48,000 in its budget. Another \$10,000 was estimated as the cost for removal of the existing surface and repairs to the base. Our intrepid tennis club members agreed to take on this part of the project.

Despite rough playing conditions (issues with the surface, balls rolling under the fences, birds nesting in the pavilion), the club’s well-established program of events and activities unfolded with enthusiasm. Anne organized the club’s annual mid-winter social at White Oaks, and donated two one-hour lessons for a draw on Opening Day in May. The Pro’s Welcome Nite at the end of May again featured Pam’s Pro Shop, a clinic and round-robin, racquet demos and prizes.

The Twoonie Socials were held on June 8th and August 24th, sometimes with more players, sometimes with fewer. Wasp spray was added to Irene’s to-bring list.

Sheila Gayman had been our club treasurer since 1989, with volunteer service in all aspects of club administration dating back to 1981. The club presented her with a gift certificate for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club in recognition and appreciation. And John Christie took on the job of treasurer.

There was an up-tick in membership, with \$6,005 being collected and \$4,503.75 presented to the Town. It brought the running tally to \$82,839.75. By year’s end, there was no confirmation regarding grant moneys, so the cost of refurbishing the courts was pushed ahead to the Town’s 2002 budget.





The Way We Were  
In 2001

Nothing happens ... and nothing happens ... and nothing happens. Then, all of a sudden : **EVERYTHING HAPPENS !**

The news was announced in the Niagara Advance on March 30 2002 : *Aldermen approved spending \$40,000 to resurface the town's decrepit Memorial Park courts this week.. More than half of the \$88,950 project has been covered by a \$48,000 Superbuild grant the town received from the provincial and federal governments in February. The town's portion of the bill will come from the parks reserve fund, which is money accumulated from the five per cent parks charge developers must pay.*

On Thursday April 4th, a group of volunteers assembled at the courts to remove the old surface. It was a big job and a tough job, but teamwork ruled the day. Our heroes were Ron Austen, Ken Kinzel, Harry Knauer, Danny McCarthy, Collin Reid, Lloyd Rollerson, Tom Roper, George Schachtschneider, John Wall, Percy Webb and Larry Young. Their support crew were Gill Bryan and Irene Wall. And the guiding hands from the Town staff were Ken Rive and Hans Pauls, who had been central to so many good things happening for tennis in Niagara-on-the-Lake for a very long time.



## 2002 The beginning .....



### Town gets rolling on tennis courts

The Memorial Park tennis courts are getting new artificial turf, but not before members of the 32-year-old NTOL Tennis Association help roll up the old flooring.



## 1995 - 2002

Stay tuned for our next chapter,  
in which the courts are resurfaced and dedicated,  
the 2002 season gets underway and  
the NTA moves on through five more years  
with the patient and consistent leadership of Irene Wall.

On the membership side, several members of longstanding  
made their first appearance during the late 90s :

Roman & Maria Korda - 1995

Gerald Pepe - 1995

Shirley Rednall - 1995

Sheila Hill - 1996

Terry & Marilyn Francis - 1997