



1987

Mission curler Ray Squirrell with the tools of his "trade".

KAREN LINDEN PHOTO

## You can thank Scotland

by Karen Linden

For some 200 years Canadians have bundled up in warm sweaters, taken brooms in hand, and skillfully swept smooth, circular rocks down long sheets of ice.

The object of the game, in simple terms, is to get the rock as close as possible to the centre (button) of the house, a series of circular rings at the end of the ice.

Mission Granite Club past president, Ray Squirrell says he has no idea how the game originated, but knows the game was introduced to Canada from Scotland.

He describes the club in Mission as a fun, social club compared to many others.

Most curling clubs must strive to be competitive in order to survive.

The Granite Club is unique in that it's a joint venture with the municipality. In 1956 the club struck an agreement with the municipality, allowing the club to donate two acres of land for a recreation complex in exchange for curling rights "forever".

However, the future depends on the inspiration of young talent. Last year there were 26 junior club members and Squirrell explains it's the only way the club will survive.

"We must attract the youth."

The club hosted a six-week program with Cherry Hill Elementary School and there are hopes of expanding it to more schools this year.

On Saturday, (Sept. 26) a free junior curling school will be held at the rink from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Hotdogs, doughnuts and helpful instruction will be offered.

It is open to students aged 11 and older, with or without experience.

If Canada's fascination with curling is any indication, there should be a good turnout.

During the world championships in Vancouver last year, more than 1.6 million television viewers watched Canada win the prestigious Silver Broom.

Squirrell was there. In fact, as a spectator, he hasn't missed a world championship match for several years.

But his dream is to one day compete for the Canadian championship, the Briar. "That's where the best curling in the world is really played," he said.

Since 1959, Canada has only lost the world championships 11 times.

"We have dominated the sport, there's no doubt about it."

With curling seriously considered as an Olympic sport, Squirrell said their is bound to be some minor changes on how the game is played.

But he feels it will be for the better.

"Whenever a sport, no matter what it is, achieves higher standing, the rules must change with it to make it challenging."

The long-time curler assures it will remain a sport for young and old alike.

Like speed skating, curling is a demonstration sport at the 1988 Olympic Games in Calgary this winter.

Squirrell claims many avid curlers across the country will try and be in Calgary for the competition, but those who can't won't be far from their television sets.

Instead, the Granite Club member has opted to travel to Switzerland for the world championships, The Silver Broom.

"I had a choice to go to the Olympics or the championships. Switzerland was out. But they have televisions there, too."

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