

OTTAWA TENNIS AND LAWN BOWLING CLUB

Old Ottawa South – the “promised land”

By Janet Uren

Introducing Andy Jonynas, a resident of Old Ottawa South for 20 years and a dedicated member of the Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club (OTLBC).

“When articling for my CPA’s in the 1970s,” says Andy Jonynas, “I surprised myself by the number of hours I could work, and that I actually got the designation. Accounting was not my best subject in university, but I was mystified by its complexity and drawn to it. The work ethic got engrained.”

As a newcomer to Ottawa in 1980, Andy was at a loss how to use his spare time. Then he discovered tennis. “The day I first played on a public court I decided this was a project that I could work at for years. To my surprise, by joining the OTLBC, I got decent at it.” He also made friends at the club, and there he met his wife, Pavla.

In his first year at the OTLBC, Andy was living in Aylmer, even though he spent much of every summer day in Old Ottawa South. “In my first year, I commuted. But each apartment and house thereafter was closer to the club. Finally, we moved to the ‘promised’ land, and now we live on Sunnyside, less than two kilometres from the club.”

Tennis is not the only sport that Andy practices. “The OTLBC had a profound effect,” he explains. “As my confidence in the sport grew, it made me explore other interests.”

Finding the winters long without tennis, Andy took up cross-country skiing. At first, he could manage to skate-ski only about 100 metres before collapsing; A couple of months later, he was skiing 30 kilometres at a time. Being an accountant, he naturally started to keep track of the ground covered. “I am now less than two years away from skiing the circumference of the earth.”

Andy did not stop there. He tried ball hockey and, at age 52, ice hockey, which he started by learning how to skate. Soon he was playing hockey

seven days a week, plus skiing, cycling and indoor tennis. After retiring, he says, he doubled the time he devoted to sports.

Even Andy began to find this a bit extreme. “It started to wear me out, physically and mentally – plus on a rainy day, I felt lost – so I took up piano at age 60. I banged away until I saw progress, and when I did, I wanted more.”

Andy has also become a writer in retirement. “After a trip abroad, I wrote a small travelogue for a few friends. To my surprise, they passed the story onto others. This inspired me to write memoirs about the tennis club, my piano adventures and other things, and now I have a bit of a following.”

It all began with tennis and, knowing what the club has done for him, Andy makes an effort to welcome others who come there, like him, searching for health, happiness and connection. “The club has a soul to it. I remember how intimidated I felt walking into it on opening day, 1980, with my cheap racquet and one hour of experience. So, I really try to make new members feel at home.”

Andy is famous at the club not just for the hours he plays, but for the range of people he plays with; newcomers and old-timers alike, all the way from juniors to seniors.

After 41 years of membership, Andy remains as connected as ever to the OTLBC, and it is not just tennis that keeps him that way. “The club is a village, where often people know what you are going to do before you do it, but, in times of a personal crisis, the community bands together to help.”

During the pandemic, Andy has seen that ethic in practice. “Coming off weeks of shutdown last spring, where everyone’s life had been reduced to an existence, it was so uplifting to see the old faces and that they were happy to see you. COVID-19 was still around, but we didn’t feel it because we were at the club all last summer, even if the programs had to be reduced because of COVID-19.”

What Andy discovered at the start



Andy Jonynas’s love affair with tennis began when he joined the OTLBC 41 years ago.

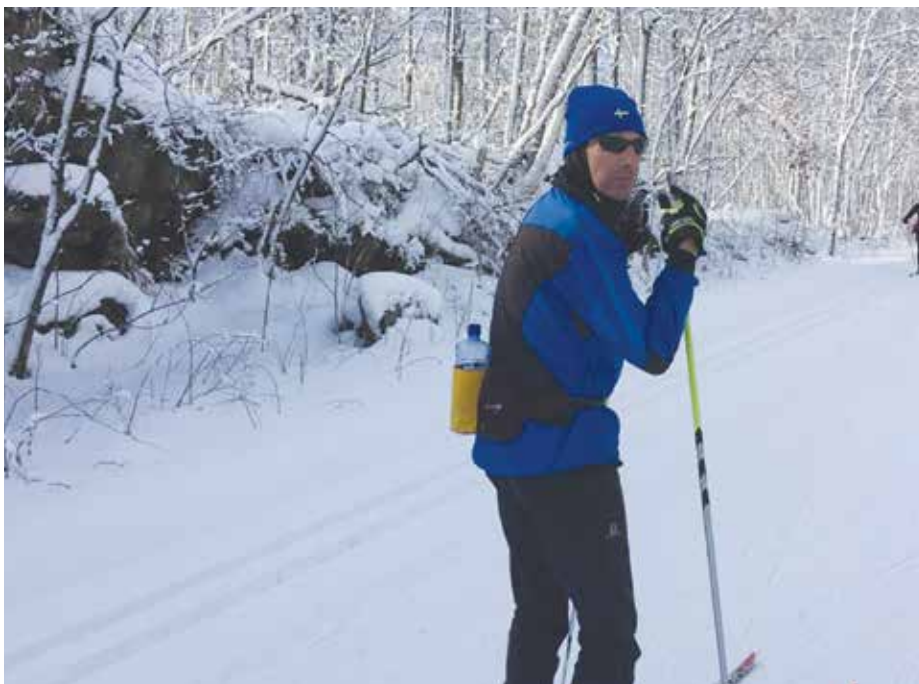
PHOTO BY MORGAN JOHNSON-DUGAY

of his career, still applies – that the joy of life comes from finding something difficult to do and working at it: “On a tennis court, I am always trying to figure out what minor adjustments will make me hit the ball harder or get to the ball faster. The use of what parts of the skate blade or which edge in hockey. How the wrist can be used and finger positioning in playing pieces on the piano. If any of this was too easy, I

would get bored.”

It all started with accounting. “As I get closer to ‘skiing around the world,’” says Andy, “while out on the trails, I write the story in my head about how the power of numbers pushed me to it.”

Janet Uren is a professional writer who lives in Ottawa.



Andy Jonynas on the ski trail.

PHOTO BY PAVLA SELEPOVA



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