

# The Life of a Club Pro

## Sandy Robertson: Alberta Club Professional from 1958 to 1995

*"Most important is to do the correct thing for your customer."*



Sandy Robertson was "born crazy for work," his wife Marilyn says. "He would go to work at the golf course at six in the morning and not come home until dark."

### We had to work 365 days a year

"It was a business to me. We had to work 365 days a year to make ends meet." And that's what Sandy did, literally. As the pro at the public Edmonton Riverside Golf Course in the 1950's, he was paid \$2.00 per year and expected to make a living by selling clubs and giving lessons.

"I ended up renting and selling cross country skis in the winter, just to keep going," he said.

### You Did Everything

"In those days, if you were a pro, you did everything and that included cleaning toilets if that had to be done."

Sandy emigrated from Scotland at age 27 as a bank accountant but with golf on his mind, based on his impressive amateur championship record in Scotland which included two tries at the British Open title. Soft spoken and unassuming with a generous burr of his Scottish accent, Sandy had a charming and irrepressible manner – traits that had endeared him to customers and assistants through his career.

"Sandy could teach anybody to golf," Marilyn says. "And his assistants idolized him."

Sandy's mother taught him to golf after his father was killed in the first days of WWII. The family lived beside the seventh tee of a Perth golf course and, by the time he was a teenager, Sandy had established himself as a top-ranked player.

### Grandfather A Clubmaker and Professional

Golf was ingrained in the Robertson family heritage as his grandfather had been a clubmaker and professional at Carnoustie. However, it was Sandy's mother's amazing ability Sandy remembered best from his playing days in Scotland.

"We were short a player for a foursome – there were three of us scratch golfers – and we talked my mother into playing even though she hadn't hit a ball in 18 years," said Sandy.

After the men hit their tee shots his mother told them not to watch hers. "She drove her first shot in 18 years straight down the fairway and past some of ours! We were all red-faced."

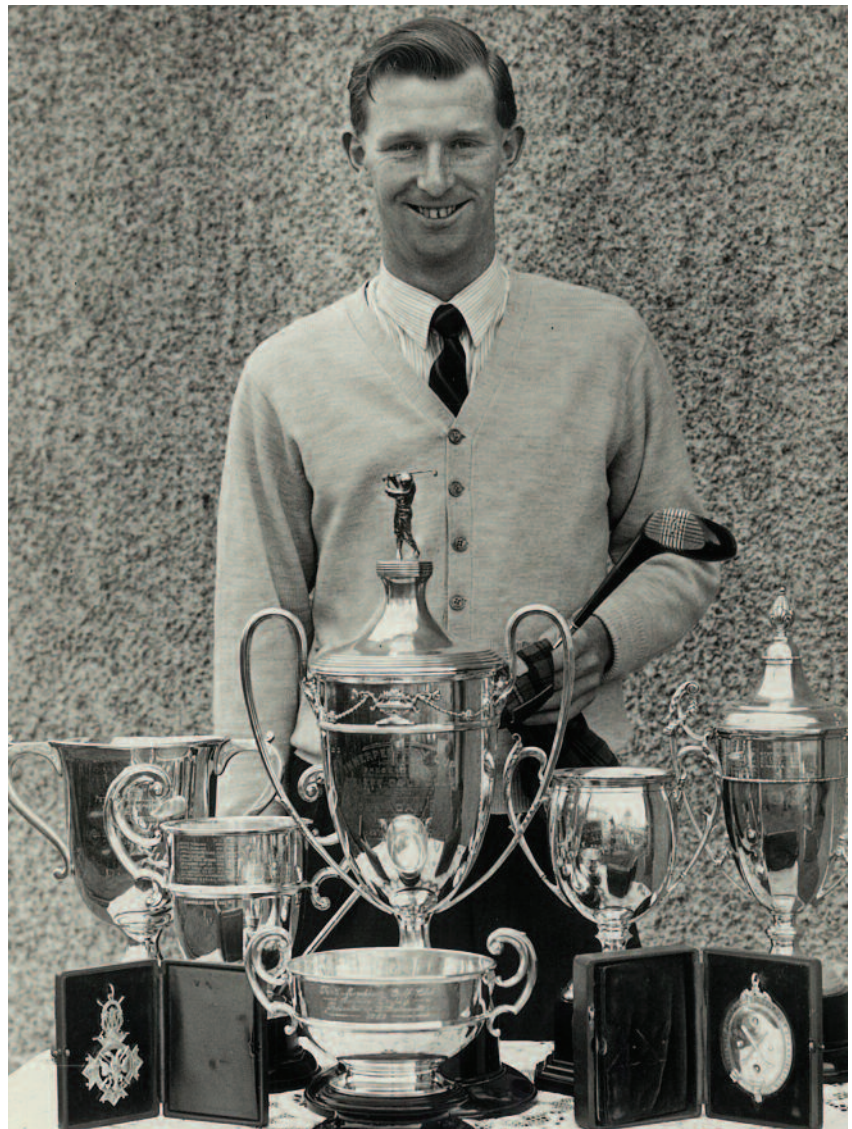
### Alex Olynk Hires Sandy

Shortly after arriving in Edmonton Sandy looked up Henry Martell, who every golfer had heard about, and asked him for a job. Henry turned him down but

suggested he try Alex Olynk, then the pro at the Mayfair Golf Course.

Alex hired Sandy and became his mentor.

"I began by cleaning and repairing clubs. I gradually worked my way into giving lessons. Before I tried something I'd tell Alex. He'd say 'No, I tried that it doesn't work' and that's how I learned," said Sandy.



Sandy Robertson arrived in Canada from Scotland with an armload of trophies he'd won as an amateur. He turned pro in Edmonton at his first opportunity.

"I wasn't a businessman about golf," Sandy said. "Alex gave me a lot of good advice. He was smart. He'd been in the business a long time." After seeing how hard Alex worked to maintain his business, even setting up indoor driving ranges and schools for the winter months, Sandy knew that he, too, could make a living as a pro if he worked as hard.

### The Pro at Riverside

Sandy was offered the pro position at Riverside after Frank Willey, the pro, was murdered. (See article page 93). "I never thought I'd fail. I was very confident. I began to make a living after my third year. That's when we began to pay our accounts on time," said Robertson

Sandy would only play tournaments occasionally after taking over at Riverside. "When everybody else was practicing, he would be out delivering clubs or giving lessons," Marilyn points out.

He golfed frequently with Henry Martell because, he says, it was "the best way to see how you were playing."

### Sixteen Years at Glendale

After 18 years at Riverside, Sandy was the professional at the Glendale Golf and Country Club for 16 years where he passed on his work ethic and genuine interest in customers to another generation of golf professionals.

"I'll ask you to work hard," he would tell his assistants. "But you can be sure I'll work harder and for longer hours."

Sandy was made an honorary lifetime member of Glendale in 1997.

While Sandy's biggest legacy might be the innumerable golfers whose swing he has improved and thus their enjoyment of golf, his contributions to professional golf in Alberta are recorded and equally admirable.

### First APGA President

Sandy was a primary energy behind the founding of the Alberta Professional Golfers' Association. As the Association's first President in 1964, Sandy spearheaded the province's education program, and coordinated the early activities of the professional association in Alberta.

In 1964, when the first Education Seminar was held in Red Deer, an unexpected 70 Professionals showed up to the meeting, officially forming the Alberta PGA as a Zone body representative of the Canadian PGA.

"I never wanted to be a bigshot," he would say in his pleasant Scottish accent. "I knew that it would be easy to set something up but much harder to keep it running properly."

For young professionals just starting out, Sandy had the same advice for them that he followed all of his career.

"Do the right thing by the customer. Sell the right clubs and the customer will come back – with friends. Only put what is best for the customer in your shop. Be willing to help people who need your advice.

"Look after everybody. That's the key."

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