

May 2012

## **Tales from Sheet Nine**

by David Garber

### **The oldest, and perhaps the largest, curling-only publication is ...**

The *North American Curling News* reported in 1946 that Ken Watson had won the Kenora (Ont.) Men's Bonspiel. Aside from being famous as one of the greatest skips in history, why was Watson's Canadian 'spiel win reported in the *Curling News*? Well, back then the NACN covered both U.S. and Canadian curling, having been established by Superior's Glenn Harris as North America's oldest national scope curling-only publication. Harris turned the NACN over to L.T. "Tink" Kruetzig of Chicago in 1959. Kruetzig changed to a high quality magazine format, but 20 years later Frank and China Rhyme of Portage stepped in to pare costs, changing to a tabloid format and allowing the paper to continue publishing. In 1991, they transferred their stewardship to the U.S. Curling Association, which renamed the paper *United States Curling News*, to better reflect the now-95%-plus U.S. readership. Readers, who knows the name of the *Curling News* prior to the fall of 1945? If your answer is, the *National Curling News*, you are correct, that was Harris' original name for the publication. Today, the *U.S. Curling News* may have the largest circulation of any curling-only publication in the world, because USCA dues include a subscription. (The *Canadian Curling News*, founded by Ted Thonger in 1957, and later owned and edited by the late-great Doug Maxwell, is published today as *The Curling News*. In 1992, the paid circulation of the Canadian paper was about the same as the *U.S. Curling News*, and that is likely the case today.)

### **First collegiate bonspiel?**

The March 10, 1957 *Curling News* was abuzz about the first National Men's Championship (held in Chicago Stadium with key sponsorship of Marshall Field, whose then-chairman, Hughston McBain, was an early inductee in the USCA Hall of Fame). On page 6, an article with an Appleton, Wis. by line was headed "First Collegiate Bonspiel Staged." Teams attended from University of Wisconsin (Madison), Marquette, UW-Milwaukee and UW-La Crosse, Lawrence College, and UW-Wausau-extension. Notre Dame was slated to compete but withdrew. The winners were skipped by Mike Collins, with Jim Twet, Dennis Grant and Tom Krueger. Mike's brother Neil skipped a Lawrence rink to the Second event title. Several of these young fellows went on to become prominent in Midwest and national curling.

### **Notes about clubs across the nation in the Curling News in 1940s and 1950s**

\*The tragic fire at the Norfolk Curling Club last December was reported here in January. Fires have plagued curling facilities as long as they've existed. According to the February 16, 1946 issue of the *North American Curling News*. The Portage (Wisc.) Curling Club facility burned in November, and on February 5, fire consumed the Brookline (Mass.) Curling Club. Both clubs were rebuilt, with four-sheets, the latter becoming known as The Country Club (after its famous golf club parent) and are important curling centers to this day.

\*The 1940 Superior Northwest Bonspiel was the largest such event in the U.S., with over 90 teams, played on 16 sheets of ice.

\*Women's curling was thriving by the 1950s. The USWCA was found in 1947. Ten years later, the *Curling News* reported the Grand Forks Women's Curling Club, formed in 1955, per Mrs. Agnes MacVicar Cardy, has made rapid progress. The 1957 women's 'spiel drew teams from North Dakota, Minnesota and Canada.

\*The *Curling News* reported that "The Scottish Lady Curlers have accepted the invitation to visit the United States and Canada from January 12 to February 9, 1958. They will be guests of the Ladies Branch of the Ontario and Canadian Curling Associations, and the USWCA."

\*The 1945 North Shore league included teams from Skokie, Indian Hill, Exmoor and Milwaukee (the Chicago CC was yet to be built). Sadly, only the Exmoor and Milwaukee clubs from this league still have curling facilities.

\*The 1945 Saint Paul International Bonspiel was advertised for “8 sheets of Ice—6 artificial.”

\*A *Curling News* 1945 list of U.S. curling clubs includes these that seemingly no longer exist: Endeavor, Wis.; Farmington, Conn.; Glencoe, Ill.; Hallock, Minn.; Hartford, Conn.; Lake Mahopac, N.Y.; Portal, N.Dak.; Saranac Lake, N.Y.; St. Vincent, Minn.; Winnetka, Ill.; and Winnebago, Minn. The great news is, instead of the 50 clubs listed in 1945, today’s count is over triple that number, including clubs in Alaska, the west coast states, and several mountain southern states.

\*The 1957 USWCA Bonspiel, held at the Detroit Curling Club, was won by the “Chicago Heathers’ Mrs. Frank Pollen, Mrs. Darwin Curtis, Mrs. Perry Pennington and Mrs. Fred Nichols.” For benefit of our younger readers: Believe me, these women’s first names were not Frank, Darwin, Perry and Fred. They had their own first names, of course, but the custom until the 1960s was to use the title “Mrs.” followed by husband’s first and last name. Times change. Have a pleasant summer!

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