

WORK ON YOUR SWING AND YOUR PHD AT THE SAME TIME!

UBC'S GOLF-BOOK BOUNTY

BY ADAM McDOWELL

If he so chooses, Sam Martz can whack enough golf facts in your direction that you will feel like one of those ball-collecting carts at a driving range.

"There's approximately 50 million players in the world and it's growing like crazy," says Martz from his home in Vancouver. "They say they're building 2,000 courses across China.

"Golf started in approximately 1450. That means it's 550 years old. And that means there are a lot of books that have been written. It's the most written-about sport."

Martz should know. The 81-year-old retired businessman recently donated his 4,730-volume collection of books about golf, valued at some \$450,000, to the University of British Columbia. For about five decades, Martz collected books about the psychology of golf, golf tips, the architecture of golf — everything from Robert Clark's 1867 *Poems on Golf* to how-to books by Arnold Palmer. He developed a special fascination for books about the history of golf clubs. "I must have about 1,800 of them," Martz says. "I have every club history ever published in Canada."

The duffer searched every patch of rough in North America and the British Isles for books on the sport. "And whenever I had a chance on weekends, I'd go to flea markets," he says. "It becomes instinctual. It becomes a craziness. But I mastered it. I collected almost 5,000 golf books one by one."

Martz notes with pride that the American expert who assessed the collection heaped praise on the pristine condition of many of the volumes. "The condition of old books, especially with golf books, is paramount," he explains. "People keep them in the pocket of their golf bags and rip the s--t out of them."

Martz reckons he owned the third-largest pile of golf books in North America, behind the collection of the United States Golf Association and one belonging to an anonymous media mogul. "I can't mention his name," Martz says. A hint: "His father is a retired priest in Scotland, so he collects in the U.K."

Eventually, Martz had so many books that they took up a whole room of his house, complete with purpose-built shelves.

Then he gave them away.

"I've got three daughters and three sons-in-law, and none of them are smart enough to take up golf," Martz laments. To ensure the collection would stay intact and would be looked after in the future, he looked around for an institution that would accept them.

Martz still maintains his love affair with the game. "If you saw me, I look 50. I'm still a good golfer."

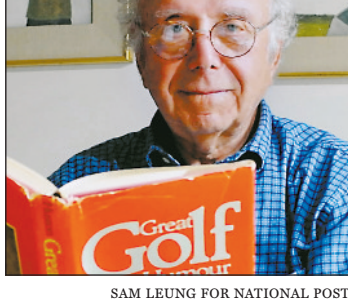
What fascinated him about golf from the time he first stepped onto a course as a 10-year-old caddy was the way the game exposes a person's character. "You'll find out if he's a gentleman, if he's honest, if he's courteous."

In spite of those virtues, Martz says he's never convinced his wife, Fraidie, to take up the clubs. "My wife saw me play once in her life," he complains. "I begged her to play.

"She's sitting here now, she's laughing."

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Sam Martz gave his collection of golf books to U.B.C. because his children don't play the game.