



‘It’s what you leave behind you when you go’

During his 33 years of curling, Roger Lee has inspired high school athletes, made lifelong friends and delivered the occasional unfathomable curling shot

By Michael Achterling | For Generations

Roger finally caved. His neighbor had been bothering him for years to give it a try, and finally, after finding some time between refereeing basketball games, Roger agreed.

Roger Lee, 79, started his curling career at the Lakes Curling Club in Detroit Lakes in 1988, at the ripe young age of 47.

He was hooked almost immediately, and when it became time for his second season in the cult-like winter sport, he formed his own team; something he has continued for the last 33 years.

Lakes Curling Club was chartered in 1980, but most of the old guard is gone, Roger says.

Remembering back to his first season on the ice, he recalls, “I had a veteran skip and then three new guys, that’s the way we started. Basically, I was trying to figure out, what is going on in this game? I can make a shot, and it looks good, and it slides on through, then I miss the broom ... but the more you practice it, the luckier you get.”

As he sat in the lounge area of the curling club on a recent Wednesday night, he started pointing out

everyone who came through the door for their 6:30 draw times. It seemed like he had a story for each former team member who arrived, and they all knew Lee well.

“Here comes another kid I had,” Roger said. “I had him two years, then he went to college, played football, Concordia football, came back into the Herzog roofing business, and as soon as he gets back, he starts curling again.”

Roger was raised on a farm in Geneseo, N.D. He moved to Detroit Lakes in 1973 with his wife, Jan. This summer, the couple will be enjoying

their 60th anniversary together. They have three adult children, two girls and one boy, who are all married now. The Lees also have seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Roger was an elementary school principal for 26 years in the public school system and worked at Lincoln, Washington with Callaway added, and Rossman Elementary schools.

“I never did Roosevelt,” he says.

As more people arrive at the club, Roger calls out to them: “Cole, did I get you started?”

The young man nods.

“Is that Ryan Tangen over there?” Roger asks.

He explains how he met Ryan, and his wife Rory, at church and convinced them to join his couples curling team in 1998.

“You’re not going to find anyone else here who has affected more people than Roger,” says Ryan. “Doesn’t seem like it was that long ago.”

He says his son, a then-high school senior, curled with Roger last year and had a great time.

“Now don’t let (Roger) fool you, he’s also an expert in curling,” Ryan says. “So not only is he getting a lot of people into curling, the guy really knows what he’s doing.”

He enjoyed curling with Roger so much during that first year that he ended up curling three nights a week with him.

“That’s what he does,” Ryan says. “He brings them in, he gets them set up. He’s an expert in the sport, so he’s teaching them to be lifelong curlers. It’s amazing. I’d like to know at some point in time, how many people he has introduced to the curling club

that have continued curling.”

He describes Roger as a patient man, but competitive. He also adds that Roger is very interested in the lives of his teammates and in helping out this community.

“It’s sustainability for the club,” he says. “Roger is that guy that you like to curl with because he’s competitive and he’s the guy you like to sit around and talk with, or play cards with afterwards, because he’s a great guy to sit and talk with.”

Roger actually fields two curling teams each year. One team is composed of veteran curlers and the other is made up of three novice curlers who are new to the sport and club. This year, he’s also teaching Detroit Lakes High School student athletes all about the sport.

“Roger is that guy that you like to curl with because he’s competitive and he’s the guy you like to sit around and talk with, or play cards with afterwards.”

– RYAN TANGEN



Zack Oistad, left, Roger Lee, and Logan Lund, right, smile for a team photo. Not pictured is Will Knoop. **Michael Achterling / Generations**



North Star Nursing
Because There's No Place Like Home

- Home Care Services
- PCA
- Respite Care
- Private Duty Nurse
- Independent Living Skills

Services For All Ages

Now providing services to Veterans as part of the VA Community Care Network

Heidi Clements & Helen Drewes, Owners

(218)573-2238 • 1-800-535-5895
www.northstarnursing.com





NORTHLAND MONUMENT INC
DENT LAKES GRANITE

Dent Office - Dent Lakes Granite
37243 State Hwy. 108, Dent, MN 56528

Monuments
Markers, Slants, Hearts,
Benches & Custom
Monuments

218-758-2187
Toll Free: 800-648-7831



Family Owned & Operated since 1984 • Offices in Dent, Anoka & Longville, MN

“

My wife and I have learned that the only value we have is what we can leave behind, and what we can leave for our community. It's a Randy Travis song: 'It's not what you take when you leave this world (behind you), it's what you leave behind you when you go.

– ROGER LEE

“I spent 46 years on the chain gang in football, so I worked the sideline with the players,” explains Roger. “So I have contact with the kids and the coaches, and I find out who is not going to have a winter sport.”

He then approaches these winter sport-less student athletes and makes a deal with them.

“All I ask them to do is, to promise me they'll give me one night a week for four months,” he says. “That's all it costs them. They get to curl for free, I get a team sponsor, and the club doesn't charge high school dues.”

The high schoolers have minimal curling experience, if any, but Roger

outfits them for equipment and gets them on ice.

He also officiated basketball, volleyball and softball games for 42 years locally, but he says teaching kids how to curl has been a passion of his since he began forming his own curling teams.

“Born on a farm, our recreation, if we had a rainy day, was to maybe go fishing at the lake,” he says. “Just didn't have much opportunity. But with (curling), I still feel like a kid.”

One of Roger's high school teammates this year is Logan Lund, 18, a baseball player for Detroit Lakes High School who is also a first-time curler.

“Roger gave me a call because Mr. Meyer from the high school didn't get back to him, so I was like, ‘Yeah, I think I can find a few friends,’”

Logan says.

After a few text messages, he found two others to join him on Roger's team.

One of those text messages went to Zack Oistad, a 6-foot, 6-inch basketball player for Detroit Lakes High School who is also curling for the first time this season.

Zack says the most difficult thing for him has been balancing himself while sliding in a lunge on the ice.

“I get the kids and I tell them, ‘Here's the way it's going to work:



**Beautiful Spaces...
Talented, Compassionate People**

A contemporary approach to serving today's families



WRIGHT
FUNERAL HOME
CREMATION SERVICE

Since 1881
WWW.WRIGHTFUNERAL.COM
218-233-1321

						
Steve Wright 4th Generation Funeral Director	Adam Nordin Funeral Director	Lisa Grossman Funeral Director	Melissa Nelson Funeral Director	Bailey Nordin Funeral Director	Nick Sellers Funeral Director	Abbie Bennefeld Funeral Director

we're going to lose, lose, lose. Eventually, we'll be making some shots, and then we'll start making more shots, and then we're scoring.' Last week we scored on four ends," says Roger. "But we still lost."

He fields a novice team, he says, because that is the only way the curling club can grow, and he enjoys teaching student athletes the right way to play a game that they might never have tried before.

"I know these guys will graduate, go off to college, but ... eight to 10 years from now, they'll be settled in, working somewhere, and they'll find a curling club," Roger says. "I know they will, and some will come back here and curl."

Roger has three principles that he tries to teach all of his young curlers: Courtesy, respect and etiquette.

The other thing he enjoys exposing his student athletes to is the fact that there is no referee in curling; something they usually don't see in their primary sports.

"I'm just honored to just get good young kids, watch them develop and



Lee awaits a stone delivered by one of his teammates. **Michael Achterling / Generations**

learn the game," Roger says.

He also enjoys competing with, and against, young people, because curling levels the playing field.

"I'm a living example — old people

can do it and compete with young people," he says.

He and his team of veteran curlers won the Vern Turner Memorial Bonspiel in 2018, a tournament with more than 24 teams from around the region and Canada.

Even after 33 years of experience, Roger says, he is still trying to learn the game.

During a recent Wednesday night draw, the high schoolers made, and missed, their fair share of shots, but were able to help Roger put points on the board with well placed stones to keep the score close. The match was tied 6 to 6 going into the eighth and final end.

His team held the hammer, the last stone to be delivered in the end, giving their team the advantage.

Roger delivered the first of his team's final two shots of the game and he knew it wasn't where he wanted it to go. The stone was heading straight for one of the opposing team's guards, a stone in front of the scoring circles to provide cover for a stone in the house.

HAPPY HOUR:
Monday-Saturday 4-6pm • Saturday Noon-1pm

Callaway LIQUORS

DAILY DRINK SPECIALS

HWY 59 • Callaway • 375-3133

ON SALE : 9am-1am
OFF SALE : 9am-10pm Mon-Sat • Closed Sunday

M Caring for Our Communities

Seniors, we may be able to help if you...

- Might lose your home or have.
- Need more food than your income provides.
- Would like to learn more about resources for seniors in our community.
- Would like to share your experience and skills to help others.
- Need help deciding the best health insurance or Medicare plan for you.
- Need help with chores so you can still live at home.
- Need help filing your income tax and property tax returns.
- Are having trouble paying for your energy bills.

M MAHUBE-OTWA
COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP

218-847-1385 or Toll Free 1-888-458-1385
1125 West River Road • Detroit Lakes • www.mahube.org

He screamed at Zack to sweep, which would hold and extend the stone's line. Zack muscled his broom back and forth in front of the stone, which collided with the opposing team's guard, but the stone struck the guard at the precise angle that sent it toward one of Logan's stones in front of the house.

The opposing team's guard struck Logan's stone and sent it slowly into the scoring circle before coming to rest near the center of the house for shot rock, the stone closest to the center from which points are given.

The skip from the other team had one chance to move the shot rock out of the center, but it was delivered wide, leaving Roger and his high schoolers with the point and the game.

"We call it 'getting Rogered,'" says Ryan. "Because Roger can make any shot, and for some reason when he misses a shot, somehow it turns into a better shot. So we always say, you could be sitting as solid as Sears and somehow he'll come down and it'll end up sitting as the score.



Lee, right, with one his teammates, Detroit Lakes High School senior Zack Oistad.
Michael Achterling / Generations



Elk Burgers
Bison Burgers

**FRESH GROUND HAND
PATTIED BURGERS**

Voted **BEST BURGER,
BAR, CASUAL DINING,
FRENCH FRIES, and MORE!!**

★ **DAILY FOOD SPECIALS** ★

★ **PULL TABS AND ELECTRONIC GAMBLING** ★

**GREAT FOOD AT A
GREAT PRICE!**



**3 MILES NORTH ON RICHWOOD
ROAD • DETROIT LAKES
218-847-4622**

‘Getting Rogered.’”

Both Zack and Logan were happy with the way the match turned out. It was their second win in the first nine weeks.

“It sure is fun to come out and get a win with Roger and Logan here,” says Zack. “Roger is always coaching and telling us things we can improve on and what we need to do to see better results.”

Logan says winning is definitely better than losing, but the

entire season so far has been a learning experience.

“I used to play hockey, and I always thought it was going to be like skating, but it’s nothing, nothing like skating on hockey skates,” he says. “Roger is always pushing us and wants us to do our best.”

Roger enjoyed the victory with a drink in the club lounge as he said his goodbyes to his high school teammates.

Upon reflecting on his long career, he said: “Well, the title of your magazine here is Generations, so I think my wife and I have learned that the only value we have is what we can leave behind, and what we can leave for our community. It’s a Randy Travis song: ‘It’s not what you take when you leave this world (behind you), it’s what you leave behind you when you go.’”

Making friends in your golden years

Making friends as a child, or as a parent to kids who are in school, is relatively easy. Classrooms and school functions facilitate the building of friendships. Work helps, too, as many adults become friends with their coworkers.

But once children have moved out and careers come to an end, friendships often get harder to maintain as people relocate or do more traveling. Older adults may aspire to make new friends, but they may not know how.

According to Irene S Levine, Ph.D., The Friendship Doctor and contributor to Psychology Today, it is not unique for seniors to want to make new friends. Age can be a barrier because there are stereotypes that pigeon-hole people of certain ages. But Levine notes that state of mind and physical ability is not directly tied to chronological age. Making friends is possible at any age. These guidelines can help along the way.

- **Explore online connections.** A 2016 study published in the Journal of Gerontology found seniors (even those in their 80s) who stay connected with friends and family using social media report feeling less lonely and better overall. Connected seniors also demonstrated higher executive reasoning skills. There are plenty of ways to meet new people online by joining social media groups that cater to your interests. In-person meetings in particular cities or regions of the country also can make for great ways to make new friends. Exercise caution when meeting people in person after contacting them online. Bring another person along, whether it’s a spouse or an adult child, to ensure that you are safe.

- **Volunteer your time.** One way to meet new people is to get involved with causes or activities you love. This serves the double benefit of getting you outside and active and puts you in touch with people who share your passions and interests.

- **Attend alumni events.** If you have an interest in getting in touch with someone from your past and



Making friends is not just for the young. Men and women over 50 also can find ways to build new friendships. **File Photo**

reconnecting, make the time to attend school reunions and other alumni activities. It can be fun to reconnect with friends from high school or college.

- **Join a gym.** The local gym isn’t just a great place to get physically fit. Group exercise classes also can be ideal places to meet other people who enjoy working out. Strike up a conversation with another class participant you see on a regular basis. Once you develop a rapport, schedule lunch dates so your friendship grows outside of the gym.

Are you
turning 65?

Call your
local licensed
Humana
sales agent.

Humana

Y0040_GHHXDFEN20_BC_C



Louis "Joe" Courneya

701-809-8014

(TTY: 711)

Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Website:

humana.com/jcourneya

Facebook:

fb.com/JCourneyaAgent