

May 18, 2017

Thanks for raising your hand, Ken



[Hamilton Spectator](#)

By [Garry McKay](#)

His playing career is impressive, to be sure. But when Grimsby native Ken Tarling was inducted into the Ontario Golf Hall of Fame this month, little was said of what may have been his biggest contribution to Canadian golf.

Some will argue that we may not have seen the successes of Mike Weir or even Dundas' Mackenzie Hughes, if the then upstart 24-year-old Tarling hadn't raised his hand at the Canadian Professional Golfers Association AGM in the spring of 1983 and demanded to know what was happening with the Canadian Tour.

Tarling had a right to be a little upset with the CPGA. He had won the Canadian Tour's Q-school in the fall of 1982 only to be told by the CPGA that, well, there really wasn't a Canadian Tour any more.

"The Peter Jackson Tour had sort of fallen apart in 1978 when the federal government banned tobacco advertising," says Tarling. "By 1983 there were about five professional tournaments across the country and even a couple of them would overlap dates on occasion.

"There was no real tour, though, no Order of Merit, nothing like that."

So up went Tarling's hand at the meeting wanting to know what the heck was going on.

He was told that the CPGA needed someone to take over their tournament players division and that George Knudson, Dan Halldorson, Dave Barr and goodness knows who else had already turned it down.

Suddenly, Tarling realized he was the only one standing in the now very quiet room. He took a deep breath and volunteered.

Someone else jumped up and said: "I don't know this guy at all but we can't get people to volunteer for anything, so let's take him."

Tarling smiles when he notes that that same guy, decades later, nominated him for the Ontario Golf Hall of Fame.

The Canadian Tour that first year was composed of 25 members and five tournaments

with a total prize money of \$155,000.

Tarling pulled together an executive and recruited his wife, Tina, to write letters.

They contacted sponsors, made cold calls, and suffered many rejections. But they pressed on.

And Tarling freely admits it wasn't entirely an unselfish pursuit.

"I was trying to create a place for myself to play as well," he says. "It helped me, too, if we had success."

And they did have success.

In 1985, Tarling's third and final year at the helm they had nine tournaments and played for \$555,000.

It was a true, organized golf tour, again. They had some good sponsors, an Order of Merit, and had worked out relationships with tours in Australia and South Africa.

Tarling says he had always planned to turn the leadership over to someone else after three years, so he could concentrate on playing and because he felt that's the way organizations should be run.

It hasn't been all smooth sailing for the Canadian Tour since then, of course. And if the PGA Tour hadn't rescued it financially a few years back, who knows if it would have survived. But there's little doubt Tarling set it back on the right track back in the early 1980s.

The current PGA Tour Canada recognized that when they honoured Tarling in 2012 with an honorary life membership.

Throughout his playing career, Tarling captured 21 provincial titles, two national championships, one Canadian Tour win and 12 international victories in eight countries.

He's currently still playing on the European Senior Tour.

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