

The Oxford dictionary defines the term history as the “*study of past events connected with someone or something, as well as our attempts to understand it.*” I do not know about you, but history was my least favorite subject in all my years in education. Memorizing names, dates, and events without understanding the implications for the present seemed like an endless pursuit of trivia. Furthermore, it seems that frequently mainstream events and people that are highlighted in history often leave out important figures. Perhaps you cannot cover it all! As a part of the 50th Anniversary of CWGA, this month our leaders plan to celebrate the history of women’s golf in our society as well as here at Charbonneau. Chris Bensel, managing golf professional of Charbonneau Golf Club will address our group at the monthly luncheon the same day this article is due. While I do not know all what Chris will share with us, I thought I would share a bit of the history of women’s golf in the world and at Charbonneau.

Did you know that Mary Queen of Scots played golf in the mid 1500’s and coined the term “caddie” after her cadets? She was also the reigning queen when the famous St Andrews Links Golf Course was built. It took another 100 plus years for the first women’s golf tournament to take place and even another 55 years for the worlds first ladies golf club to materialize, “The Ladies Club St Andrews. Around the same time, a leading golfer, Issette Miller invented the first handicapped fold system, enabling golfers like me (less experience and less skill) to have a competitive chance when playing. One hundred and thirty years later, the handicap system is still used. The golfing universe should be thanking this pioneer women for her invention! Fast forward another 40 plus years for Helen Hicks to become the first professional golfer who was endorsed by the sporting company Wilson-Western. Along with Babe Zaharias, Hicks was also one of the founders of LPGA.

It took four hundred years for women’s golf to be part of the mainstream, but thanks to these founding mothers of women’s golf, Chris Bensel, and a number of previous managing golf professionals, it did not take that long for women’s golf to be a significant part of Charbonneau golfing community. The Charbonneau Ladies Golf Association (CLGA) began in 1973, two years before the men’s golf club in 1975 and included both the 18-hole group and the 9-hole group (Niners). By mid 1980’s the Niners separated from CLGA and formed their own club. During the 80’s and 90’s memberships grew, and many tournaments were added to the calendar. In the late 90’s and early 2000’s membership dropped significantly. As a result and after much discussion and dissention, but with a unanimous vote, Charbonneau Ladies Golf Association name was changed to Charbonneau Women’s Golf Association (CWGA), and by laws written to include women outside of the Charbonneau community to become members.

In 2007 Chris Bensel began his leadership of the Charbonneau Golf Club. Chris is a third-generation golf professional. (Is his son Jackson following closely in his footsteps?). He is a graduate of the University of Oregon and is endorsed in sports and event management and planning, golf instruction and sports marketing. In his career he has taught over 40,000 students and currently coaches Wilsonville High School Girls Golf. Take a moment to watch his “Monday Mulligan Series” on YouTube, you will witness his teaching expertise. All of Chris’ background leads to his extraordinary support of equity in women’s golf at Charbonneau and in the future of women’s golf in this community. He was the advocate for both CWGA and the

Niners having two days of sanctioned golf days. This has increased the number of rounds of sanctioned golf played this year within CWGA, so far 523 rounds on Tuesdays and 571 rounds on Thursdays. He is present and an active planning partner in all our events giving advise and support when needed. His enthusiasm for our vision to become the premier women's golf club in the area is unprecedented. If you want to see this firsthand come join us for the next scramble, chipping contest, and dinner, *Fifty and Fabulous – Let's Flamingo* on September 7 at 1:30. You will also see him at the club championship September 14th and 15th (remember to qualify you need to have played 8 rounds of 18-hole sanctioned golf) and the Stagette - scramble, horse race, lunch and more on October 3rd as we continue to celebrate "*Cheers to 50 Years*".