

It's A Family Thing

In the early 60s in McAdam, NB, Ellen Brennan began a curling career that continues to this day. She and her best friend, both being young mothers at the time, decided that they needed some “play time” and the curling club in McAdam seemed just the place. Having no knowledge of the game and how it was played, Ellen sought some help. Her husband, Donnie, who had one year of experience, offered some assistance by simply saying, “you just get out on the ice and throw rocks!” That she did! Over the next several years she, her husband and friends, and then later with their children, curled in various bonspiels around the province improving their skills and enjoying the game.

Ellen encouraged all her children, all five of them, to learn to curl hoping they would learn to love it. Junior High in McAdam was the starting point for Danny, Glenn, Heidi, Susan and Veniene. Ellen and her husband, Donnie, coached these teams and Ellen remembers twice competing and finishing well, in the Mixed NB Provincials with her husband, Donnie, son, Danny and daughter, Heidi. The Brennan family curled from the McAdam Club until the early 80s when life brought Ellen and Donnie to Saint John, NB.



Illustration 1: Glenn, Ellen and Heidi

By the mid-80s they were all members of Thistle-St. Andrews Curling Club (TSA) in Saint John where Heidi's husband, Greg Hanlon, was the president. The boys, Danny and Glen, who had joined the RCMP, were settled in BC. Danny and Glen went on to have their share of success in the curling world. Both, now retired RCMP members, remain active in the game. Each has participated several times in National Police Competitions.

Daughter Heidi Hanlon and Ellen were often teammates as they advanced in Womens Curling in NB. In 1985 Heidi started skipping her own team and went on to compete in 11 Scotties Tournament of Hearts. Mother and daughter continued to complement each other on the ice. Heidi's first trip to Hearts

in 1987 included her mother, Ellen, as her fifth player. Again in 1988, Ellen was third on her daughter's team and in 1991, when Heidi was runner up at the Scotties, Ellen returned as her fifth player. Heidi continued to have success when she moved into the Senior ranks. She led her team of Kathy Floyd, Jane Arseneau and Judy Blanchard, to a Canadian championship and went on to represent Canada at the 2012 World Senior Curling Championship in Denmark and bringing home the gold medal. Her success was further recognized when, in 2017, she and her World's Team were inducted into the NB Sports Hall of Fame.



Illustration 2: NB Scotties Team 1994

While her children have seen many accomplishments, proud mother Ellen kept moving forward too. She remembers two NB Seniors wins as skip, one in which she defeated the Fredericton team to whom she had lost the previous year — aah what a feeling! And she remembers two more wins playing third and being chosen All Star Third at a National Event — a memorable highlight of her accomplishments. At the Masters level she and her teammates won several NB Masters Competitions and in 2002 and 2004 they brought home the Canadian Masters banners to TSA. Of special note is that at the age of 82, in 2017, Ellen and her TSA team traveled to Guelph, Ontario to represent New Brunswick at another Canadian Masters.

Being supportive of her family's curling careers has been a passion for Ellen. She traveled wherever the games were to sit behind the glass and quietly encourage their best. As a club curler at TSA, Ellen is helpful to beginners and quietly offers suggestions and support for all players. Heidi remarks about her parents' attendance at games and how she always appreciated seeing their faces on the sidelines.

Heidi Hanlon is a familiar face at Thistle-St. Andrews Curling Club curling on a regular basis in the competitive leagues. She continues to bring a sense of pride to club members. Many years ago, Ellen “got on the ice and started throwing rocks” and fell in love with the sport. Now at 85, Ellen is still in love with the sport and she too, curls regularly at Thistle-St. Andrews Club in Saint John, NB.