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PRESENTS THE COACHING SERIES...

## “A PANE IN THE GLASS”

### THE MAPLE TREE

By Bill Tschirhart

I'm in Kitchener as I write this, spending some pre-Christmas time with my Dad while en route to a Grand Slam of Curling event in Port Hawkesbury, NS. It has snowed for the last 24 hours straight. I've blown out my Dad's drive twice and when I finish this, I'm going out there for #3. It was the view of the maple tree on my Dad's boulevard in its blanket of white that reminded me of another winter's day many years ago. My Dad tells me I would have been about 13 years old at the time. It was a morning much like today. When we drew the living room drapes we could see the tire tracks on the street that lead to that maple tree.

I clearly recall my concern as I struggled into my winter clothing and pulled on my boots to examine the damage more closely. As my Dad and I drew near, we could see first-hand what the out-of-control vehicle had done. The tree had literally been split in two at its trunk. You had to see the sadness in my Dad's face as plants were his life. Our garden was the envy of the neighbourhood and in the summer flowers bloomed everywhere on our property. To see his beloved maple tree so critically damaged clearly made his heart sink.

The tree was young, with the trunk perhaps one foot in circumference so it would not have been out of the question for most to simply wait for spring to have the tree replaced, but not my Dad.

When weather permitted he literally bandaged the trunk to bring its open sides together. I respected his dedication to the tree but I must say that even with my limited knowledge of biology I felt Dad was “pushing a rope”. When spring conditions finally arrived, he did more work on the tree to continue the healing process. Well, the tree I'm looking at 50 years later is strong and straight. The trunk

still shows the scar that the crash with the vehicle caused, but it reminds me that we should never give up on something. Not even a tree!

As I began my chosen profession as an educator in the field of physical education, I was reminded of that maple tree as I started to coach teams.

The tradition was to create a varsity team by holding try-outs and by making cuts, get down to the final roster. I did that too until a young student who had tried out for virtually every varsity team and who in my “professional opinion” was not worthy of making that final roster, upon graduation went on to the University of Michigan on an athletic scholarship. So much for my professional opinion! He simply had matured at a rate that was different from his contemporaries. Thankfully he did not lose his determination even though my rejection of him could have destroyed it. But it made me think of other students who tried out for whom I might very likely have done just that. That’s when I remembered my Dad’s tree. I never cut another student who tried out for one of my teams!

When you see a young curler who seems to be all arms and legs moving in different directions and are about to give up on him/her, I suggest you too remember the lesson of my Dad’s maple tree.

Enjoy working with you athletes and I’ll see you soon behind a pane in the glass.