

Martyn is happy following hockey and playing golf in his retirement years

By Joe Falls / *The Detroit News* - Thursday, February 14, 2002



DETROIT--It would be dark and cold and the streets would be empty as I drove around Detroit. A little light was needed, a little warmth. So, I would turn on the car radio and there was the familiar voice of Bruce Martyn.

"Bergman blocks it at the blue line, holds the puck in. Libbett in the corner. Out front. Unger shoots -- he scores!"

Heaven.

It's been seven years since Martyn called the games for the Detroit Red Wings. He retired thinking he might call a Stanley Cup winner, but the New Jersey Devils routed the Red Wings in four games.

But don't fret. He is 72 years old and lives in Gaylord in the summer and Venice, Fla., in the winter, and still shoots and scores -- an 89, 82, or, occasionally, a 76. He is one happy man. He overcame a quadruple bypass operation early last December and is just getting back to golf, his second love.

Yes, he still listens to the hockey games even if he can't pick them up on his radio. He simply turns on his Internet and listens over the NHL Web site.

"I guess I listen to every other game and still enjoy it all," Martyn said from his home in Venice. "As I told Ken Kal when I left, nobody is going to miss this voice as long as you are around."

After 31 years in the broadcast booth, Martyn remembers how he felt breaking into the business. When he did his first Red Wings game, an exhibition from Sault Ste. Marie, he started by saying: "Good evening, everyone. Welcome to Tiger Stadium."

Martyn and his wife, Donna, enjoy all the days, outdoors or simply driving around and looking at the countryside. They have three sons.

He is in constant touch with Budd Lynch, his old broadcast partner and current public-address announcer at Joe Louis Arena, who lost his right arm fighting in World War II.

"I'll never forget meeting Budd for the first time. He welcomed me with open arm," Martyn said, chuckling.

Said Lynch: "We got along well. Bruce didn't have a brother, and I didn't have a brother, so we became brothers."

Martyn still misses the late Sid Abel, the old captain, coach and general manager of the Red Wings. When Abel shared the broadcast booth, the pair traveled as one on the road. If you saw Abel, you saw Martyn.

They had great rapport, such as the night on the air when Abel said: "Did I ever tell you about the time I laid out Rocket Richard?" Martyn said: "I thought it was the other way around."

Martyn told of the night he was driving to the airport with Sid, Sid's wife Gloria, and their dog, Oliver.

"He was a big pooch," Martyn said. "He was sitting in the back with Gloria. Sid and I were in the front seat. Suddenly, she cried out: 'Sid! Sid! Stop the car! Oliver is on fire!' Sid had thrown a cigarette out the front window, and it flew back in the rear window. Oliver wasn't hurt but his fur was smoking."

Martyn started his broadcasting career listening to *Hockey Night in Canada* on the radio with his great uncle in Sault Ste. Marie. He was thrilled at the voice of Foster Hewitt from the gondola at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto. That broadcast booth was a dream that never left his mind.

He carved himself an old microphone out of wood and put it on a desk and read the newspapers into it.

Martyn broadcast the Wings in some of their most dire times.

"At times it was pretty difficult," he said. "I always figured I was 50 percent reporter and 50 percent entertainer. It was my job to keep people listening. You had to make the games interesting. Maybe I dramatized too much but you couldn't say, 'This is the worst hockey game I have ever seen.'"