SUNNY SIDE UP

JOHN PRIESTLAND AND KATE LAWRENCE WIN THE KING’S GOBLET
See page 4
As I struggle to meet the editor’s deadline I really have no excuse. The dreaded tennis elbow has kept me off court since June, although I now have over 30 “cast iron” remedies from fellow sufferers, for which I am eternally grateful!

In my first “proper” message as chairman I would like to use this opportunity to focus on the matter of the club’s social calendar. We are conscious that, for whatever reason, there has recently been an absence of opportunities for members to meet each other. We have therefore set ourselves the modest target of arranging three different events in the coming year and we hope that members will respond with the enthusiasm that undoubtedly exists.

Firstly we have the annual carol service in December which is well publicised on the page opposite. It is a real privilege to have the opportunity to use the Chapel Royal and then meet for a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie and exchange seasonal wishes. While the cost of the choir is not inconsiderable, it does make the occasion very special and we do hope members will appreciate the reduced prices this year. It would be wonderful to fill the chapel to capacity with members, family and friends, so please put the date in your diary and buy your tickets by the deadline.

The second event is a club dinner, which is currently planned for Saturday 26 March 2011 at a venue to be confirmed. The board and professional team feel that we do not do enough to honour playing success both within the club, at all levels, and those who represent the club in the National League and other open events. We would therefore like to introduce an annual event to celebrate playing achievement and give another chance for members to meet socially in numbers.

Finally, we want to resurrect the summer barbecue, which, ideally, will coincide with the King’s Goblet summer handicap doubles. This will be some time in June or July, avoiding major events at the Palace and, where possible, other sporting and social distractions. The obvious attraction of the summer doubles is the opportunity to watch some tennis and enable competitors to mix off court with friends and family. The current debate is whether to make this a daytime event or hold in the evening. I personally favour the former because of the critical mass provided by those already playing, plus the opportunity to have an event tailored to members’ families in the club garden (free of scaffolding!).

We believe this strategy gives us three very different occasions for members to enjoy each other’s company, sensibly spaced through the club calendar. We will ensure that information is available well in advance to enable you to plan your diaries and we hope you will support these initiatives.

In closing I would like to formally welcome Chris Chapman to the professional team. Chris has already settled in well and we look forward to some healthy banter during the forthcoming Ashes tour down under.

Paddy Sweetnam

DATE FOR THE DIARY – NATIONAL LEAGUE

The professional season has begun! RTC’s first IRTPA National League Premier Division match will take place on Wednesday 13 October, starting at 6pm – and what a mouthwatering line-up it is.

Nick Wood and Peter Wright will take on a Prested Hall team featuring... Ben Matthews and Chris Chapman. Yes, that is the same Ben Matthews who only recently left RTC, and the same Chris Chapman who recently replaced Ben. Chris is filling in for the injured Ricardo Smith and will take on Peter in what should be a tight singles match, while Nick will be up against his former protégé Ben.

All in all, an evening not to be missed. Tickets are on sale now.

COMING UP

RTC
19 Sept: RTC v Hurlingham Pigeons
25-26 Sept: Barker-Camm Cup (60+)
9-10 Oct: de Laszlo Bowl (preliminary)
13 Oct: National League Premier Division: RTC v Prested Hall (see left)
23-24 Oct: de Laszlo Bowl (finals)
30-31 Oct: Barker-Camm Cup (50-59)
13-14 Nov: Barker-Camm Cup (40-49)
15 Dec: Carol Service

ELSEWHERE
21–26 Sept: French Open (Bordeaux)
1–3 Oct: T&RA Category B, C, E, F, G Open Championships (various venues)
8–10 Oct: T&RA Category D Open Championship (Hatfield)
5–7 Nov: US Ladies’ Open (Philadelphia)
5–7 Nov: British Open singles qualifying (Radley) (doubles 9–10 Nov)
14–23 Nov: British Open (Queen’s)
22–28 Nov: IRTPA Pro Singles (Manc’r)

DATE FOR THE DIARY–NATIONAL LEAGUE

Carol service
This year’s annual carol service will be held on Wednesday 15 December. The club is hoping for a record attendance this year and asks that members apply as early as they can – well before the deadline of 15 October if at all possible.

Enclosed with your newsletter is a separate sheet for your application – to avoid having to mutilate the newsletter. Please note that ticket prices are lower this year than before: just £12, or £10 per head for groups of four or more.

David Seelig

ON A SCREEN NEAR YOU
This newsletter is also available via email from the pros or via the club website, www.royaltenniscourt.com, in glorious Technicolor.

Paddy Sweetnam
The RTC
Annual Carol Service

in the Chapel Royal
with Chapel Royal Choir and Organ
Wednesday 15 December 2010 at 7.30pm

Followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the club

Tickets: £12 (or £10 per head for groups of four or more)
PLEASE APPLY BY 15 OCTOBER – EARLIER IF POSSIBLE

Available from the professionals

Cheques, made payable to the Royal Tennis Court, should be sent to the club with the application (please enclose stamped addressed envelope)
It’s a royal knockout

Owen Saunders describes a dazzling weekend of King’s Goblet summer doubles

I
t’s summer 2010 and 32 sporting competitors are battling through a group stage, then knockout rounds, to win one of sport’s most sought-after prizes… not the football World Cup, but the 2010 King’s Goblet summer doubles.

Where the World Cup had controversy and talking points, we had one player accidentally passing through to the Hazard side before the incoming servers had passed through (unbelievable, I know!).

Where the World Cup had a group of death with Brazil, Portugal and Ivory Coast together, we had regular playing partners Tim Church, Nicola Doble, Simon Edmond and Owen Saunders pitted against each other.

Where the World Cup had former champions France never get into their stride and then descend into a nightmare of recrimination and soul-searching, we had… Nick and Tom Carew Hunt.

One key difference was that the English won this one, as Kate Lawrence and John Priestland defied the summer heat to emerge triumphant, making full use in the final of the handicap allowance against David Blizzard and Peter Mather to win 10/6.

Group stage

Received wisdom is that the key factors in doubles are a) experience in doubles, b) an evenly matched pairing, and c) an appreciation that a terrible shot over the net is better than a brilliant one that goes into the net. On this basis the pre-tournament favourites were generally agreed to be Oliver Buckley and John East, Nick and Tom Carew Hunt, and Nicola Doble and Simon Mansfield.

Owen and John set the early pace on day one, blowing away the competition by winning 36 games and conceding only 11, generating a ‘goal difference’ of +25. This was remarkable, given that the next best goal difference in the entire group stage was +12.

The highlight of group A was Oliver and John taking on Richard East and Adam Lawrence, as brother fought against brother in a no-holds-barred contest. The result was a resounding 11-5 victory to Oliver and John, a result that will surely be brought up at key moments in East family get-togethers for many months to come.

The crucial game turned out to be Victoria Carew Hunt and Terry Marsh against Richard and Adam, with Victoria and Terry victorious as Terry used his “crouching tiger” serve to great effect. This secured them a place in the knockout stages.

Group B turned out to be the tightest, with doubles expert Keith Smith pairing up with Dan Callaghan and pulling out his chopped drag serve at crucial points to bring victory and top seeding from the group.

In group C, Peter Mather excelled throughout, taking a fearless position up at the galleries and letting very little past him. His high standard of play was made all the more remarkable by the fact that he played most of the time with his shorts nearer his ankles than his waist, his fetching turquoise briefs on full display (which I am reliably informed is à la mode nowadays). With Peter playing up, David Blizzard ran the back and gave another of his masterclasses in accurate volleys.

The Carew Hunts never got into their stride, with frustration eventually getting the better of them as they seemed to target the stronger opponents rather than the weaker ones and repeatedly overhit. It was a strangely lacklustre performance from the experienced pairing, but rest assured they will come back stronger.

John Priestland and Kate Lawrence grew in confidence. John showed good tactical nous and targeted the weaker opponent and the right areas of the court, while Kate was tenacious and confident in the volley.

In the group of death, the sting was taken out by the withdrawal through injury of Owen Saunders in the first match, which meant walkovers were given to all their opponents. Despite walkovers being given, Nick Wood generously filled in for the third match which Mike Shattock and Nick lost 13-2 to Simon Mansfield & Nicola Doble – the biggest loss of the tournament!

Knockout stage

The pick of the quarter-finals was Tim Church and Peter Flood overcoming Oliver and John 8-5. Despite their pre-tournament billing, Buckley buckled and East’s game went south when confronted by inspired opponents and a large handicap difference.

In the semi-finals, David Blizzard had dominated the match against Church and Flood, with Peter Mather popping up at the net with some crucial volleys on the way to an 8/4 lead when the bell sounded for the end of the time.

Kate and John had a tighter semi-final against Simon Edmond and Clive Dacre, but a couple of crucial 40-40 games turned the match and at the bell they had opened up a 7-5 lead.

The final was the second meeting of the two pairs over the weekend, with Kate and John having won a close group match. Despite David’s eager efforts charging around the court volleying expertly (and despite a new pair of fetching black and red briefs for Peter), the handicap of receive ½ 30–owe 30 proved too much as both Kate and John retrieved well and took their chances when they came along.

Thanks to Nick and Stef for sterling work in the dedans over the three days (no need for any video replays here) and for such an enjoyable competition, and well done to Kate (a winner for a second consecutive year) and John for a thoroughly deserved victory.
The future’s bright for RTC

The club’s junior championships showed the wealth of talent coming through

The last weekend of July saw RTC’s younger members showcase their talents in the club’s junior championships, open to under-25s. In addition to the Wollaston Cup handicap singles, we are now into the second year of the Chairman’s Cup (level singles) and Vaughan Trophy (level doubles), both of which saw some very competitive action between some of our emerging elite players.

In the Wollaston Cup, which featured handicaps ranging from 68 down to 15, Nick Hatchett defied his prohibitive low handicap of 15 to set up a repeat of last year’s final against Peter Mather, who was also a finalist in the King’s Goblet doubles this summer. Despite giving away 29 (rec 30 – owe half 30; one serve, banned tambour), Nick still managed to claim the title 6/2.

In the Chairman’s Cup, both Nick Hatchett and James Watson cruised through impressive semi-final wins over Karen Hird and Tom Freeman respectively to set up an intriguing final. The similarity of their handicaps suggested it would be a tight affair – and it was, with James rebounding from the loss of the second set to come out on top 6/3, 4/6, 6/2.

The Vaughan Trophy saw the four Chairman’s Cup semi-finalists all on court at once, with Hatchett and the rapidly improving Freeman up against Watson and Hird. Again it went to three sets, with Nick gaining some measure of revenge on James, 6/2, 3/6, 6/3. Many thanks should go to the professionals for running a fine weekend, to Peter Ohlson and David and Jane Vaughan for providing and presenting the trophies, to David Glover for his camerawork (both video and still) and to Lindsay and Jane Hatchett for their support.

Congratulations to all the winners, but a word of warning: if they rest on their laurels they’ll soon find young Max O’Hagan snapping at their heels…

David Seelig writes... We were greatly saddened to learn that John died on Monday 9 August, following a short illness, at the age of 78. He was an accomplished tennis and squash exponent and a valued member of our newsletter stuffing team.

All who knew him were struck by his quiet, friendly and gentle manner as well as by his erudition. He will be sorely missed. Our thoughts go out to his widow Paquita and to the rest of his family for their sad loss. His funeral took place on Tuesday 17 August at St Andrew’s Surbiton; the church was filled by his very many friends.

Murray Glover writes... John was, quite simply, a lovely guy! We had many a tussle on court... I see from my February 1992 newsletter that, together with David Vaughan, we were all in the first five of the club ladder, with a certain Simon Barker (that name seems familiar?) at no. 7.

I remember that both David and John had an infuriatingly effective shot where they hit the ball over the net to make a fast looping second bounce around the one yard mark, in either corner, while I was trying to play what I thought was the “classic” game, with cut and slice. I put it down to their having been top-class squash players who didn’t feel the need to kow-tow to the “proper” way to play tennis!

He was also a compassionate man: he and Ronald Swash came up with a plan to cheer up the great Vernon Ely in his last years. I used to go with them to pick Vernon up from his Dorking retirement home.

He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of tennis, and sport in general. He was the only person I know who still had every single copy of the RTC newsletter since it was first published in the early 70s. He also had a programme of an England v Scotland football international at Wembley in February 1944, signed by all the players, including Matt Busby, Tommy Lawton and Ted Ditchburn, and I was working with John on acquiring and montaging images of the players around the programme. He even phoned me from hospital to discuss our next session on the project.

In recent years, we met regularly at newsletter-stuffing sessions and would often make the walk to and from the car park together and compare notes about our hips, knees etc. His cheerful smile will not fade from my memory.
Victoria’s secret weapon

New assistant professional Chris Chapman is hoping to reveal his talent to the UK

Chris Chapman has come a long way in just three years. Back in 2007 he was a promising squash player trying to climb his way up the Australian rankings when Royal Melbourne member John Link introduced him to real tennis.

“I thought, ‘What is this crazy game?’” Chris recalls, but before he knew it he was hooked and had been offered a job as trainee professional at the club and the opportunity to learn the game. Just four weeks after his first ever hit, he was already hard at work.

The progress since then has been impressive. His first handicap was 36 (“I was beaten 6-0 6-0 by a 32”), a year later he had shot down to 9, and another year later he was off 2. This promise, coupled with a steely determination and an agreeable demeanour around the club, made him the ideal candidate when RTC was looking for a young professional to replace the Bordeaux-bound Ben Matthews earlier this year.

“I was getting no matches in Melbourne, and this was a club I’d been to – I’d stayed with Nick on all three of my trips to the UK – and I thought this would be a great place to work,” he explains in his Victorian drawl (reminiscent of Shane Warne, thankfully without the bleach or the diuretics).

It was July by the time Chris was able to join us, and he has settled in well, despite the challenge of remembering so many names and faces: “In Melbourne I saw the members more often, so I got to know their faces and names quickly, whereas here some members might only play once a week or less as there’s only one court, so it takes a while to get to know everyone.”

Now he’s looking forward to playing some competitive tennis. “Nick and I have looked as far as Christmas at the moment in terms of events – I’ll be playing in the French Open, the IRTPA Championships in Manchester, the British Open and the Browning Cup. There’s also the National League.”

Of course, professional tennis demands certain sacrifices. With the court almost fully occupied, the professionals have to be on court at 7am to practice before the members take over. Is he coping with being given the runaround by Nick and Stef at the crack of dawn? “I’m not normally a morning person, but when you roll out of bed, have breakfast and head downstairs it’s not so bad. I’ve learnt a lot so far – just learning how to control the ball and not rely on smacking it around like in squash; improving my accuracy and dropping the speed a little bit.

“Footwork is Nick’s big thing – he moves really well and has great hands, so I’m trying to learn a bit of that. That’s another thing about coming over here: I’ve learnt the game from other people – Frank Filippelli and Ruaidhí Gunn – and now I’ll have the influence of Nick and hopefully some of the other guys over here.”

Along with the optimism and enthusiasm that comes with a new season, there must also be targets.

“Handicap’s a tough one – it becomes almost irrelevant – but by the end of the season I would like to be a plus 2. But my main tournament goal that I’ve set myself is to win a first-round match in each of the tournaments I play.

“Long-term, I want to be one of the best players in the world, if not world champion. Coming from another sport, it was something I wanted to do properly, not something I was going to just do 50-50; it’s something I really want to succeed at.”

There’s just one more thing Chris is hoping for: “Snow is something I’m looking forward to. I’ll be disappointed if it’s really, really cold and not snowy.”

As the nights draw in, meanwhile, many of us will soon be keeping a close eye on events down under in another sport. Would our new man blot his copybook by boldly predicting a 5-0 Ashes drubbing for England? “I think the Aussies will win at home, but I don’t think it’ll be a blow-out like last time.” Confidence and diplomacy rolled into one – this boy could go far.

Simon Edmond

The event that time forgot...

It is always a challenge to complete a competition that starts with more than 110 entrants, and so it has proved with the 2009-10 Lathom Browne Cup, the club’s handicap singles tournament.

As the newsletter was winging its way to the printers in early September we had one finalist in Paul Wright and two remaining semi-finalists, Elvira Campione and Dorian Drew.

After winning grade B and then playing top-class tennis to dispatch grade A winner Simon Edmond, Paul then reached the final at the expense of the emerging Stephen Goss, who had himself taken care of another improver, Fraser Shorey, in his quarter-final.

The lower grades have also featured several rapid improvers (known as “bandits” to less charitable souls!). Elvira and Dorian epitomise this new guard – indeed, if Dorian’s handicap had not been adjusted at the quarter-final stage from its September 2009 figure of 56, he would be unstopable (it now stands at 40.6).

Dorian had to beat fellow newcomer John Priestland in the grade G final before easing past John Traversi in his quarter-final. Elvira, a highly accomplished lawn tennis player, cruised through grade G, but she had an almighty scare in her quarter-final, sneaking past John Halliday 9/8.

As Nick Wood has mentioned in his pro’s notes, it is crucial that we all help the pros when it comes to arranging our matches in tournaments. The delays in the Lathom Browne meant the club had no representative in the recent Chetwood Trophy – an embarrassing situation when RTC is the host club.
**Wood’s Words**

Head professional Nick Wood on the fine art of serving

**Bobble**, Side wall, Giraffe, Demipique, Railroad. There are many, many serves to try, but what do we hope to achieve with them?

**Prioritise**
1. Put the ball into play  
2. Prevent your opponent from playing an attacking shot OR persuade your opponent to return to your strength  
3. Win the point – an ace!

Those who only go in search of the ace will often draw a dud. Choose your serve carefully, depending on whether you hope to pin your opponent down or encourage your opponent to hit to your strength, and position and balance yourself. Find your target to guide the serve – this may be a mark on the wall or penthouse or a spot on the ceiling; or you may have to visualise a target. For high serves, I imagine a basketball hoop on the wall.

To be accurate, it is important to achieve the correct pace, line and length. It is these three elements that will produce aces. Initially, avoid spinning the ball as this will only increase the chance of inaccuracy. As you improve and gain in confidence, and it is appropriate, spin can be added.

**SERVES**

**The Bobble** is often used as a second serve but can also be devastating as a first serve. When served well it can pin your opponent tight to the back wall, making the return very awkward.

**The Side Wall** can die against the back wall and has a propensity to push your opponent backwards. I often see this served with too much spin at the cost of accuracy.

**The Giraffe** loops high in the air, lands on the penthouse and kicks across the court, forcing your opponent to backpedal rapidly and/or make them play from the grille corner of the court. This serve is best delivered with a twist of spin.

**The Demi Pique** is a good serve to confuse the volley return of serve. Striking the penthouse near the service line, the ball carries on to the wall, then on the way down it preferably shaves the edge of the bandeau before dropping dead weight against the back wall.

**The Railroad** traditionally runs along the bottom edge of the penthouse and will keep close to the side wall, which encourages your opponent to hit crosscourt. Often too much emphasis is put on spin – allow a natural action to impart spin so that pace, line and length are not sacrificed.

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**News from the pros**

We are back to a full team – myself, Stef, new arrival Chris (see page 6) and Les. Chris has settled in with ease and composure, and with a little more time will understand the systems and the idiosyncrasies of the Royal Tennis Court.

In Chris, we have a real star in the making. He has joined us from the Royal Melbourne Tennis Club, where he has learnt the game under the guidance of such luminaries as Ruaraidh Gunn, Frank Filippelli, Julian Snow and Graham Hyland. Having achieved a very high level as a squash player, Chris has superb court coverage and a keen eye and is intent on becoming a great real tennis player.

**The Professional Fund**

The fund – set up by trustees with donations from the membership – provides funds for the professionals to access expert advice and training and allows them to best prepare for events. Although Chris does not yet qualify to receive assistance from the Professional Fund, your donations will in time make a serious difference to his ability to become a great real tennis player.

**Tournaments**

The tournament season 2009-10 saw some changes to events that increased competitive play and improved tournaments. We had over 70 entrants to the club championships (Barker Camm Cup) and over 110 entrants in the club handicap (Lathom Browne), not to mention all the other events – Harris Watson doubles, Seal Salver, De Lazslo Bowl, King’s Goblet. Again we had a strong turn out for the under-25 events; young Max O’Hagan will be working his way up the ranks soon! The tournament season will soon be upon us and we will again be making a few changes to improve them. Due to a delay in finishing last season’s Lathom Browne and Seal Salver, we will be working extra-hard to assist you with arranging your matches, but we will also be more strict on those who do not proactively help with arranging their games.

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**The Royal Tennis Court**

Club Championships  
Barker Camm Cup

**Date:** February 12th – 25th 2011

- Preliminary Rounds  
  12th – 20th February
- Semi-finals  
  21st & 22nd February
- **Championship Finals Evening**  
  Friday 25th February

Champagne Reception & Canapés  
6.30pm  
Final  
7.15pm

Kindly supported by Pol Roger and The Canapé Company

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**Bowl, King’s Goblet. Again we had a watson doubles, seal salver, de lazsolos**

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**Spin at the cost of accuracy.**
Radley prepared

Martin Bronstein reflects on an enjoyable but losing debut for a new team, the Hambusters

It was Graham Aston’s idea to put together a team of RTC senior members and challenge Radley to a ‘friendly’. As the four members – Aston, John Clark, David Glover and Martin Bronstein – were quite senior, the tag The Buspassers was mooted and quickly dropped.

With some RAF service in our collective histories, we plumbed for Hambusters and issued the challenge. Chris Ronaldson, whose club now has 80 members, responded immediately and on 20 July the Hambusters made their debut at Radley College.

Ronaldson, of course, knew all the visiting team well and naturally (he is very competitive) put together a Radley team that included the captain of the Cambridge ladies’ team – and her son. The other team members were somewhat younger than the average age of the Hambusters (70!).

It was all played in good spirit, each of the three singles and four doubles were marked professionally and even though bribes were openly offered, Chris, Mick Dean and Lumley the Younger could not be tempted. The result, sadly, was that the final score was 6/1 in favour of the home side, with our captain being the only winner in his singles match. (It should come as no surprise that CJR did the handicapping…)

The match was followed by a very convivial dinner and Chris was, as expected, the perfect host. It was Aston’s idea that the losing side be given coconuts and so four were purchased at Waitrose (the Hambusters are not cheap). As it would seem somewhat strange to present them to his own team, he generously gave them to the victors. Sadly the one coconut that was opened in our presence proved to be mildew. Somewhere in that last sentence there is some sort of moral.

The good news for RTC members is that a return match has been arranged for 24 November. As your reporter was trounced 6/0 in his singles match, he is keen to give his opponent an equal drubbing on his home court. Tickets are already being touted on eBay (see: Revenge of the Hambusters).

The Great Escape:
Having failed to win a game in his singles match, Martin Bronstein attempted to emulate Steve McQueen by purloining a Radley member’s rather fine MC combo. Alas, the hosts were alive to this escape attempt and order was soon restored.

RTC Top Ten

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The Royal Tennis Court Newsletter

is published four times a year and the editor would love any contributions from members. Please get in touch if you have any ideas for the winter issue, via the professionals or by email at the address below.

Editor: Simon Edmond
simonrichardedmond@yahoo.co.uk

RESULTS

Summer handicap doubles
Quarter-finals: Tim Church & Peter Flood beat Oliver Buckley & John East 8/5; David Blizzard & Peter Mather beat Dan Callaghan & Keith Smith 12/2; John Preistland & Kate Lawrence beat Victoria Carew Hunt & Terry Marsh 7/4; Simon Edmond & Clive Dacre beat Ian Mathers & Tony Whitfield 8/3.

Semi-finals: Blizzard & Mather beat Church & Flood 8/4; Priestland & Lawrence beat Edmond & Dacre 7/5.

Final: Priestland & Lawrence beat Blizzard & Mather 10/6.

Club Junior Championships
Wollaston Cup final (handicap): Nick Hatchett beat Peter Mather 6/2.

Chairman’s Cup semi-finals: Nick Hatchett beat Karen Hird 6/1 6/1; James Watson beat Tom Freeman 6/1 6/1.


Lathom Browne Cup
Quarter-finals: Paul Wright beat Simon Edmond 9/6; Stephen Goss beat Fraser Shorey 9/5; Elvira Campione beat John Halliday 9/8; Dorian Drew beat John Traversi 9/5.


BITS

The club lost one of its longest-serving staff in early September, as Bits left us at the grand old age of 19. Along with her brother Bobs, Bits had become part of the furniture at RTC, and the pro shop will not be the same without her constant purring.