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and a mastery of attacks from the “wrist rocket” and “crank shot” to the “pull-” or “push-kick”—arguably the most difficult shot, since it combines two distinct and opposing physical movements.

Regan’s bread-and-butter are her smooth pull-shot and deft “five-bar” (the centre bar) passing skills, which helped her become the world’s highest-ranked woman player for four years running in the mid 2000s. In the first foosball world cup, in 2006, she was one of Team Canada’s pivotal players and is featured prominently in the yet-to-be-released documentary *Foosers*, which chronicled the Canadian contingent’s ultimately disappointing run. Her finest hour was in 2004 at the Las Vegas Hall of Fame Classic. There, Regan made foos history, taking first place while playing the much more challenging forward position in a mixed-doubles match, something no woman had ever done. The victory secured her rep. She became an icon, albeit in an infinitesimally niche world.

Despite her status, Regan still faced dude ‘tude. “One of the top players said that he’d retire if he ever lost to a girl,” Regan says. (He did lose to her, in a doubles match. And no, he didn’t retire.) Even though she was now a Pro Master, many men still regularly thought they could beat her simply because she was a woman. “I’m like, ‘You’re pissed off that you lost to me? What made you think you weren’t gonna lose?’”

A self-described “spiritual”



Furrier Jim Laurenson pursues the skin trade in his South Granville salon

person, Regan has increased her metaphysical quest since she escaped with only minor injuries when her car plunged down a 40-metre embankment last April. Although unrelated to the crash, she has lately scaled back her tournament play, going from about six major competitions a year to one or two—mainly because of the relatively paltry payouts. This wasn’t always the case. In the mid to late 1970s, before Regan was a pro, the game seemed poised for its Fischer-Spassky moment; \$500,000 tours were being funded by a table manufacturer and sports cars were being doled out to some first-place winners.

By the early 1980s, though, with newfangled video games dominating North American arcades, foosball’s “golden age,” was over. In fact, when adjusted for inflation, the pots today are significantly less than they were. Regan’s biggest one-time take? \$2,500. “How can you be the best in the world at what you do and get no compensation for it?” Almost famous, indeed.

Fashion

Into The Wild

After 63 years, Jim Laurenson finds he’s the last furrier standing
By Leanne Dunic

WHAT ARE THEY doing all crumpled up?” asks Jim Laurenson as a woman drops a garbage bag full of furs to the floor. Even before he removes the items for appraisal, he knows they will have little worth. He quickly assesses each rumpled mink coat—only one has any value: \$50 on a good day. He suggests she consider donating the lot. Once the customer has gone, Laurenson, 77, the dapper owner of Speiser Furs on South Granville, whose thick ivory hair is slicked back and curls around his ears, shakes his head. “They would’ve had some value if they’d been taken care of.”

Around us, the storefront is packed with leather coats and furs knitted, sheared, and dyed into jackets and scarves.

Beside the counter, a clock radio whispers the AM 980 news; the time runs an hour behind. Out of sight behind a rack of coats, Laurenson keeps a recliner he brought in to elevate his leg. This week, he underwent his fourth knee surgery—the first three replacements didn’t take.

Despite the knee, Laurenson can usually be found on his feet in the shop he’s worked in every day since it opened in 1949. (He took ownership 30 years later.) Today’s persistence has something to do with four Tylenol T4s and two Celebrex, but it’s also about character: the wrinkles on his face speak to a constant smile, and his blue eyes have that Gene Wilder sparkle.

A well-dressed woman in her 50s enters the store, and he stands again. Moving gingerly, he shows her coats of pearlized Italian leather and others of butter-soft lambskin. She tries on one she likes, but the fit is tight. “You can’t breathe when you look nice,” he says with a chuckle. One imagines him repeating this line decade after decade; flattery is timeless.

The neighbourhood, however, is not. Since 1997, rents have tripled, driving out many neighbours, like Purr and Dyrberg/Kern. With the departure of stalwarts like Jackson’s Meats and MacKinnon’s Bakery, Speiser Furs is the last store on the South Granville strip remaining from the mid 20th century. (Increased rent was the catalyst in 1997 for moving the store four blocks south from its original Granville Street location, at West 11th.)

Jenny Reed

The Speisers were originally from Vienna, and moved in 1934 to Shanghai, where they opened a store in the French Concession. When the Communists took power, they emigrated. They lived down the road from Laurenson in North Van, and met him at the neighbourhood grocery store where he worked. They recruited him to their store when he was 16, teaching him the furrier business (as well as the German language). They were like his second parents.

Laurenson remembers patiently helping a customer in the ’50s, when Mr. Speiser said to him in German, “If this customer buys that coat, I’ll eat a broom.” He laughs. “The next day, I bought a broom, put salt and pepper on it, and said, ‘Here, Papa!’”

Twenty-five years ago, the shop had a dozen employees, many staying for the bulk of their career. “We were like a family.” Cary Grant co-star Alexis Smith was a customer, and when Kurt Russell came to buy gifts for his mother, the two of them chatted over glasses of Scotch (there’s still a bottle of Ballantine’s in the drawer, with its encouraging motto: “Leave An Impression.”) Today, Laurenson usually works alone, though his ex-wife and his current wife sometimes help out. None of his three kids is interested in taking over the business.

When Laurenson started out, fur was the epitome of luxury and fashion. Since the mid ’80s, he’s seen a dozen Vancouver fur stores shut their doors, and in the last few years he’s had to be especially adaptive, adding lightweight fabric-based coats to his inventory and reworking used furs into pillows and blankets. He’d like to open another, smaller store in Vancouver with less expensive rent—PETA notwithstanding, he believes fur and leather will always be in fashion.

In recent years, his store has been the target of various activist groups, resulting in broken windows and graffiti. Last summer, one animal-rights group funnelled bleach into the shop via the mail slot, damaging 80 garments. The gesture, Laurenson points out, was unproductive: “This kind of disruption results in killing more animals, because now I need to buy more furs.” **vm**