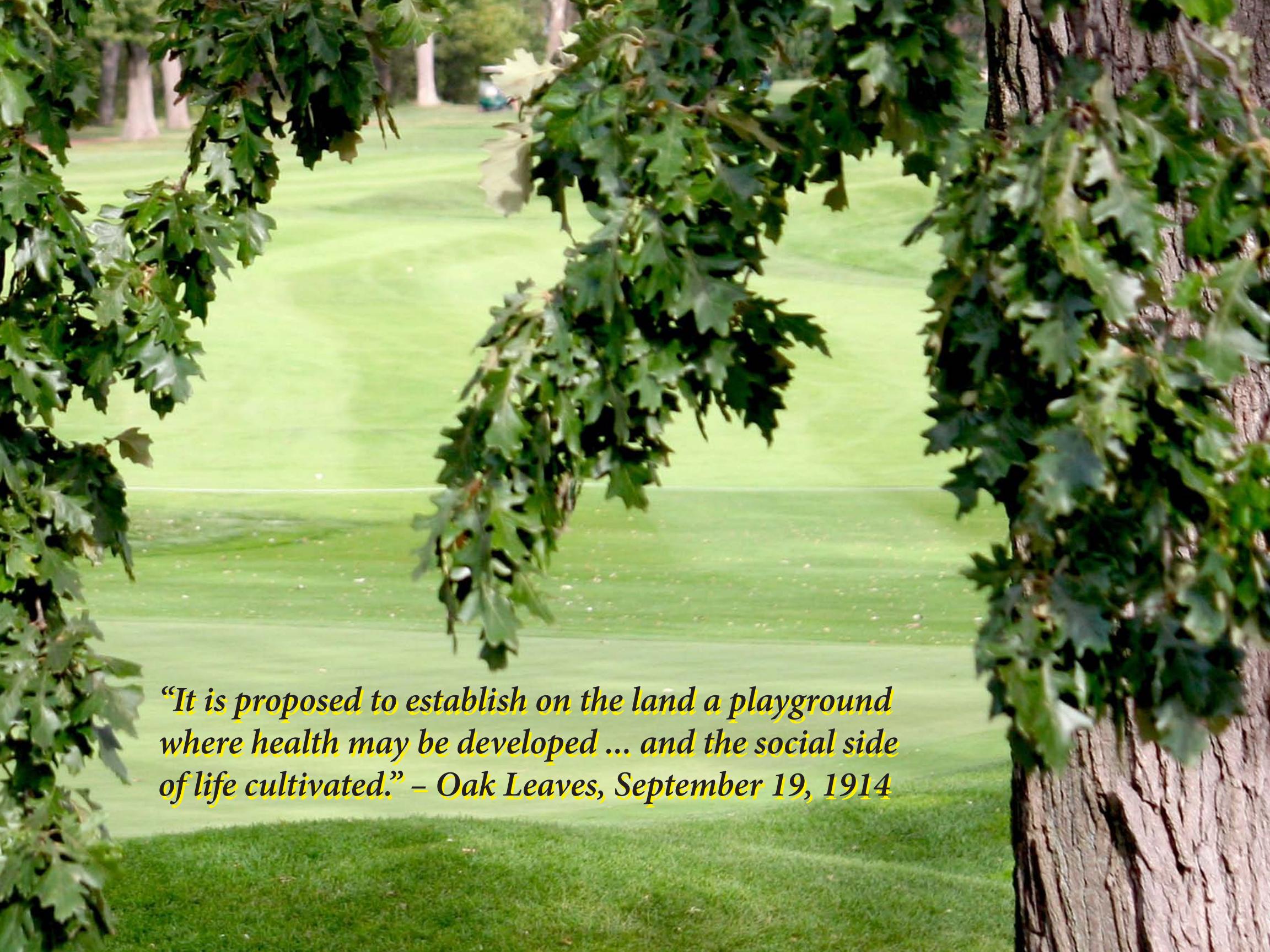


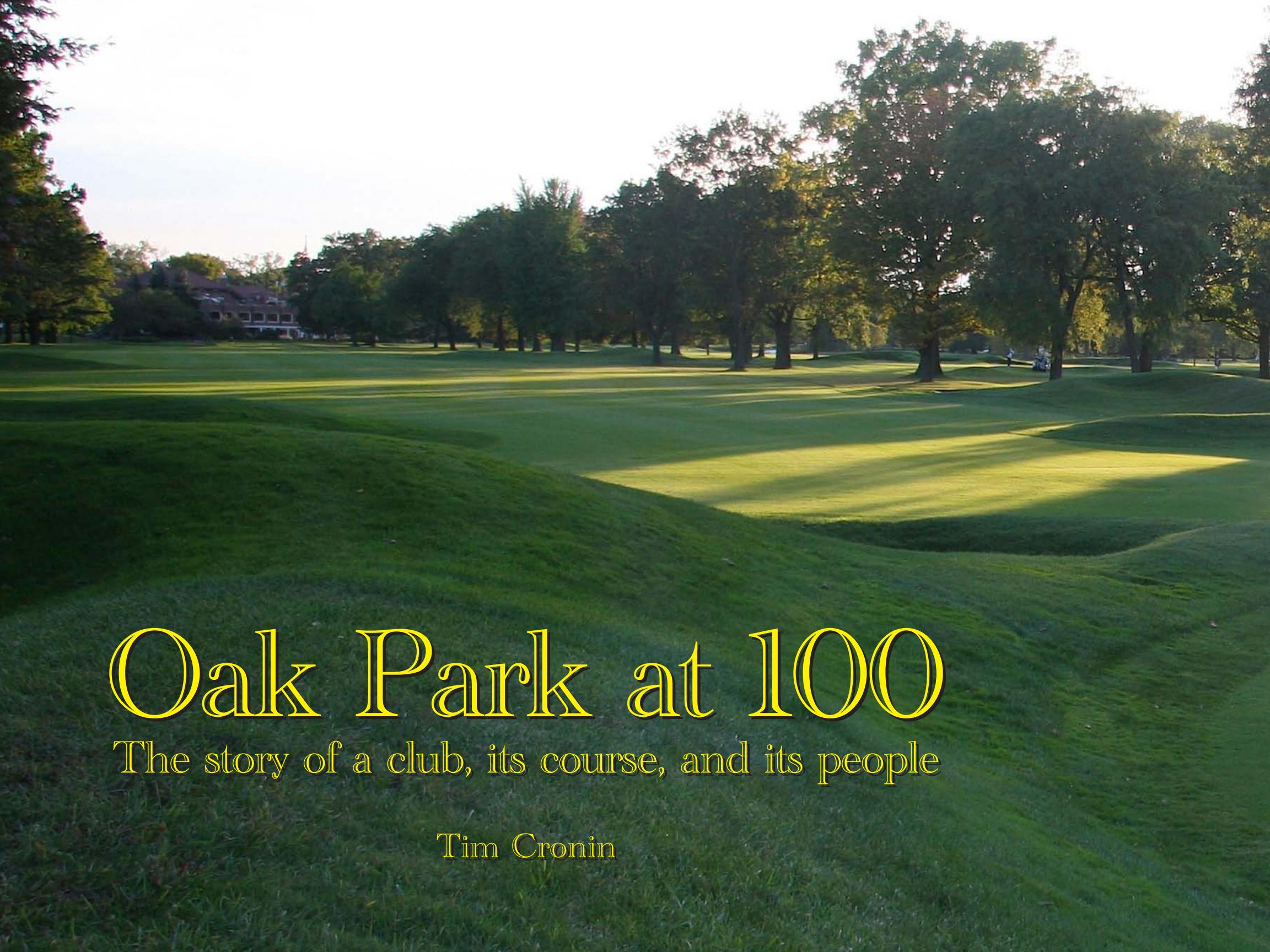
Oak Park at 100





A scenic view of a park. In the foreground, the dark green, lobed leaves of a large oak tree hang down. Behind the tree, a well-maintained green lawn stretches across the middle ground. In the far distance, a few people can be seen walking or sitting on the grass. The background is filled with more trees and foliage.

“It is proposed to establish on the land a playground where health may be developed ... and the social side of life cultivated.” – Oak Leaves, September 19, 1914



Oak Park at 100

The story of a club, its course, and its people

Tim Cronin



Contents

Foreword by Andrew Corsini	ix	7 Harry Radix	71
Introduction	xi	8 Ray & H.K.	81
1 'A place of beauty'	1	9 Fun & games	97
2 Enter Donald Ross	13	10 Renovation and renewal	119
3 From Ross to Tillie	25	11 The course today	127
4 The Joplin Ghost	33	12 To the second century	165
5 The legendary Errie Ball	47	Presidents and champions	172
6 From Simpson to Bruno	59	A note from the author	174

“I do not believe in making a course too hard. That is quite easy to do. I believe a course should be laid out in such a manner that the good short golfer can get to the green quite as well as the long hitter.” – Donald Ross





Foreword

I am honored to have the opportunity to introduce the story about the achievement of dedicated members who founded and set Oak Park Country Club on a course of rich heritage and tradition which has meant so much to all who have been a part of it.

Oak Park Country Club is a special place that its members have always been proud of. It is a premier country club that boasts a grand Donald Ross golf course, a magnificent clubhouse and first class amenities. I am privileged to be a member of this club and a part of its traditions.

My wife Carmela and I have formed many lasting and meaningful friendships during our time here. Our three children have grown up here. I could not imagine my life without Oak Park Country Club in it and am excited every time I visit our club.

When I reflect on the many world events and advancements since 1914 I realize how much change occurs over the course of a century. Our club has changed as well but many things remain the same. Our membership today is just as vibrant as the club's original membership. Each of us joins a country club to share a sense of community and camaraderie. The pride and enjoyment of activities with our fellow members in a unique and wonderful setting has been the constant over the past century. Our membership continues to truly value what Oak Park Country Club has to offer. Many friendships have been made and cherished throughout the years and are a symbol of the fiber that makes membership in our club so special.

Our membership also realizes that we have a shared obligation to advance the common goal of maintaining and enhancing the country club experience that we all enjoy. We continue to honor and respect the tradition and vision of those who came before us, and build on the foundation that we have today. Our pursuit of excellence for our members will ensure success for future generations of Oak Park Country Club.

I want to thank the members of the Board of Governors both past and present as well as the presidents of Oak Park Country Club who served before me. The pride that we have in being members of Oak Park Country Club would not be possible without their leadership, guidance and vision.

Additionally, I want to thank the Heritage and Centennial committees, as well as our general manager and his team, who have all been extremely instrumental in planning a centennial celebration that will long be remembered. I hope that you continue to enjoy our beautiful club and participate in the many events that are planned this year.

*Andrew Corsini
President, Oak Park Country Club*



Introduction

Moments in the sun

The world we live in is complicated, filled with cacophony and chaos, the hurried and the harried, all rushing to the next task, took often pressured by that which engulfs them.

For those who try to keep their wits while all about them are losing theirs, an oasis is needed. A place of tranquility.

Welcome to Oak Park Country Club.

Here, nestled a half-mile from the bustle of North Avenue, but a seeming light-year from the madding crowd, is an uncomplicated setting. A beautiful golf course. An inviting pool. A place for a racquet, not a racket. A clubhouse with a welcoming staff and succulent food.

A spot to get away, to enjoy a moment in the sun, or a lifetime on the links.

Golf courses and country clubs have always been that way, but there are varying degrees of solitude. Oak Park, a garden on the outskirts of the city, with only a forest preserve to protect it from being totally surrounded by development, is one of the select few that does solitude really well.

That has been appreciated by members from the beginning.

In 2003, Dr. Charles Lewis, the very definition of a long-time member, recalled playing golf at Oak Park in 1926, when he was 7, nine years after his father joined the club.

“I had an old Schenectady putter than was a perfect length for a 7-year-old,” Dr. Lewis recalled. “I played 18 holes with that putter. Not well, but at least I was out there.”

A lifelong love affair with the game and with Oak Park was kindled. His passing in 2008 at age 89 was a reminder that the clock runs too fast, but also that it is possible, at least for a moment, to slow the clock down.

Beauty abounds at Oak Park. This planting greets the weary coming from the 18th green.

Dr. Lewis did so at Oak Park, either after his daily dentistry chores, or on weekends. “It’s meant as much to me as anything I’ve been involved in,” he said.

So it is with so many members, and with so many families. A favorable location and a wonderful golf course have combined since the first day, melded into a place to be, as Dr. Lewis said, “Out there.”

Out there on the golf course, one of only five in the Chicago area designed from scratch by a legend working alone: Donald Ross, the eminent course designer of the first half of the 20th century.

Out there at the pool, especially the youth of Oak Park, getting away from it all even before they know what they’re getting away from.

Out there on the adjoining tennis courts, more and more a place to be since a major renovation revitalized the facility nearly a decade ago.

Out there in the winter, taking aim on the skeet range, where once condominiums were contemplated, or perhaps indulging in cross country skiing on a golf course turned white for the winter. Or even joining the Acorns, the curling group that for several decades was right on the button on Oak Park’s two-sheet rink, and today curls at Exmoor.

Oak Park is a family club, more than it was when Dr. Lewis was a tyke or for many of the years in between. Once a WASP haven, it is ecumenical in its pioneering gender-neutral membership policy and its continuing appeal.

“You have to develop and evolve without changing your culture,” said Fran Roche, whose curiosity in the history of the club led him to start the Oak Park’s heritage committee.

Oak Park has done that, and now, a century after businessman Gustavus Babson created the spark that led to the club’s creation, can be proud of a century of camaraderie coupled with genial competition.

The club’s history includes a century of elite golf professionals on staff who account for 120 tournament victories on the PGA Tour, including the first and third playings of the Masters Tournament, earned by Horton Smith while affiliated with the club, and the 1946 U.S. Open, captured by Lloyd Mangum shortly after his stint as an assistant to 14-time tour winner Dick Metz.

Oak Park’s history includes the remarkable Harry Radix, whose personal legacy includes the annual Radix Cup Match, an Oak Park fixture since 1963. It includes the vivid

memories of the Auchtermuchty and the Invitational, a pair of get-togethers that have featured everything from Playboy bunnies on the tee – Scotty Fessenden brought those to the Auchtermuchty one year – to H.K. Snyder's famed floor shows to cap the Invitational, which invariably brought the house down. Then there's Ray Anderson, a fine player and an influential force behind the scenes, the only person to serve on the USGA's executive committee and rise to the presidency of the WGA and CDGA.

Generally, a visit to Oak Park equals serenity. A meeting among friends old and new. A golf game, often put together by a chance encounter in the locker room or a call to Tom Geraghty, who can line up handicaps and keep secrets. A hand of bridge or gin rummy after. Dinner with the family to greet the evening.

All of it enjoyed by a membership committed to the finest. And a membership that in many cases goes back generations. A club that has seen fathers and sons on the board, as club presidents, and as club champions.

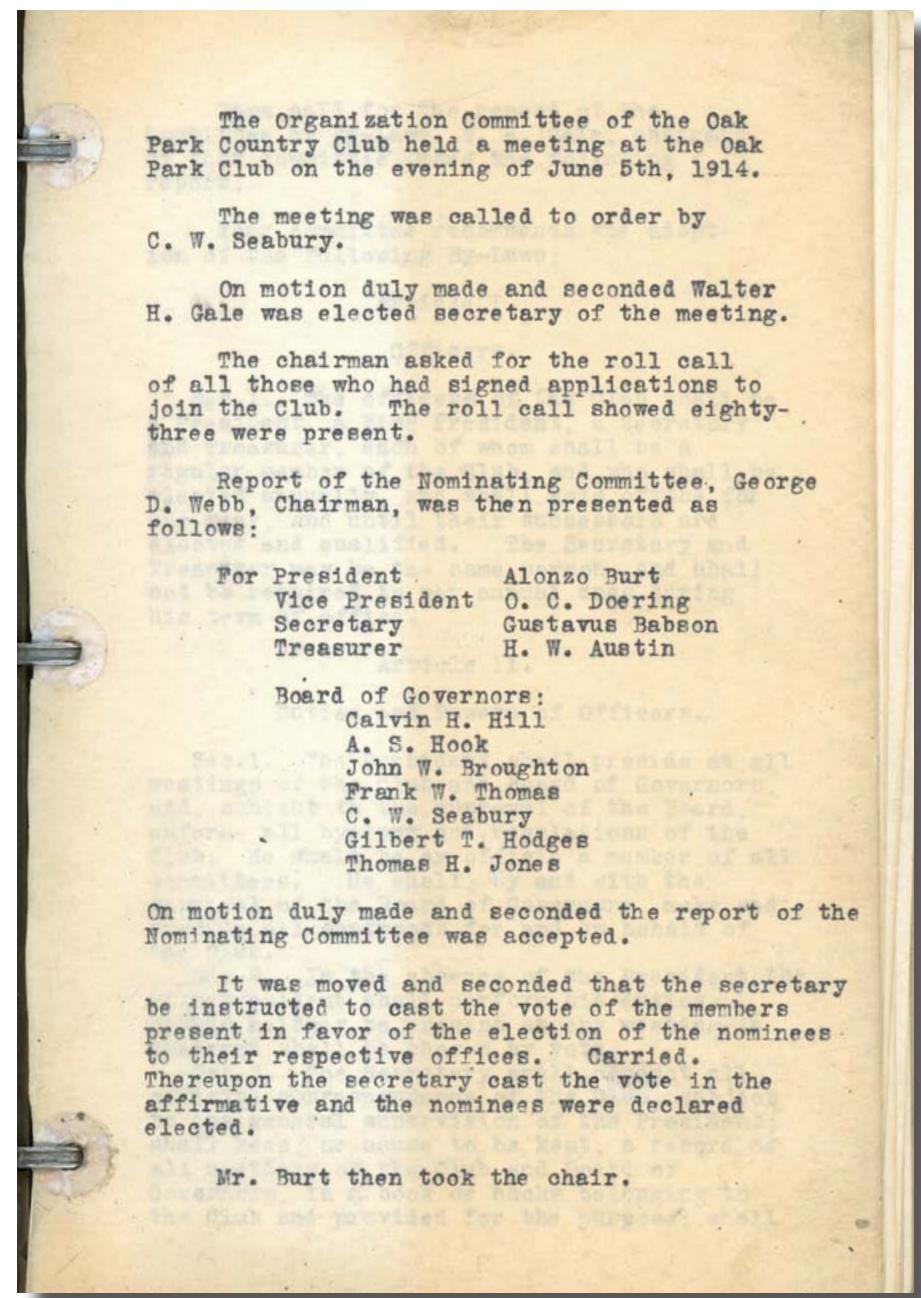
Don Heppes Jr. never won the club championship, but before his passing, he remembered 1958 vividly.

"My dad was club champ, my mother was club champ, and I was junior champ," he recalled in 2011. "That was one very good year."

John Ingram, Heppes' grandfather on his mother's side, was a member as early as 1919. Don's widow Gay remains a member, extending the family's heritage at Oak Park to 95 years strong. Such dedication to a club is not atypical. Third-generation members abound.

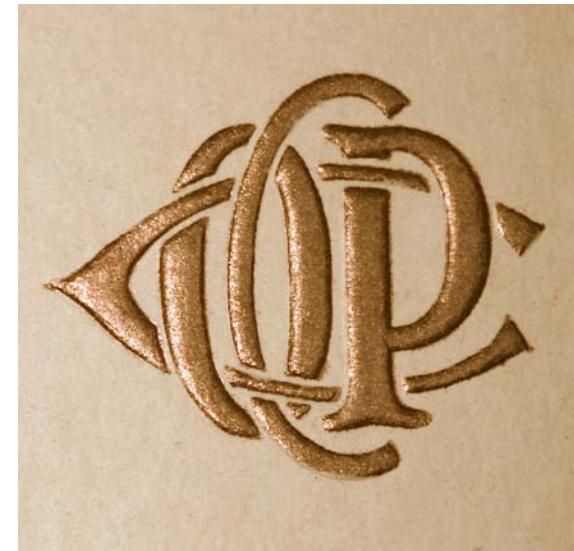
Oak Park's draw isn't because of any one thing. There are harder golf courses nearby. River Forest Tennis Club has 10 courts to Oak Park's four. There are other country clubs with pools, and those who want to shoot skeet year-round can join a sportsman's club.

What Oak Park offers is the total package, including a warmth



When it all began. The first page of the minutes from the club's organizational meeting, in which the inaugural by-laws were adopted.

Club logos through the years



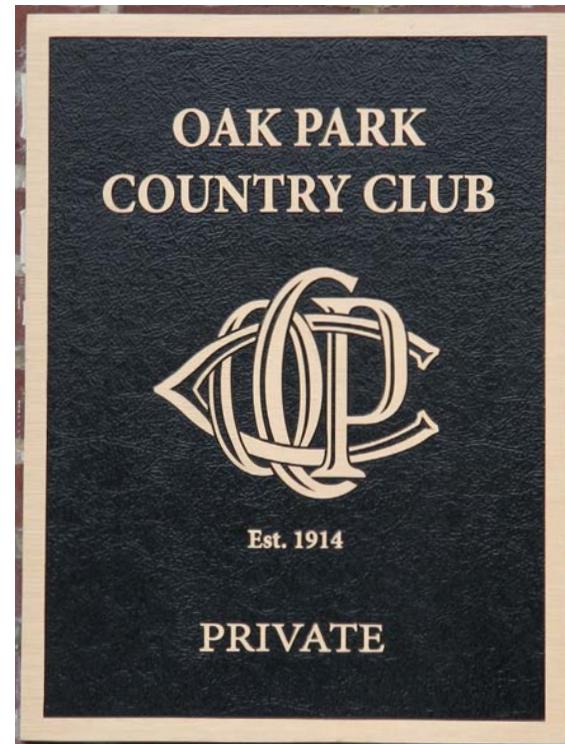
Oak Park's original logo, used as early as 1916, featured crossed tennis racquets in front of a golf bag. It has been used, slightly modified, for most of the century. The script logo, also from 1916, appeared on schedules and scorecards. The golden interlocking logo was featured on 1919's fifth

that comes not from the double-sided fireplace, but from within the membership.

"I felt as if I belonged from the day I got here," Chuck Doherty said. "That's the way I was treated by every member at the time. I can remember walking out and making my first golf game with two people I hadn't seen in my life, and they couldn't have been more kind.

"The thing that made Oak Park so desirable to me was the fact it was so closely integrated with the neighborhood. Along with that goes the lack of pretension. People can't be pretentious when their neighbors and fellow club members see them taking out the garbage every morning. I think that's a trait that has been carried through as long as I've been here. And I hope the ability to meld in so closely with the neighborhood continues as long as the club exists. That's the key to making the club successful, and a very important key to making the neighborhood the vibrant place it is."

Oak Park is also a club that supports a caddie program that has turned out over 100



anniversary brochure. The 1970s brought a circular op-art logo into vogue. The Pipe Major strode to the front in the 1980s, and remains on the porte cochere and the title of the former Invitational. The centennial logo seen at the front gate is an adaptation of the 1919 brochure logo.

Evans Scholars, and gives the Oak Park-River Forest High School teams a place to practice and play.

It is welcoming to guests of members, and a getaway for members who, if only for a few hours, need a haven from the grind of making a living. It was not the first club, golf or country, to enable players from the community and beyond to tee it up, but it is the one that has lasted.

Quality is the reason for that. A clubhouse designed by disciples of Frank Lloyd Wright. A golf course designed by Donald Ross. The enduring commitment to quality from members and employees, and a remarkable legacy of navigating financial headwaters that took other clubs under, has brought Oak Park from 1914 to 2014 with flying colors.

This is Oak Park Country Club, with a proud past, a lively present, and a limitless future.



Chapter 1

‘A place of beauty’

Be fitting a club with a youthful outlook and a distinguished history, Oak Park Country Club was founded by a young man of distinction.

Gustavus Babson was one of Oak Park’s leading citizens. He and his three brothers grew up on a Nebraska farm, but found their way to Chicago, where three of them founded the Babson Brothers mail order company. As with crosstown rivals Sears, Roebuck and Co., and Montgomery Ward, it sold everything from electric fence insulators to the Victrola, and even phonograph records on the Babson Brothers label. It also made Gus Babson wealthy.

Gus Babson had many interests, and golf was one of them. In January of 1914, Babson was a 32-year-old member of a local club, the Westward Ho Country Club in the Galewood section of Chicago’s Austin neighborhood. It leased 170 acres along North Avenue from Oak Park to Narragansett avenues. Since 1909, Westward Ho had been searching for a new site, given the development of the area, and the situation was coming to a head.

Babson, a man of action, was tired of waiting. On his own, he found 190 acres in unincorporated land to the north of River Forest, a few miles west-northwest of Westward Ho, and took options about 180 acres on the property, which consisted of the Sayre, Lovett and Wallace Evans farms. (The landowner of the other 10 acres, on which today sits the pool and tennis complex and most of the club’s parking lot, would not sell immediately.)

An arm of the property stretched to the Des Plaines River, where a boat dock was contemplated. Much was made of the potential boating aspect of the club at the start – “The club will be ... in a position to make the prairie river in some respects as pleasant a playground as the Thames,” gushed *Oak Leaves*’ reporter in one story – but plans were soon shelved, as was the idea of an additional nine-hole course.

The clubhouse was still under construction when the club opened on July 3, 1915. Often remodeled, it retains its original character.



The plan for the club was front-page news in Oak Leaves, sharing space with the Great War.

At the end of Westward Ho's annual meeting on this cold winter night, Babson told his many friends among the membership of his move, and his belief that a new golf course, on land the club could first lease and then buy, should be built there.

The trio of farms were on a dirt road well outside of Oak Park – Westward Ho was more convenient to all, and could be reached by streetcar – but Babson had in mind a first-class club, with a golf course, clubhouse and membership to match. Immediately, his friends rallied to the cause.

The next morning, Babson, Walter H. Gale, Frank O. Southbrook and Sherman C. Spitzer met to begin a search for members. Within days, an organization committee had been formed. Babson and his friends, including Alonzo Burt, O.C. Doering and H.W. Austin, would become the club's first president, vice president, and treasurer, respectively.

They and other go-getters didn't have to work hard. A mention in Oak Leaves on February 11 helped generate momentum, and publicity in the form of a story in the May 5 *Chicago Tribune* boosted the cause. Wrote Jack Proctor, "All that is needed is the guarantee that a sufficient number of members can be obtained for the club, and as country clubs seem to be essential in all up to date localities, there appears to be no doubt the citizens of Oak Park will do their duty."

Two weeks later, on May 19, 1914, Oak Park Country Club was chartered by the State of Illinois. It was one more step from concept to reality.

Later, an *Oak Leaves* reporter would write, "It is proposed to establish on the land a playground where health may be developed by wholesome outdoor exercises and the social side of life cultivated. ... There is to be no ostentation in the clubhouse and grounds, but the designs now under discussion indicate that the spot will be a place of beauty for all who pass that way and comfortable and convenient for all the members. Alonzo Burt of 538 Euclid, north, is president of the club and is devoting considerable time to the preliminary work of improvement. The other officers are:

Some 228 potential members expressed interest in joining, and the record shows there were 83 charter members by June 5, 1914, when the club's very efficient organization committee held its one and only meeting. It elected a board and passed the inaugural by-laws, which included the

six classes of membership – regular, non-resident, ladies, junior, lawn tennis and honorary, with a limit of 300 regular members – and a general plan for buying the property from Babson. He was elected the club's secretary and also controlled the Oak Park Club Syndicate, the landholder, which would charge the country club \$5,000 annually on a 99-year lease, with an option for the club to buy out the lease for \$100,000 at any time.

Oak Park Country Club was coming to life. And what a life it would be! Board member Charles Ward Seabury, whom Babson had appointed the chair of the organizing committee, told *Oak Leaves* for its June 13 edition, "We are starting in to put the grounds in shape and will probably have 27 holes of golf, tennis courts, outdoor swimming pool and a small building on the river bank to be used as a winter club for skating and tobogganing and for a boat house in summer.

"The club has met with enthusiastic success and everyone seems to be delighted with the progress made."

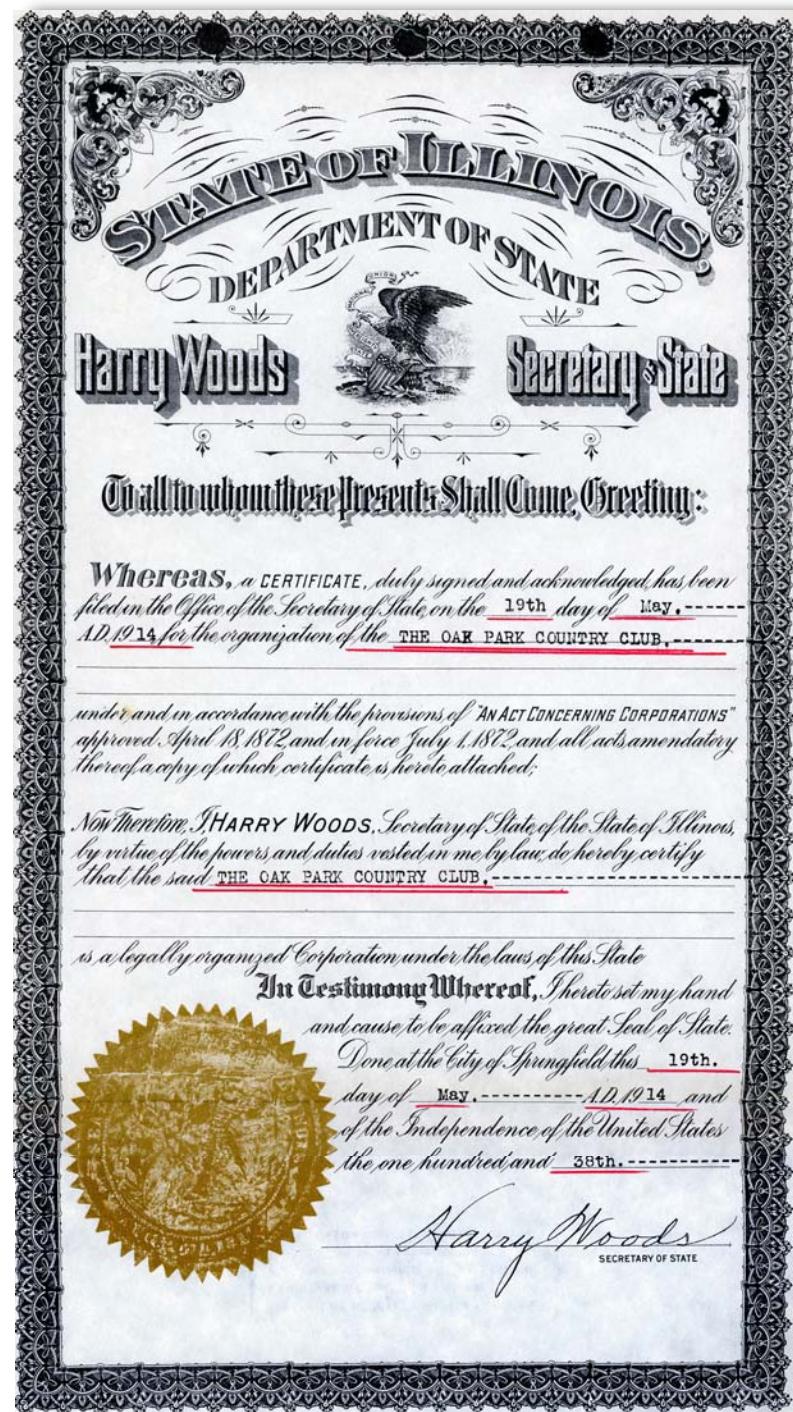
The first meeting of the board, on June 19, included setting of charter memberships at \$300, payable in equal installments of \$100 over three years.

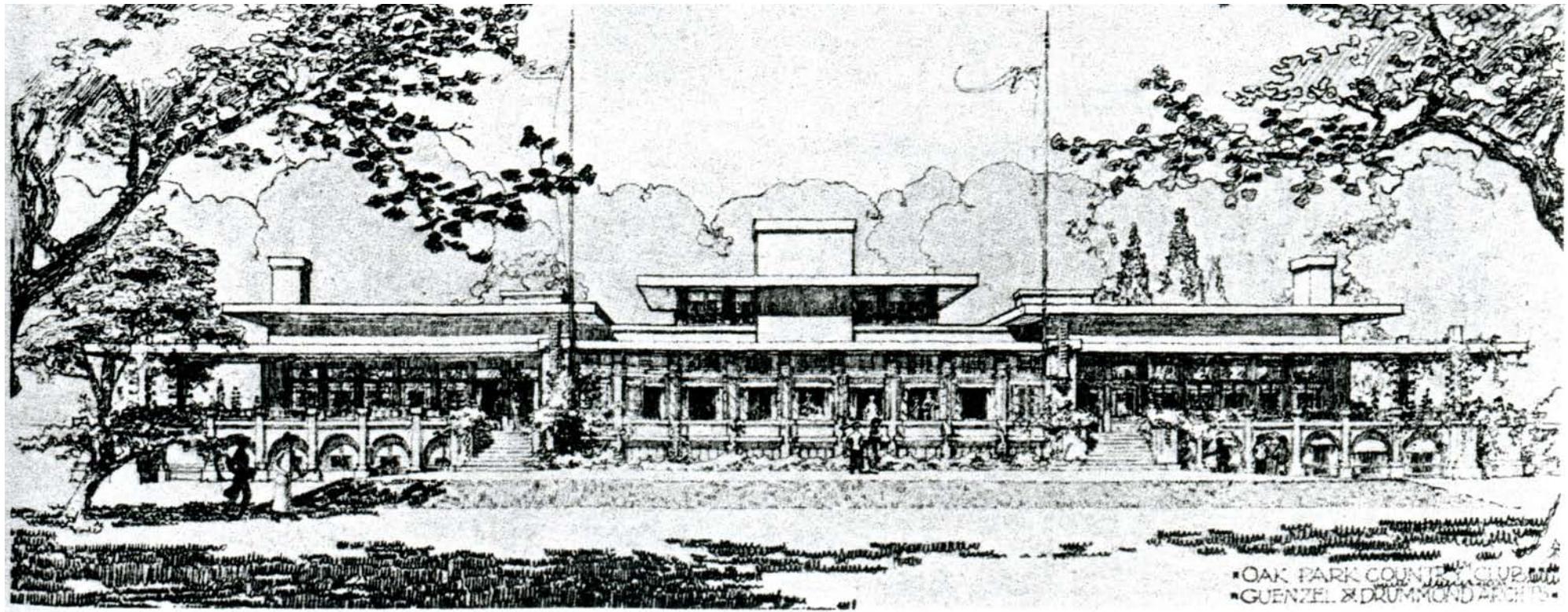
It also included the formation of a committee of four to find a clubhouse architect. The committee, consisting of architects Normand S. Patton, E.E. Roberts, Charles E. White and William Drummond, proposed to the board at the next meeting they design the clubhouse and associated buildings together.

A newspaper report noted the four made a survey of local clubhouses and also queried more distant clubs to get a sense of what worked and what did not, "to the end it may incorporate the most desirable features to be found."

Drummond was the best-known of the quartet. He had worked under Frank Lloyd Wright when the famed creator of Prairie Style architecture was headquartered in Oak Park. When Wright closed his Oak Park office in 1910,

The club's charter of incorporation was granted by the State of Illinois on May 19, 1914.





The Prairie Style clubhouse design of William Drummond and Louis Guenzel anticipates the sunken ground floor and elevated main floor existing today. A unique feature was a pair of flagpoles that visually broke the building into thirds.

Drummond went out on his own, working in the Wright style.

He took on Louis Guenzel, another former Wright associate, as a business partner, and their business flourished. Drummond designed many structures in the Oak Park-River Forest area that remain in use today, including the River Forest Methodist Church, a structure that both reaches toward the heavens and implies earthbound solidity.

When Oak Park design committee was formed, he and Guenzel also designed a Prairie Style clubhouse. For years, the rendering of the clubhouse was described as being a Wright design. In fact, as the fine print on the lower right of the rendering shows, it is a Drummond and Guenzel, but, reminiscent of Wright's classic Robie House on a larger scale, one that the old master could have created.

While a detailed floor plan of the design is not available, it appears to be very much in sympathy with the clubhouse Drummond, Patton, Roberts and White came up with, and was quite likely used as a template for the final design. There's a ground floor that is sunken



The clubhouse rendering of March 1915, as envisioned from the north side, with the walkout ground floor, and floor-to-ceiling windows on the main floor.

on the front side but opens directly onto the course on the back, with a raised main floor. Only the second floor is missing from Drummond and Guenzel plan.

There was also the matter of the golf course. While the date was not committed to the minutes, at an early date the board engaged Donald Ross to design the course. Ross completed his plan on July 28, and met with the board and a group of members August 3 at the Oak Park Club in the city. His plan was adopted, and construction began August 19.

“Mr. Ross is a well known expert in this work, particularly in the eastern part of the country,” *Oak Leaves* reported on September 19, which devoted a page to Ross’s detailed diagram of the club’s course and grounds, including the archery range directly north of the tennis courts and just behind the 15th green.

Two days later, the rest of the city could see it in the *Chicago Herald*. Even after the recent renovation by Rick Jacobson, it is remarkable how little the course has changed over the years. Ross even left vacant the northwest portion of the property, calling it “land reserved for third nine hole course,” a move that allowed the club to eventually develop the skeet-shooting area, the practice range, and have enough land to sell to Elmwood Park High School in the 1950s, allaying fears that the northeast corner of the course would be disrupted by the specter of eminent domain.

Water for both the course and the clubhouse would come from a 296-foot deep well drilled adjacent to the clubhouse. There was also an auxiliary pump at the Des Plaines River for course use as needed.

According to the 1915 annual report, the entire plan, from building the course to construction of the clubhouse, would cost about \$123,000 to implement, exclusive of the purchase of the property. This was real money, some \$20,000 of it supplied by a bank loan, but the club was attracting members so quickly that by the day after Christmas, 1914, the board “decided that those members who had failed to pay the first installment should be notified that unless this were paid by January 22nd their names would be automatically dropped and their places filled from the waiting list.”

Construction on the clubhouse began on November 17, barely a month before, and the golf course wouldn’t open even nine holes until the spring of 1915, but before 1914 ended, Oak Park Country Club had plans for a waiting list.

It would soon have a professional. It took under a month for a three-man committee,

appointed on December 26, to interview and nominate George O. Simpson as Oak Park Country Club's first head professional. Simpson would start April 15, and be paid \$75 a month.

According to the January 27, 1915, board minutes, Simpson could also retain all "such earnings as he can realize from teaching, making, repairing and cleaning golf clubs, and from the sale of golf balls and other golf supplies."

But there was still something missing.

A good road to the clubhouse.

Pavement on Thatcher Avenue didn't extend north of North Avenue at the time. It was just a dirt path to the old farms, then connecting with similarly unimproved Armitage Avenue, which went west and curved around the western boundary of the club – and bisected that small portion of club land that connected with the Des Plaines River.

Club president Burt had definite ideas about improving the roads.

"Thatcher Avenue should be rebuilt and widened from the end of the asphalt in River Forest to Grand Avenue in the village of River Grove," Burt said in the September 19, 1914 issue of *Oak Leaves*. "North Avenue should be resurfaced from Harlem Avenue to the intersection of Thatcher Avenue at the Des Plaines River, and Harlem Avenue should be rebuilt and widened from North Avenue to Chicago Avenue in Oak Park."

That wasn't all. An election was looming in the fall of 1914, and Burt said, "We should all be for the good roads candidates."

Those candidates must not have won. The quest for improved roads extended to 1915. Charter member C.H. Wells had spoken with the Cook County Board, but they hadn't committed to improving Thatcher or any other avenue.

On March 4, the club's board asked Wells to press the issue with the county and anyone else, to "ascertain just what would be necessary to bring about the best results and what municipalities or organizations had jurisdiction over the road that we were anxious to have developed.



August 10, 1916

Members Oak Park Country Club:

We desire to call your attention to some of the details in connection with the operation of our dining rooms, where we are endeavoring to give to members service of the highest standard.

Undoubtedly many members are not familiar with the fact that we require approximately thirty to thirty-five regular employees to properly maintain our Club House. This incurs a heavy overhead expense which should be largely absorbed in our restaurant sales, but so far this year members have not taken advantage of the Club's dining facilities to the extent that we had hoped and anticipated.

The following statement shows clearly that the house is being patronized and used by only a small percentage of our members.

Statement of Restaurant Patronage

Members	June 1916		July 1916	
	no receipts	\$ 1.00 to 2.50	no receipts	\$ 2.50 and less
88			87	
53	\$ 1.00 to 2.50		36	\$ 2.50 and less
54	2.50 to 5.00		29	2.50 to 5.00
38	5.00 to 10.00		58	5.00 to 10.00
32	10.00 to 15.00		45	10.00 to 15.00
14	15.00 to 20.00		19	15.00 to 20.00
11	20.00 to 25.00		20	20.00 to 25.00
6	25.00 to 50.00		27	25.00 to 50.00
2	50.00 to 75.00		2	50.00 to 75.00
2	75.00 to 150.00			

Taking the average, less than one hundred members are patronizing the restaurant, which is not sufficient to give the support that our present facilities and organization deserves.

A 1916 note from the board, headed by the original club logo, implored members to make use of the club's dining facilities.



Aside from newspaper clippings, the earliest existing photographs of the course date from 1919. The bridge leading to the second green was rather treacherous, but only the bunkering appears to have changed.

Whatever Wells said to the county board next worked. He was able to report on April 9 that the board agreed to improve the road.

Oak Park now had a clubhouse under construction, albeit the work having been delayed by an area-wide strike, a golf course with nine holes nearly ready to play, a nearly full membership roster, and the promise that there would be a decent road leading to the fancy brick entrance gate. (Sadly, Normand Patton, one of the four architects in charge of its construction, would not see its opening. He died March 15, 1915.)

Members were itching to play, and not just golf. Soon, \$500 was allocated for the construction of three tennis courts about 500 feet west of the clubhouse, the walk to the courts along a lovely promenade. But golf was the main item on the mind of every member. Ross' design was being pushed to completion, with nine holes expected to be ready for the opening day.

But when would Oak Park open?

On June 28, the decision would be made. July 3 was selected. And, thanks to O.C. Dearing and Western Electric manager Frank Ketcham, those who ventured to the club on the day before the Glorious Fourth would see the American flag flying high from a 60-foot flagpole.

It didn't matter to the 100 or so members who made their way to the grounds that only the front nine holes were available, that the clubhouse was incomplete because of the construction strike

across Chicagoland, and that it was so hard to get there. This was their club, Oak Park Country Club, and they were going to enjoy it. And they did, with sports and pastimes committee chair Gilbert Hodges leading the way with an 89 – the course record! – when the course was treated gingerly, up to and including teeing it up in the fairway.

Most of the key men in the development of the club were there, including Gus Babson. He scored 111, but few outsiders knew. The *Tribune* misspelled his last name. (By July 17, Hodges had cranked out an 84. He would win the club's Labor Day tournament as well.)

It was a great start, all things considered. The idea of Oak Park Country Club had been in the mind of only Gus Babson before he told his friends at Westward Ho only 18 months before.

Within two months of the first ball being struck in anger, the clubhouse would be finished, with a formal opening on Labor Day, September 6, L.P. Trudeau, previously of El Paso, Texas, having been installed as the club manager. William Matthews was the grounds foreman. Simpson was giving lessons to tyros eager to learn how to play, and regripping clubs. A man named Simmons was in charge of the caddies.

All that was left was to open the back nine. That would have to wait until the spring of 1916, great care being taken that the turf was in prime condition until players were let loose on it. Then, Oak Park Country Club was in full flight.



A 1919 photograph reveals a pond adjacent to the 16th tee and just close enough to the 18th green to be a worry to slicers. Today, it's known as Lake Wilbur.

A short history of golf in Oak Park

It's well known that golf in the Chicago area began, at least formally, on a backyard bluff overlooking Lake Michigan on the Lake Forest estates of Charles B. Farwell and John Dwight, and part of what is now Forest Park. From those seven holes, laid out by Charles Blair Macdonald in April of 1892, the whole grand rigmarole began.

Golf in Oak Park and vicinity was not far behind. William Havemeyer, the brother of Thomas Havemeyer, an acquaintance of Macdonald and partner in the formation of the USGA, created three holes in a Riverside village park in the summer of 1893. From that meager beginning sprouted Riverside Golf Club, second in age only to Chicago Golf Club, though both institutions have switched locations.

It took only five more years for the golf craze of the 1890s to invade Oak Park. A farm field at Madison Street and Carpenter Avenue was found worthy of a nine-hole course in August of 1898. The farm was owned by A. Haddow Smith, who was already disposed to golf games on his property. It was he who leased a portion of his farm in Belmont – now Downers Grove – to Macdonald and his cohorts in 1892 for Chicago Golf Club when it became clear that seven holes in Lake Forest back yards just would not do.

Smith may have laid out the course at Madison and Carpenter as well. On that, the record is sketchy, but we do know that for a brief moment in its larval stage, it was called the Oak



Westward Ho's clubhouse at Natchez Avenue and North Avenue in Galewood hosted a lively membership for close to 25 years beginning in 1899.

Park Golf Club. By the time it opened, it was called Westward Ho Country Club, a name sometimes accompanied by an exclamation point. Westward Ho! bespoke a dude ranch more than a golf course, but the name stuck, even if the exclamation point did not.

The course lasted for only a few years. The membership of Westward Ho was out the door almost before it entered. First, it voted down playing on Sunday, a point of contention at most area clubs well into the first decade of the 20th

century. Second, the group decided it needed an 18-hole course, and began to search outside Cicero Township for suitable grounds. Those were found in Galewood, as the section of Chicago's Austin neighborhood nearest Oak Park was named, and Westward Ho moved there in 1899 to play on a course designed by Herbert James Tweedie and David McIntosh.

Meanwhile, play at Madison and Carpenter went on. The Newspaper Golf Club, a group of reporters, photographers and printers working

and River Forest

at Chicago's many daily newspapers, leased the course, naming each hole after one of the papers. That group moved to the Harlem Golf Course, located within the infield of the Harlem Race Track at 7400 W. Roosevelt Road, in 1901. The following year, a second group naming itself Oak Park Golf Club took over the Smith farm course. Eventually, the land became too valuable for Smith, and the course was overrun by housing and businesses.

While Smith was turning his farm into a course in 1898, River Forest tycoon William F. Quick was ordering a course for his back yard, and it opened, six holes strong, in July of that year, a month before Smith's nine. By the following year, Quick's six, bounded by Harlem, Lake, Quick and Bonnie Brae a stone's throw from the elevated line, had become the nine of the River Forest Golf Club, expanded to cover 130 acres and with a clubhouse designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The fun there lasted until 1905, when the club's membership merged with Westward Ho. By now, the property was owned by E.A. Cummings. He allowed the new River Forest Tennis Club to use the north half of the property. That group built a modest clubhouse that was consumed by fire in 1906. It then called on Wright, who built the club a clubhouse of which the membership was so enamored, it was cut into three parts in 1920 and moved to the River Forest Tennis Club's new site, at Quick and

Lathrop a few blocks to the west, when the Forest Preserve District took over the land for its general headquarters building.

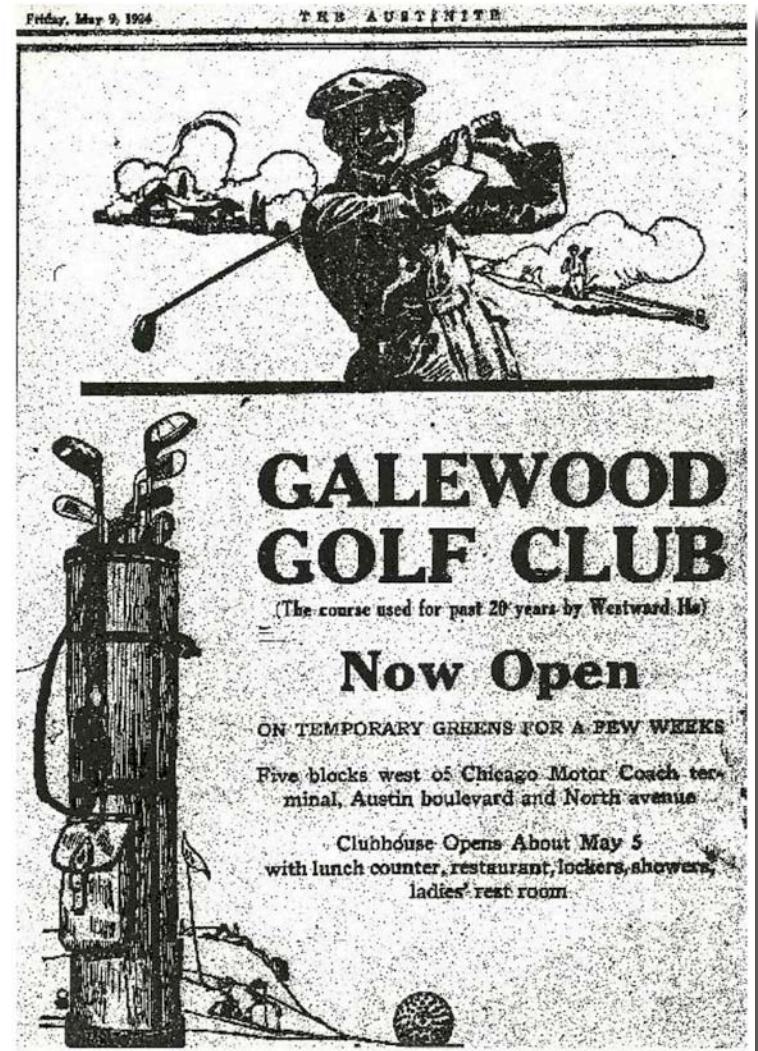
Meanwhile, golf at Westward Ho's new site was booming even before the River Forest membership arrived. It was one of the leading clubs in the Chicago area, but trouble was afoot. A clubhouse fire in the winter of 1911-12 caused \$20,000 in losses. A plan to buy 120 acres for a new course west of Elmhurst fell through; some disgruntled members mulled joining the Wheaton Golf Club. And the longterm lease on the property granted by the Gale family – hence, Galewood – was running out.

While it was later extended, the expectation, given the housing boom, was that it would end in 1917.

Knowing that, Oak Park's Gustavus Babson searched for land suitable for golf, and found it where dusty Thatcher Avenue turned to the west.

Westward Ho stayed in Galewood through 1923, and the course, renamed Galewood Golf Club and opened to the public, remained in business through 1927, when the Gale family created Galewood Estates.

Westward Ho's third course, in Melrose Park, opened July 4, 1924 on a 360-acre tract at North Avenue and Wolf Road. It was open until 1957, when the course closed and the land was sold,



Once Westward Ho's membership moved west, the course became Galewood, open to all.

most of it becoming an industrial park. There remains Westward Ho Drive and Golfview Drive in a small residential area where the course was located.

But Babson's inspired creation? The Oak Park Country Club thrives today.



Chapter 2

Enter Donald Ross

A group planning to start a golf or country club a century ago faced many of the same obstacles a group does at present: Rounding up the necessary amount of members to finance the club's start, searching for good land on which to build the golf course, and hiring an architect to design the best possible course.

In 1914, in the early years of the second great American golf boom, there were several outstanding architects available for hire. In the Chicago area, two names were particularly prominent:

- James Foulis Jr., who learned the game under the wing of Old Tom Morris and won the second United States Open in 1896. Foulis designed or redesigned several area courses, including Lake Zurich Golf Club, which has barely been touched since Foulis created it in 1895.

- Tom Bendelow, the most prolific golf architect the game has seen. The in-house architect for A.G. Spalding and Co., and later for American Park Builders, Bendelow crossed the country and Canada designing courses, some in a day, others with much more forethought. Among his notable works are Medinah No. 3, which, while modified, still bears his imprint, and the South Course at Olympia Fields Country Club.

A group searching outside Chicago could contract with, among others:

- William Watson, shuttling between the Midwest and southern California, and beginning in 1912 with his design of Westmoreland Country Club, active in the Chicago area in particular.

- Harry S. Colt, the English former lawyer who advised George Crump on the routing of Pine Valley Country Club, and whose co-design of the Old Elm Club in 1913 with our next prospect brought him to the Chicago area for the first time.

Donald Ross, pictured in 1935, was on site at Oak Park in the summer of 1914 to draw up the master plan for the golf course and gain approval from the club's board.

- Donald Ross, like his contemporary James Foulis Jr., a native of Scotland and a student of Old Tom Morris. Unlike Colt – with whom he collaborated on Old Elm in his first visit to Chicago – he was firmly encamped in the United States since 1898, originally holding down professional and greenkeeper positions in Massachusetts, while wintering in Pinehurst, North Carolina, and, on the side, building the first real golf design empire.

There were others who might have been considered, including Chicago-based architects William B. Langford and David McIntosh, the former just starting a long career, the latter a golf professional who dabbled in architecture for decades.

However, the original Oak Park Country Club board of governors settled on Ross. Did Gus Babson, the man who pushed for the club's formation, push for Ross? Had Babson or his cohorts seen the work of Ross and Colt at the Old Elm Club in Highland Park, which opened in 1913?

It's possible that the Old Elm course, or the design for Indian Hill Club in Winnetka, which opened in July of 1914, or a plan of revision for the Glen View Club, all attracted Oak Park's attention. Yet, all three were Ross and Colt collaborations, and the board selected Ross alone to create Oak Park's course. Colt would eventually travel back to England for a time, but he appears to have spent enough time in the U.S. in 1914 to design one more course, either with Ross or singularly.

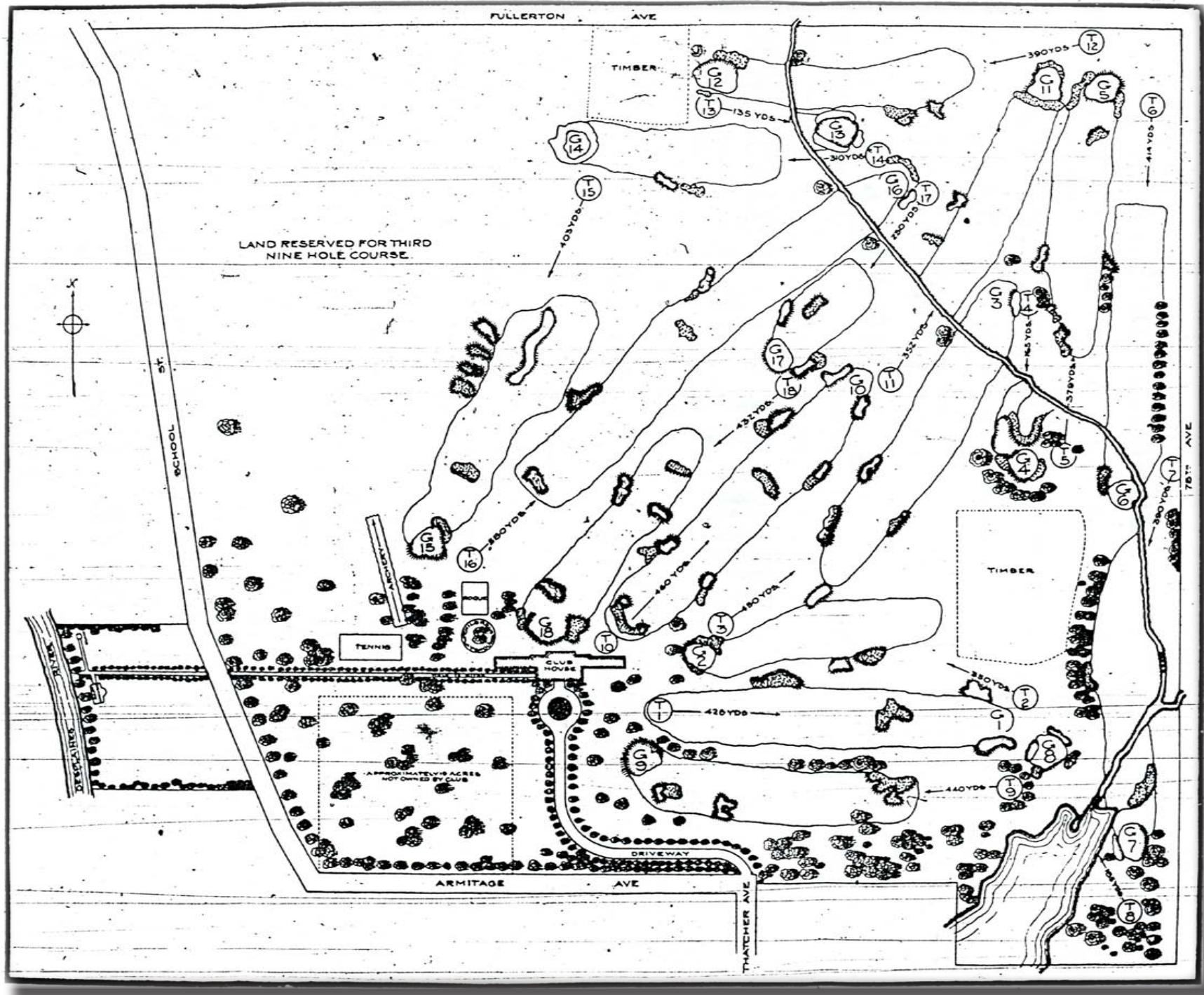
That Oak Park selected Ross to go it alone makes it likely Ross' reputation as a first-class golf course architect was known to the board from more than his recent work in the area.

Perhaps one or more of the founders had wintered in Pinehurst, where Ross began to ply his trade in 1902. Precisely who might have been in the running, and what criteria the board used in the selection of Ross, does not appear in the carefully-preserved minutes, which date to the club's founding, nor anywhere else.

Instead, the board minutes of August 3 boldly reveal his presence:

"The purpose of the meeting was to receive (the) report of Mr. Donald J. Ross, Golf Expert, who had been laying out the course and also to discuss with the four (clubhouse) architects sketches which they had prepared.

"Mr. Ross and the architects met with the Directors, and on invitation, several members of the Club. Both the plans for the grounds and Club House were thoroughly



Donald Ross' original plan for the golf course, as depicted in September 1914. It was generally built as designed, with the major exception of the 14th hole.

discussed and considerable progress made.”

Ross had completed his plan for Oak Park on July 28, most likely after several days of studying the grounds on foot.

Many golf courses designed by Ross elsewhere in the country were essentially mail-order plans, with Ross sent a topographical map by a course and returning a set of basic plans based on that map. For high-profile assignments, including most of those he took on in the Chicago area, Ross was present at the course. This was the case at Oak Park, based both on his extensive travels through the area from 1913 through 1919, and in the thoroughness in which Ross put in to employ Auchtermuchty Creek as a hazard.

In “Golf Has Never Failed Me,” a memoir unpublished until 1996, Ross wrote of his course design manner, “I visit the land and walk over it until I have a complete grasp of the conditions and possibilities of the tract.

“This is first done without any attempt to lay out the course. It may take two days or more to accomplish this, depending entirely on the extent and the nature of the property.

“After going over it in this fashion, I then select all the good holes possible, irrespective of whether they shall be in the final layout.”

Ross went on to explain that he puts as many of those “good holes” in his final routing as possible.

We can imagine, then, Ross as a solitary figure, topographical map in hand, tramping across the generally flat farms of the Sayre, Lovett and Evans families, looking for something to start with, and finding the then-unnamed creek flowing through the property, meandering to and fro. There, almost surely, Ross would begin to sketch holes going one way and the other, then repairing to a hotel room each night to see what combination of holes would best fit together.

Ross was careful to shy away from the 10-acre square spot close to the proposed entrance at Thatcher Road that the club did not control. In fact, he left the western quarter of the tract all but untouched save for plotting the position of the practice range, tennis courts, roque, and an archery range. Most intriguing on the original plan, on the northwest corner of the grounds, was this: “Land reserved for third nine-hole course.”

His plan would also dodge the most heavily-wooded portions of the property, but require play over the creek no fewer than 13 times on 12 holes.



A rare photograph of the 18th green before the pond was expanded. That's George Simpson, Oak Park's first professional, on the green.

Was the first hole Ross envisioned the current fifth hole, with the creek in play off the tee, down the left side of the fairway, and crossing again at the green?

That's not a bad bet, but we don't know for sure. Ross, who kept many files on courses, left nothing behind on his work at Oak Park, and the club has no original hole-by-hole drawings on graph paper, which Ross consistently used both to finish his concept of a hole and to provide his construction crew precise dimensions for each hole. Those undoubtedly existed at one time, but have been misplaced in the shuffle of time.

The earliest plan is the original of the course as a whole from September, 1914. While the Tufts Archives – the Pinehurst, North Carolina, repository of Ross' working diagrams and papers – does not believe the overall plan was drawn up by Ross, they don't know who did it. It could have been one of Ross' assistants, or a local surveyor, working from Ross' original. Regardless, it depicts Oak Park Country Club as it was when it opened, with one major exception.

The overall plan – work for which Ross was paid \$660.26, including expenses – shows golf course remarkably like the one that can be found today by looking out the window of the main floor. The front nine has been rearranged slightly – there was also a period when



The fifth tee (right) and fourth green in the earliest days of the course. An absence of trees in most areas gave Oak Park the feel of a links.

it became the back nine – but few holes have been changed radically, and the same is true of the back nine, even after several architects and a few members have had a hand in making changes. Ross, even while dodging the heaviest concentration of trees, was able to fashion a course that would test generations of players.

The major differences beyond rebunkering come in the sequence of the front nine and the location of the current seventh, 12th, 14th and 18th greens and 15th tee.

Originally, what today is the eighth hole was the first hole. Today's ninth was the second, while today's first was the third, and so on through the current seventh hole, which stood as the ninth in the original plan. Essentially, the front nine's rotation was moved two holes behind Ross' original intent.

In 1921, Ross wrote he believed the clubhouse would be located some 200 feet south of where it is, but the plan shows no sign of that. On the diagram, the clubhouse is positioned precisely where it stands today.

So why was the front nine juggled? The simple answer may be nothing more than the membership, or perhaps head professional George S. Simpson, wanting the front nine to start and finish just a few steps from the golf shop and the locker room, rather than on the front side of the clubhouse, where one would walk by two tees and a green before starting the journey.

But there could be another reason. Ross believed in a strong opening hole, and the original first hole, while stout at 420 yards with a cross bunker about 270 yards out, wasn't as strong as the par-5 third, which ran for 450 yards and forced players to make a decision about the second shot: Go for the green or lay up short of the creek?

In that configuration, in use by 1921, Ross provided options – and a challenge – immediately.

Beyond the changes on the first hole, revisions of the course requested by the grounds committee as early as 1916 infer that the course was not built completely as planned.

It didn't take long to build a golf course a century ago. There was no

permitting process. An architect or his construction chief would put together a crew of men and mules or horses – the animals to drag dirt about – and set to work.

At Oak Park, the construction chief was William J. Matthews, the club's first superintendent of grounds, while Edward Dearie, who would later become the club's superintendent, was on the construction crew. Beginning on August 19, Matthews took Ross' plan and brought to life a great deal, but perhaps not all, of what the architect had drawn up. Things came along quickly enough that the front nine was able to open on July 3, 1915, but play on the back nine didn't commence until 1916.

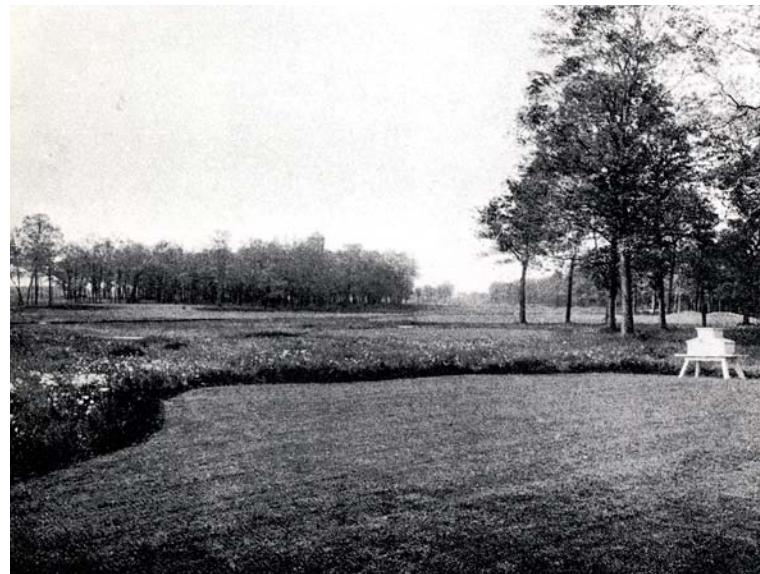
At the same time, the land for that potential third nine holes lay fallow. In the 1915 annual report, the board reported to the membership, "In view of the expenditures that are imperative for next year, the Board recommends that consideration of the proposed third nine holes be postponed until the second nine holes have been in play long enough to develop the urgency of building the third nine."

That additional nine was ninth on the list of key expenditures, which began with a caddie house for \$1,000, and included a children's playground for \$500, plus a \$9,000 heating plant for the clubhouse, originally unheated and not used in the winter. The estimate for the third nine was from \$6,000 to \$12,000, "according to the kind of a course desired," the board wrote.

Before any of that would be added, the club wanted to pay down the mortgage that helped finance the club's construction. Eventually, everything would be added, except that third nine holes.

Regardless, the course quickly gained notice as one of the best in the Chicago area. The order of the front nine had been changed to the current rotation when A.T. Packard lavished praise on the course in the *Chicago Evening Post* within a preview of the 1922 CDGA Amateur Championship.

"There will be players in this event who will tee up on the morning of June 15 without first having tried the course," Packard wrote. "Let mortals have compassion on such misguided golfers. The course will not."



Rough came up to the tee on the par-3 sixth hole. Note the old sand and water bucket for making tees.

"There is an overflowing abundance of difficulties, natural and acquired. A single element is the brook, which rambled blithesomely, not to say pestiferously, at times, through fourteen fairways. ... Ain't nature wonderful?

"In spite of this, there isn't a tricky hole at Oak Park. The stranger will be confronted at many holes with the option of playing over, short or around. Each way is a right way, depending on the skill of the player or wind conditions, but the stranger will have to do enough guessing the first time around to wreck an otherwise good score. And this difficulty is not confined to the long holes, of which there is an abundance, the course being 6,549 yards long.

"Take the sixth hole, for instance. The card says it is 185 yards. One simply can't believe the flag is waving its greeting from such a distance. ...

"Golf courses are rated high or low in proportion as they are tests of golfing skill. This puts Oak Park in the golfing Broadstreet as AAA1. Every difficulty is as honest as rain, but hard as the dickens to overcome and bring in a score that requires no glittering generalities in the explanation."

Even as Packard waxed so favorably, there had been some changes from the original plan, in addition to the rerouting of the front nine, and more were on the way.

The drive to revise the course started quickly. Late in 1916, after the full 18 had been in use for about six months, the grounds committee huddled and suggested the following changes:

1. Widening the third green.
2. Filling in the west end of the bunker in front of the fifth green.
3. Filling in the east end of the bunker on the east side of the fifth hole, west of the creek.
4. Moving the 14th green between the 15th tee and the woods, as Ross intended. The original course map from September 1914 depicts Ross' plan, but the detailed proposal of August 1917 notes that "the elbow" of the 14th hole turns left, rather than slightly right.

In other words, the 14th hole as built ran in the direction it does now, rather than straight to the west and finishing approximately in front of the current 15th tee, as Ross had intended. Either Matthews or Dearie, or the pair working together, came up with this arrangement.

The proposal noted it was desired “to relieve the present congestion between 14, 15 and 16,” and “bring the player once more in touch with the woods, and furnish the opportunity for further separation of the course by the trees in the area that will be left between 14, 15 and 16.”

By August 1917, more proposals had been added. The fourth hole was to be lengthened by 50 yards, with a 12-foot mound about 120 yards from the tee leveled and an associated fairway bunker filled in. Many players had to play their second shot short of the creek even after a good tee shot, thus settling for getting on the green in three, just as those with a poor first or second were doing.

“The movement of the tee north should overcome all of the present objections to the hole,” the proposal intoned.

On the fifth hole, a temporary tee about 50 yards forward was proposed, which would keep the total yardage of the course the same. If the three-week trial proved unsatisfactory, the original tee would stay, with a hollow in the fairway and a portion of a greenside bunker filled in.

On the 15th hole, a fairway bunker would shrink, allowing a 50-yard wide landing area, rather than the original 30-yard spot.



This map from the 1929 club directory shows the golf course after the changes suggested by Donald Ross, as amended by the board. The relatively short 15th hole, the large bunker between the first and 10th fairways, and the two between the 14th and 16th fairways stand out.

Donald Ross in Chicago

Golf architect Donald Ross worked on a dozen Chicago-area courses, five of them solo designs.

Oak Park was the first of those five.

1913	Old Elm Club	New, with Harry Colt
1913	Glen View Club	revisions, with Harry Colt
1914	Indian Hill Club	New, with Harry Colt
1914	Skokie CC	revisions
1914	Oak Park CC	New, returned in 1921
1915	Ravisloe CC	revisions from 1917-1919
1917	Bob O Link	New
1918	Beverly CC	revisions
1919	Evanston GC	New
1920	Calumet CC	New
1921	Northmoor CC	New
1921	La Grange CC	revisions, scope unknown

DONALD J. ROSS

WALTER B. HATCH, Assistant

Golf Architecture and Construction

Supervision of Maintenance

821 Pleasant Street . WORCHESTER, MASS.

Even a master like Ross advertised for new clients. This is from a 1921 issue of Chicago-based Golfers' Magazine.

With money tight, in part because of the escalating war and members leaving to join the service, the club's board moved slowly on the proposals.

In August 1918, the board agreed unanimously to move the 14th green, following a plan drawn up by Tom Bendelow. Club president Sherman C. Spitzer announced he would pay for the work, expecting it would be less than \$400. More than that, and the club would pay the remainder.

If a shovel was ever taken to the land, it was done in vain. On October 8, the board agreed unanimously to postpone the relocation of the 14th green, leaving in place the impromptu dogleg-left hole. The widening of the third green, "to conform to the original plans made by Donald Ross," was approved.

By the spring of 1919, the club was going forward with the plan to lengthen the fourth hole, though nothing was said of the temporary tee for the fifth hole. Plans for the fourth, approved unanimously on April 9, now included removal of a bunker at the green, as well as the removal of the fairway bunker and moving the tee 50 yards to the north.

That summer, one more move was made that would transform the look of the course. With only a few trees aside from the copses of trees near the east and north boundaries of the course, president Ernest P. Waud appointed a three-man Forestry Committee. John Q. Adams, William H. Spear and founder Gus Babson were charged with finding a way to plant trees on the previously open farmland areas of the course, using the services of a landscape architect, in Waud's words, "both from an architectural standpoint, as well as for the comfort of the golfers and adaptability to the golf course. No doubt such a person can give excellent assistance to the architect in the latter departments."

In October, the trio proposed planting 748 trees at a cost of \$4,600, the funds to be raised through voluntary donations by the membership.

The piecemeal changes may have occasioned the club's board to

consult with the source for the original plan. Donald Ross was brought back on May 6, 1921 to give the club his thoughts on the course as it stood and how it could be improved.

Spear was appointed chair of a five-man committee dedicated to permanent improvements, with Babson a key member. They took Ross' plan to heart and passed it on to the board in total for approval.

Ross' thoughts were considerable, covering the better part of three pages of a plan to be financed by the club's "permanent improvement fund."

They began with the location of the clubhouse. While it's on the correct place on the September 1914 map, Ross now said he expected it to be 200 feet south.

"When this change was decided upon, it automatically changed the distance of several holes," the board noted. "Our seventh, which is 400 yards, was to have been the ninth and 440 yards. The length of our eighth hole was shortened – likewise the 10th, 11th and 12th, and on account of this, Mr. Ross has, at some holes, placed new traps or changed the construction of several as now built. His main criticism was our weakness around several of our greens, particularly the eighth, ninth, 14th (the construction of which is entirely wrong), 17th and 18th.

"He does not believe that the short driver should be unjustly penalized from the tee, due to his inability to get distance; to the contrary, feels that there should be a way at each hole for him to play to the green, and Mr. Ross' suggestions regarding the filling in of part of the traps on the second, seventh and 10th holes cover his view regarding this; but he is very emphatic in his statement that the short driver's bad or misplaced shots should be penalized the same as the long driver, and several of the new pits suggested by him have been placed as such, 'To whom it may concern.'

Those suggestions would take the first half of the Roaring '20s to implement.

OAK PARK CLUB HAS A1 LINKS

By A. T. Packard.

The annual championship of the Chicago District Golf Association will be played June 15, 16 and 17 over the course of the Oak Park Country Club. There will be players in this event who will tee up on the morning of June 15 without first having tried the course. Let mortals have compassion on such misguided golfers. The course will not.

There is an overflowing abundance of difficulties, natural and acquired. A single element is the brook, which rambles blithesomely, not to say pestiferously, at times, thru fourteen fairways. Just to show the absence of

Evening Post golf writer A.T. Packard's praise for Oak Park during the 1922 CDGA Amateur drew favorable attention to the club.



Chapter 3

From Ross to Tillie

Donald Ross' return to a golf course was not unprecedented for him. Beyond making adjustments to Pinehurst No. 2 for decades, he often returned to a course at a club's request to make improvements on his original designs.

Sometimes he returned to adjust for improvements in technology. The switch from hickory to steel shafts in the 1920s, a change analogous to the more recent shift from persimmon-headed woods to metal drivers, brought Ross back to many of his old courses to lengthen holes, move fairway bunkers and strengthen hazards around greens.

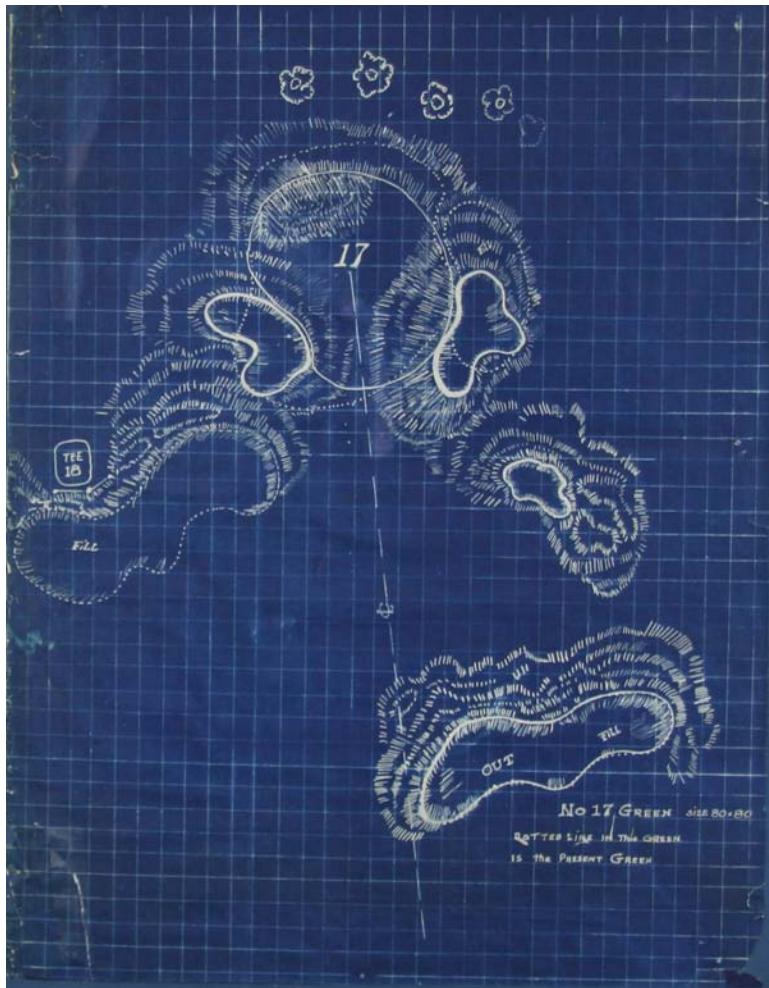
In other cases, clubs budgeted for improvements over a number of years, and Ross made an annual or biennial visit. At Ravisloe Country Club in Homewood, a Ross sighting almost every spring from 1915 through 1919 was as expected as the blooming of the crocus.

In Oak Park's case, Ross made one return visit, but his thorough plan of revisions of July 1921 was generally carried out over a span of five years, in conjunction with other plans and paid via the Permanent Improvement Fund, which would average \$4,500 per year.

The first year, \$5,500 would be expended to jump-start the remodeling of the 10th and 14th holes, to pay for Ross' work and a set of blueprints detailing the work to be done, and other work on the course. That included improving the pond which would eventually become a hazard in front of the 16th tee, adding new trees and caring for old ones, and bringing in a surveyor for the front nine.

Over the first four years of the five-year plan, all 18 holes would be remodeled, four "rest houses" would be built, and most of the work on landscaping the creek that winds through the course would be completed. In the fifth year, the ongoing tree program would be completed, as would the creek landscaping, and a new tool house would be built for the grounds crew.

This May 31, 1931 aerial photograph, looking to the east, shows the southern two-thirds of the golf course, most of it absent of trees and retaining the links look Donald Ross envisioned.



Albert W. Tillinghast (left) detailed his work at Oak Park and other courses in letters to PGA of America president George Jacobus. This 1935 letter (far right) was a hole-by-hole briefing on the course. Superintendent Ed Dearie produced blueprints, including one for the 17th hole (above), to guide his crew's construction work.

The changes would bring Oak Park completely in line with Ross' original vision for the course, with one notable exception. He went along with original superintendent William J. Matthews' idea for the 14th hole to turn to the left, albeit with a completely new green. Ross, knowing that his original idea for the 14th to dogleg to the right, essentially circling around the par-3 13th, had not been followed, called the 14th the weakest hole on the property. But the new green on Matthews' hole would strengthen the hole, and eliminate the crowding that would have been forced by Ross' original plan.

Ross called for the construction of 14 new bunkers, and changes to more than two dozen others, including replacing grass faces with sand faces throughout the course. He moved or built new mounds on eight holes, some fronted by bunkers. He called for new tees on three holes, with the fourth hole shortened by 50 yards. Another new tee was on the 16th, behind the expanded pond on the right side of the 18th hole, livening up the hole visually and throwing fear into the hearts of duffers.

The board accepted Ross' plan and set the schedule for the renovations. Almost immediately, changes were made. On October 13, 1921, three revisions to Ross' plan were decided upon.

- The new fourth tee Ross ordered to shorten the hole by 50 yards was built, but only after John Q. Adams moved that it be built as a ladies tee.

- Ross' plan to raise the back of the 10th green by two feet was stopped by C.W. Shonk, who recommended not doing so.

- Similarly, Frank Swett moved that the Ross plan be followed, except for the fourth, 10th and 14th holes. Swett wanted the rear of the 14th green – the hole Ed Dearie created to replace Ross' original plan – raised more than the master architect planned.

All three motions were carried.

From that point, it appears that Ross' renovation plan was otherwise followed almost to the letter. In the fall of 1921, bunkers were remodeled on the 10th fairway and at the green, though the back of the green was apparently undisturbed. The other changes Ross wanted for the 14th hole

– and as with his original plan, the diagram he submitted in 1921 has vanished – were carried out, with the back of the green elevated more than he desired. The other work, on the pond, plus planting new trees and caring for those already on the course, went on.

In 1922, the second, seventh, ninth, 12th, 13th and 18th holes were renovated, and the first two of four on-course restrooms were built.

In 1923, the renovation was extended to the fifth, sixth, eighth, 15th and 17th holes, with the final two restrooms added to the property.

In 1924, after renovations to the first, third, fourth, 11th and 16th holes, the majority of course work was finished. Arboreal work and the landscaping of the creek ran through 1925.

What did not end was the tinkering with the course, and thus with the Ross plan. The fourth hole continued to be a point of interest. On April 4, 1928, grounds committee chair William Hodgson recommended to the board that the fourth green be rebuilt. The board agreed and voted \$850 to carry out the job. There is no record of whether the green was redesigned or not, and if so, who designed it.

Chicago, October 27th 1935

President of the P.G.A.

Dear Sir:

Although it is Sunday I put in the day in the effort to make some headway through the numerous requests from this district.

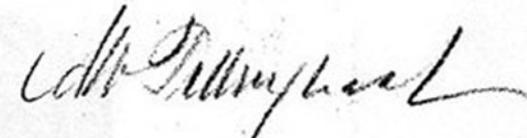
The entire day, as was yesterday, was given over completely to a very complete examination of one course. Today, at the request of Horton Smith, I visited his course at the Oak Park Country Club. He asked me to look over every hole and make general criticisms in addition to answering questions concerning their special problems.

In addition to himself, there accompanied me around the course, greenkeeper Ed Dearie, W.C.Spears (Chairman of the Green Committee, who attended our meeting on Friday night) W.W.Hodson, R.R.Simpson and Dr. L.F.Bryant, - all of the committee and the Board of Governors. The attendance of these gentlemen, who were most attentive to details and keenly interested, gave both myself and Horton particular satisfaction.

The result of the examination briefly was as follows.

1. Reduce Green from Right.
 2. Rearrange Traps.
 3. Rearrange Green.
 4. O.K.
 5. O.K.
 6. Show Sand on Sides of Green.
 7. Rearrange Green Traps.
 8. Reduce size of Green.
 9. Lengthen from Teeing Ground.
 10. Contour traps and slopes at Green Entrance.
 11. Hazards properly introduced at Green and a Fairway bunkering scheme.
 12. O.K.
 13. Recontour sides of Green.
 14. A rearranged Green to take Pitch and Run approach.
 15. Bunker Right of Green.
 16. Contoured smaller Green.
 17. A new Green as sketched for Dearie.
 18. Draw in pits around green and reduce size.
- Specific instructions were given in every instance and copious notations made by Dearie and the committee. Many unnecessary traps were condemned for generally extraordinarily large sanded areas were wasted and conducive of great maintenance costs.

Very truly yours



Chicago, Illinois
November 4th 1936

President of the P. G. A.

Dear Sir:

The weather turned very cold today. I went to the Oak Park Country Club at the urgent request of P. G. A. member Ren Smith (who succeeded his brother Horton there). It will be recalled that I made certain recommendations at Oak Park just a year ago and already Constructor Eddie Dearie has completed both the Sixth and Fifteenth greens, and I am pleased to report that these are regarded very highly indeed. Dearie had followed my instructions to the letter.

Today I was wanted to check the work on the Eleventh and the Seventeenth, both greens being now in the process of reconstruction. I gave them the finishing touches and also instructed concerning the recontouring of the mound work on the left-front of the Fifteenth green. Dearie accompanied me today as well as W. C. Spears (chairman of the green committee) and W. W. Hodson (of the committee).

It is also interesting to know that Dearie informed me that another piece of work, which I sketched at another Chicago course last year, had been completed and that a beautiful hole was the result. This is the new home hole at Ridgemoor, outlined in my daily report of November 9th 1935.

Certainly it is very heartening to find our service is proving something more than mere recommendations, but that it is being a reality of completed work.

Very truly yours

A. W. Tillinghast



Tillinghast's letter to PGA of America president George Jacobus from late 1936, noting the members' approval of his new greens on the sixth and fifteenth holes.

It was not just Donald Ross who put his mind to work regarding how to improve Oak Park. Only a decade after Ross' last recommendations were put into place, the club, through superintendent Ed Dearie, requested the services of the man hired by the PGA of America to help clubs lessen their maintenance expense as the Great Depression tightened its grip on the country. That man, who would travel from course to course and generally advise where a bunker could be removed to ease the burden of maintaining a course, was one America's first homegrown golf course architects of distinction: Albert W. Tillinghast.

Tillie, as he was known to confidants, designed many of the great courses in the golden age of American golf course architecture, including both courses at Winged Foot and Baltusrol golf clubs, San Francisco Golf Club, and Bethpage Black, in Farmingdale, New York. But the Depression had hit not only country clubs hard, but the men who designed the courses. Tillinghast, once busy but now idle, landed in a safety net constructed by PGA president George Jacobus, who was worried his fellow pros might be out of work if other expenses of a club ran out of control. By assigning an architect to be available to clubs with PGA members, Jacobus hoped that those members would be inclined to keep their professionals employed.

This service brought Tillinghast to Chicago, where the PGA's headquarters were then located in the LaSalle Hotel, in the fall of 1935. On October 27, Tillinghast visited Oak Park and undertook a thorough examination of the course, accompanied by Dearie,

head professional Horton Smith, and a quartet of green committee members: chairman W.C. Spears, W.W. Hodson, R.R. Simpson and L.F. Bryant.

The Tillinghast visits are well documented, because Tillie wrote a letter to Jacobus summarizing his work each day of the two-year project. In the first 15 months, Tillinghast reported at a PGA annual conclave, he had suggested the removal of 7,427 bunkers, saving clubs over \$164,000 in maintenance costs.

Sometimes Tillinghast's reports were short on specifics, but for Oak Park, he provided a hole-by-hole summary, as can be seen from the letter, which is reproduced in this volume.

Notably, Tillinghast suggested major changes to the third, eighth, 13th, 15th, and 16th greens, and sketched a completely new green for No. 17. (At this point, Auchtermuchty Creek meandered between tee and green on the par 3; it was eventually filled in.)

"Specific instructions were given in every instance and copious notations made by Dearie and the committee," Tillinghast wrote. "Many unnecessary traps were condemned, for generally extraordinary large sanded areas were wasted and conducive of great maintenance costs."

Only three holes, the fourth, fifth, and 12th, were found unneeded to be improved by Tillinghast, who said his hosts "were most attentive to details and keenly interested..."

So Dearie began the work. A year later, Tillie returned, invited by Ren Smith, who had succeeded his brother as head professional, to see how construction was proceeding.

"Already constructor Eddie Dearie has completed both the sixth and fifteenth greens, and I am pleased to report that these are regarded very highly indeed," Tillinghast wrote on November 4, 1936. "Dearie had followed my instructions to the letter.

"Today I was wanted to check the work on the eleventh and the seventeenth, both greens being now in the process of reconstruction. I gave them the finishing touches and also instructed concerning the re-contouring of the mound work on the left-front of the fifteenth green."

There is no record of Tillinghast returning to Oak Park again, either in the files of the PGA, for which his assignment was nearly concluded, or of the club.

But Dearie, the club's superintendent, carried out Tillinghast's plans completely, and even after the restoration by Rick Jacobson, the Tillinghast touches, especially the diabolical 17th green, remain evident.

Other course changes

Beginning with A.W. Tillinghast's plan of 1935, numerous course changes were made through the 1960s. Here are the most important:

1936: New greens on the 6th, 11th, 15th and 17th holes, based on Tillinghast's plan.

1939: Remodeled 1st, 5th and 18th greens, new fairway bunker on 10th.

1950s: Bill Diddel led a small renovation.

1958: Bunker changes on 6 holes.

1960: New bunker behind 18th green.

1964: Fourth green rebuilt, with surface raised.

1966: Willow trees east of 4th green removed to allow morning sunlight.

Donald Ross' revision plan of 1921

The revision plan of July 1921 is the nearest Oak Park Country Club has to an original Donald Ross plan for the course. Precise in its details, it's interesting if only to mentally place the hazards he ordered on today's course.

First Hole

Sand face first bunker north side of fairway. Landscape stream.

Second Hole

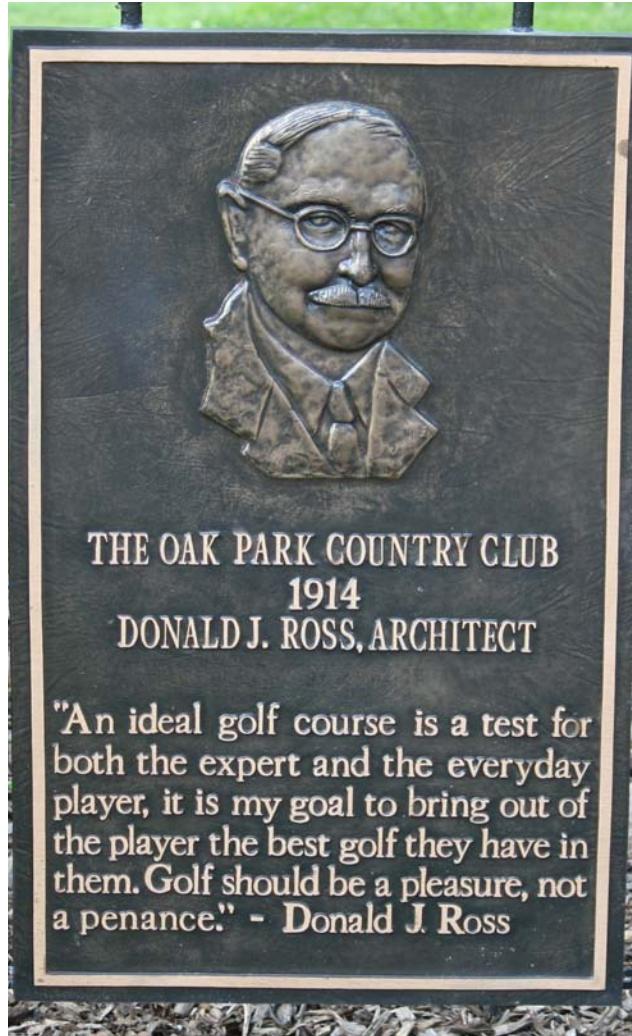
Cut rough south of creek to southwest, as a route for the short player. Fill in 20 feet of west part of bunker in front of green. Build a 4-foot mound northwest corner of green, giving the players taking the short route to have a pitch shot to green. Sand face bunker north of green.

Third Hole

Sand face first bunker west side of fairway. New bunker west side of fairway 200 yards from tee to extend southeast about 20 feet. This leaves a fairway of 150 feet (in width) at this point. New bunker west side of fairway 320 yards from tee, leaving an opening of 60 feet between this and present pit, south of green. Extend bunker west of green southwest 45 feet to catch hooked second shot.

Fourth Hole

New tee 50 yards south of present one. Cut out four trees east side of fairway (which the board does not approve of) to give more fairway at this point for the tee shot. Sand face pocket of bunker west of green. Build mound rear and at center of green and sand same.



This plaque honoring Donald Ross stands proudly near the 10th tee, reminding all of the master's belief that a golf course should be a place of entertaining recreation, not a torture chamber.

Fifth Hole

Do not cut fairway east of creek. Sand face bunker west side of fairway. Landscape stream. New trap northwest corner of green.

Sixth Hole

Landscape stream. Sand face traps guarding green. Build mound northeast corner, rear of green and sand face same.

Seventh Hole

Fill in 33 feet south end of trap, now running across fairway. New bunker north of fairway 300 yards from tee. New bunker south side of fairway 350 yards from tee.

Eighth Hole

New trap north side of fairway, 150 yards east of tee to extend south 40 feet, leaving a 90 foot fairway at this point. Close center of trap now running across fairway which would leave two bunkers at this point with an opening between of 30 feet. New traps north and south side of fairway 310 yards from tee, leaving an opening of 90 feet between them. New trap northwest corner of green. Extend present swell south of green northwest about 12 feet, leaving the opening to green 60 feet. Raise northeast corner of green about 6 inches with pit in rear.

Ninth Hole

Sand face pocket of mound north side of fairway. Sand face farthest mound west of tee and shallow pit with sand at base of same. Sand face trap north side of fairway east of green. Build mound 3 feet high south side of fairway at green,

leaving an opening of 60 feet between it and trap to north.

10th Hole

Fill in 50 feet west end of trap, north of tee. Sand face first bunker west side of fairway. New trap west side of fairway 180 yards from tee to extend east 30 feet, leaving a fairway at this point of 120 feet. Farthest mound east side of fairway and south of green to be sand faced and shallow pit at the base. Extend mound west side of fairway, nearest the green, east 20 feet, with shallow pit at base. Sand face pocket of mound east of green. Raise green at rear about 2 feet.

11th Hole

Sand face mound east side of fairway nearest green. Lower by a gradual slope, starting about 10 feet south of the south bank of pit guarding green, to the pit level and sod same. Straighten up north bank of pit. New bunker to run southwest about 45 feet, starting at west end of trap in front of green. Sand face pocket east of green.

12th Hole

New trap south side of fairway 180 yards from tee to extend northwest from pit, north side of 13th green, through rough 25 feet. Landscape stream.

13th Hole

Straighten up sides of pits, north and south of green. Lower slopes of same from west to pit level, and sod slopes. Build mound east of green about 2 feet higher than green and sand face same.

14th Hole

Mr. Ross considers this the weakest hole we have, as now constructed. He has drawn plans for a new green which will be shown for your approval.

15th Hole

New tee about 100 feet east of present location, and move north far enough to make a par five

THE Oak Park Country Club							
Player _____							
Holes	H'dcap Stks	Distance	Par.	Self			Bogey
1	2	522	5				6
2	17	177	3				3
3	9	392	4				5
4	3	430	5				5
5	7	395	4				5
6	15	185	3				3
7	5	400	4				5
8	11	377	4				5
9	13	343	4				4
OUT		3221	36				41
10	10	390	4				5
11	12	352	4				4
12	8	370	4				5
13	18	145	3				3
14	14	320	4				4
15	4	430	5				5
16	1	580	5				6
17	16	200	3				4
18	6	414	4				5
IN		3201	36				41
TOTAL		6423	72				82
Handicap						H'dcap	
NET						NET	
Scorer _____				Date _____			

The oldest scorecard, with the 1916 script logo, dates from after the original third hole became the first.

hole. The mound east side of fairway will affect the long driver only as he will be obliged to carry this at the longest point he dares try, in order to

get home in two. The short player will drive to the southwest on a line with the bunker which stands to the west of fairway. Sand face the east pockets of east bunker and sand trap base of same. Sand face trap west side of fairway. New bunker with mounded face 190 yards from tee just south of present mound at east side of fairway, to run southeast into what is now rough. Sand face cross bunker north of green. Widen entrance to green by filling in about four feet of northwest corner of pit east of green and leveling mound northeast corner of green to green level.

16th Hole

Make a tee just south of pond. Sand face pocket of mound east side of fairway and lower same at the right point to give view to green from tee. Sand face bunker extending east and west across fairway. Landscape stream. Sand hollow east of green. Build mound north of green and sand face same.

17th Hole

Sand face and straighten up south bank of pit running east and west across fairway. New trap east side of fairway 175 yards from tee to extend northwest, leaving an opening between it and mound west side of fairway of 72 feet. Build mound rear of green at the center and sand face same.

18th Hole

Sand face mound south of tee. Sand face mound west side of fairway. New pit east side of fairway 380 yards from tee to extend northwest 18 yards, and at 370 yards another one, extending a little farther northwest – this leaves a fairway at this point of 90 feet. Mound northwest corner of green 4 feet 6 inches high with a flat top. Raise southwest part of green 3 feet at rear (undulating to center to correspond with south and west side of green).



Chapter 4

The Joplin Ghost

Horton Smith came out of the hills of the Ozarks, that area of Missouri where in the first third of the last century neither electrification nor indoor plumbing had reached every corner.

He grew up on the family farm, milking cows, herding cattle, walking to school two miles each day with older brother Ren. But Horton Smith, from when he was 11, was as devoted to golf as he was to working the farm. At that age, his family moved to a farm located a half-mile from Springfield Country Club, and Smith became a caddie after a friend told him it was a good way to earn money.

That devotion would lead to a championship career, triumphs near and far, his wooing and winning an heiress. But his common touch would win over the members at Oak Park in the four years he was the club's head professional.

That was unimaginable at 12, when he was playing occasionally. Or at 13, as a rapidly improving bogey golfer. Or two years later, his parents having joined Springfield Country Club, where he won the club championship, then the city championship, and was on his way.

The path that led to Oak Park Country Club included stops as an assistant pro at Springfield, then head professional at three rural Missouri clubs simultaneously, and forays into tournament golf, as sporadic and unorganized then as it is continual and regimented today. He finished in the money twice – in an era when the purse was generally shared by only the first 20 finishers, and sometimes only the first 10 – as an 18-year-old. He played in the 1927 U.S. Open at 19, and made the cut at Oakmont Country Club, tying for 44th.

His breakthrough in competition came late in 1928, at the Oklahoma City Open. The lanky lad had finished his first season as the head professional at Oak Hill Golf Club in Joplin, Missouri. By now 20, gifted with a naturally smooth swing and a smoother putting

Horton Smith puts uphill, the ball obscured by his body, on the 18th green during the third round of the first Masters Tournament. The positions of Smith and his caddie on what is now the ninth green would be reversed in the final round, when he two-putted from above the hole to win.

HORTON SMITH WINS AT OKLAHOMA CITY

Oak Hill Professional Leads Flashy Field in Rich Tournament—
Ed Dudley Second.

Oklahoma City, Nov. 5.—Inaugurating his winter campaign by winning the first major event on the list, Horton Smith, young professional of the Oak Hill Golf Club, Joplin, Mo., has turned toward the west, where he will compete in the Oregon open at Portland, November 15, 16 and 17. Smith shot 288, one under par, to win the rich Oklahoma City open tournament here Sunday, with Ed Dudley, formerly professional at Oklahoma City, hot on his heels with 289 for second money.

Makes Hole in One.

It was a hole in one on the 119-yard No. 2 hole of the final round which gave Smith the needed margin, although he was leading the field at that time. Smith had been in front since the end of the first day's play and was favored to win. With the honor which was attached to the \$1,000 purse, the winner's attached to Joplin golfer came even more into the limelight, where he has been more or less of a conspicuous figure since last winter, when he made his first major campaign.

Dudley received \$700, which was Tommy Armour's, who was close behind Smith all the way, until the afternoon of the final day when Dudley overtook him. Armour finished third and received \$500. He turned in 292.

Al Espinosa of Chicago, who won the first Oklahoma City open two years ago, landed in fourth place and received \$300, while Bill Mehlhorn of New York came in fifth.

Smith's first victory was headline news in his hometown Joplin Globe.

stroke, Smith led a field that included Tommy Armour and Ed Dudley with a round to play. But a bogey 6 at the first dropped him into a tie with Dudley, and Armour only one back.

This is where a youngster might fold. He recalled in "The Velvet Touch," a biography issued in 1965, that both Dudley and Armour hit their tee shots on the par-3 second within eight feet of the cup. Then Smith stepped up, mashie-niblick in hand, and struck his tee shot. It landed 20 feet by the cup and finished out of sight, spinning back into the hole.

That ace paid off handsomely at the finish. He won by a single stroke, collecting \$1,000. "It looked like a million to me," Smith wrote.

Smith won again before 1928 was out, beating pro's pro Walter Hagen by a stroke just before Christmas. Those were the first and second of 32 victories in significant tournaments worldwide, 28 of them individual titles. Through 2013, only 14 players have won more often on the PGA Tour.

Smith wrote that coming back from triple- and quintuple-bogeys in the first four holes of sectional qualifying for the PGA in 1928, when he momentarily considered trudging back to the clubhouse, his turning point. He still squeezed into the field.

"That started me on my way," Smith wrote. "It taught me perseverance and to never give up and was a helpful thing the rest of my life. Regardless of what you shoot, play the game. I've never forgotten that day. It changed my whole career."

Nicknamed him "The Joplin Ghost" by a columnist for his inability to be caught once on a leader board, the Ghost appeared often in 1929. Smith won eight tournaments in the U.S., triumphing from coast to coast, including a victory in the prestigious North and South Open at Pinehurst, North Carolina, his fourth of March and eighth in the 1928-29 winter circuit.

Smith eventually called that domination of the American tournament scene "The Twenty-Thousand Mile March." The run of victories earned him a berth on the PGA of America's 1929 Ryder Cup team, which set sail for England in April.

The only thing Horton Smith didn't accomplish in 1929 – or in any other year – was winning any of the original big four: the U.S. Open (10th), Western Open (second), British Open (tying for 24th) or PGA Championship (advancing to the round of 32, the equivalent of a tie for 17th).

Still, he led the 1929 money list, collecting an estimated \$15,500.

Horton Smith's victory parade

1928											
Nov. 3-4	Oklahoma City Open	\$1,000	Even	Mar. 22-25	Masters Tournament	1,500	- 4				
Dec. 22-23	Catalina Island Open	500	-11	Oct. 12-14	Louisville Grand Slam	1,000	- 2				
1929											
Feb. 9-10	Pensacola Open	NA	-10	Dec. 28-31	California Open	500	- 5				
Mar. 5-6	Fort Myers Open beat Denny Shute in playoff	NA	- 3	1935							
Mar. 15-16	Florida Open	NA	+ 4	Feb. 12-13	Palm Springs Invitation	400	-12				
Mar. 22-23	La Gorce Open	5,000	+ 5	Dec. 14-17	Miami-Biltmore Open	2,500	- 3				
Mar. 26-27	North and South Open	700	- 1	Dec. 28-31	Pasadena Open	1,000	- 5				
May 28-29	French Open	NA	-11	1936							
Oct. 31-Nov. 1	Oregon Open	1,200	- 8	Apr. 2-5	Masters Tournament	1,500	- 3				
Nov. 28-30	Bay District Open	1,000	Even	July 26-29	Victoria Open	700	- 3				
Dec. 20-22	Pasadena Open	1,000	- 4	1937							
1930											
Feb. 20-22	Savannah Open	1,000	-18	Mar. 23-25	North and South Open	1,000	+ 2				
Feb. 25-26	Central Florida Open	600	- 3	June 3-7	Inverness Four-Ball with Harry Cooper	587	plus 7				
1931											
July 24-26	St. Paul Open	2,500	-10	Oct 14-18	Oklahoma City Four-Ball with Harry Cooper	600	plus 12				
1932											
Nov. 12-13	National Capital Open	700	+ 6	1940							
1933											
Feb. 19-22	Miami Four-Ball with Paul Runyan	500	2 up	Mar. 14-18	St. Augustina Best-Ball with a-Marvin "Bud" Ward	NA	4 & 2				
32 tournament victories, 28 individual, 4 in team play											
June 22-25											
Massachusetts Open											
1941											
Mar. 9-10											
Florida West Coast Open beat Byron Nelson in playoff											
July 14-16											
Colorado Open											
July 25-27											
St. Paul Open											



For decades, Horton Smith's smooth swing was a sight to behold.

Smith won twice in 1930, early successes in the South that brought his victory total in the U.S. to an even dozen in three winter seasons, all of them coming in the second and third campaigns, before he turned 22. Add in the French Open of 1929, a title he captured on his 21st birthday, and Smith had won 13 times across the world.

Since Smith's incandescent start, only Tiger Woods has collected victories as quickly starting a professional career. Woods turned professional at age 20 and won six times as a pro before turning 22. He won 12 times in his first three years on tour (September 1996 through August 1999), and 14 times worldwide, including a pair of European Tour titles.

Smith's heavy play, including a 100-exhibition tour with Walter Hagen in Australia and Japan, took a physical toll. He awoke one morning following the 1930 Medinah Open with severe pain in a leg, so bad he could barely move it. The cause was traced to his back, and therapy, including hot baths to keep his back supple, brought him improved health.

He would play again, but less often, and with a different swing, one designed to take the pressure off his back. Rather than a precise move through the ball, he would "sway" through it. He lessened his practice habits – he was a heavy practitioner well before Ben Hogan – but stayed at the top of the game thanks to a precision short game and a putting touch that at times bordered on the surreal.

One 1930 victory was special. Smith won the Savannah Open by a stroke over amateur Bobby Jones, the only time Jones lost to a professional in his Grand Slam season. Later in the year, Smith paced the U.S. Open through 36 holes and ended up five strokes behind Jones, whose march to the Grand Slam took step No. 3 in the Open at Interlachen.

A single victory in 1931, at the St. Paul Open at Keller Golf Course, was his last before he began to hunt for a club professional's job in the latter half of the season.

He would find one at Oak Park. The club needed a new pro with Ray Croslin leaving after three years, and sought one with a playing pedigree similar to that of George Simpson.

In part, it was to keep up with other Chicago-area clubs. The area professional roster boasted Armour, Cooper, Abe Espinosa, Johnny Revolta and a host of others. Smith had beaten all of them at one time or another.

Now he would join their ranks. The club signed him early in 1932, while Smith was healing a broken right arm from a freak auto accident during a tournament late in 1931. Six months later, after rehabilitation, Smith's right arm was good as new.



A meeting of Oak Park legends: Donald Ross (center) presents winner Horton Smith his first place medal and check for capturing the 1937 North and South Open at Pinehurst. That's runner-up Paul Runyan (right), looking on while wearing his 1935 Ryder Cup jacket.

Wrote Charles Bartlett in the *Chicago Tribune* of April 13, 1932, "Early birds at the Oak Park Country Club during the last few days have found a stranger on duty in the golf shop, but the tall, sandy haired newcomer's smile makes it easy for one to discover that he is none other than Horton Smith, one of the game's leading professionals since he made a sensational entrance onto the tournament stage in 1929. The Missouri youngster, who will be 24 years old on May 22, already has begun his first year as a Chicago district professional. ... The injury eliminated him from the remainder of the winter campaign, and is still in the mending stage, so that Horton has done very little actual playing and plans to take it easy for a few weeks."

Smith set about building relationships with the membership, which came easily, and was well enough by late spring to play again. At Oak Park, Smith assumed all the duties a professional was tasked to, from regripping clubs – though Ren, his brother and assistant,



Horton Smith on putting

In 1962, Horton Smith, in association with Dawson Taylor, a writer and member of the Detroit Golf Club, where Smith was serving as the head professional, wrote "The Secret of Perfect Putting."

Excerpts from his introduction, in which he explains why anyone can be taught to putt well, convey both the theme of the book and the spirit of the man who wrote it.

I believe that when it comes to putting, the various personal qualities which we call "imagination," "touch" or "feel," "judgment," and "nerve control" are capable of being developed to a high degree of perfection by the average golfer, provided he is given sensible methods of practice and a clear understanding of what he is attempting to accomplish. I believe that very few golfers clearly understand that the putting stroke is an entirely different stroke from that employed in all the rest of the golf game. It is a "specialized" stroke, in my opinion, in that while the regular drive or iron shot the face of the golf club immediately tends to "open" or turn clockwise, in putting, the blade is consciously kept in what I call "square-blade" position throughout the stroke. ...

It might be interesting to tell you that a good deal of my own ability to putt well arose from my early experience on sand greens in Missouri. The courses I played did not have the grass greens so common today but used hard-packed sand instead. When the player's ball reached the grass he had the right to take a smooth-edged rake and smooth out the footprints on the green between his ball and the hole. And it was a result of my observation of putting technique on these sand greens that I first discovered the necessity for the "end-over-end" roll of the ball in order to bring about a true and efficient result.

It was clear to my eyes that when I hit down on the ball, I caused the ball to push itself down into the "green," leave a little pockmark in the sand, and then run erratically toward the hole. I also noticed that when I "cut" the ball – that is, struck it so as to impart a "cut" or clockwise spin on it – even if it reached the cup it was apt to spin out and fail to sink.

So, early in my golfing career, I attempted to put together sound principles as a basis for good putting ability in practice and under pressure.

did the majority of that work – to finding the right equipment and clothing to sell in the shop, to giving lessons. In the custom of the day, they were often playing lessons. Each Wednesday, Smith would gather up a trio of members and play with them, occasionally dispensing advice – often well after an errant shot, so as not to make a big deal about it. The practice brought him more time on the lesson tee down the line.

“I remember Horton Smith vividly,” Dr. Charles Lewis said in 2003. “He gave me golf lessons that were helpful to me. But I probably already had a swing that couldn’t be changed.”

Smith’s common touch endeared him to the membership. The quality of his play wowed them. His connections with golf’s elite brought many famous friends to the club.

One such occasion was August 25, 1932, with Smith hosting 24 American and foreign-born star players in a team match resembling the Ryder Cup. Smith teamed with Al Watrous to beat the Hackney brothers, Clarence and Dave, 1 up, thanks to pars by Smith and Watrous on the 18th hole. That helped the U.S.-born players – “homebreds,” they were sometimes called in that era – to a 3 1/2-2 1/2 victory over the imports, a group including Armour, Cooper, Jock Hutchison, Laurie Ayton and Harry Hampton. Among the American-born players aiding Smith and Watrous: Hagen, Johnny Farrell, Denny Shute, Leo Diegel, Olin Dutra and Al Espinosa.

Many of those names have faded to obscurity, but on that august August day, on the fairways of Oak Park Country Club walked the winners of 27 major championships, nine Western Opens, and 12 Canadian Opens, past and future. No more glittering lineup of golf talent has ever been assembled at the club.

Smith won three times in 1932, and thrice more in 1933, plus a fourth-place finish in the Western Open at Olympia Fields, and another Ryder Cup berth.

That Western earned a footnote for the appearance of Vincent Gebhardi, the pro at Evergreen Golf Club in Evergreen Park. He was better known to newspaper readers and newsreel watchers as Jack “Machine Gun” McGurn, one of Al Capone’s henchmen.

A year earlier, Smith and Gebhardi had crossed paths at Oak Park. In “The Velvet Touch,” Smith’s biography, the tale is told that in 1932, a member mentioned his friend Vince Gebhardi might want to play, and to please let him even if he, the member, wasn’t on hand.

Smith remembered big Vince as someone with a football player’s build who wanted to



The program from the first Masters made no mention of the popular name to come.

take lessons. When Gebhardi arrived for the first lesson, he was accompanied by a man who also had a bag of clubs, but who didn't hit balls on the range. Smith found that unusual, until, after several lessons, he discovered Gebhardi's not-so-secret identity. The other guy had a machine gun among his clubs in the golf bag, and was along because the range was then more open to Thatcher Road as it curved along the club's south boundary than it is now.

From that point, Smith always had a reason to not give Gebhardi a lesson, and he soon stopped dropping by Oak Park.

Smith continued to play the winter circuit, but 1933-34 was quiet for him. It included a third place finish in the Charleston Open, 13 strokes behind winner Paul Runyan and three back of runner-up Craig Wood.

The tournament following Charleston was the last of the spring swing, and a new one: the Augusta National Invitation Tournament, played at the Augusta National Golf Club, the brainchild of famed amateur Bobby Jones. Everybody was talking about it.

Augusta National opened to complimentary reviews on January 13, 1933, some 14 months prior to hosting its first invitational, but to most, the main attraction of the tournament, which many had immediately taken to calling the Masters – the master being Jones – was seeing the great Bobby in action for the first time since his retirement following his capturing the Grand Slam in 1930.

Because of Jones' presence, the first playing of the Masters gained more publicity than the rest of the winter swing combined. Jones had fired a 65 on the National a few weeks before the tournament, firing the imagination of those who thought he could snap his fingers and be back in tournament form.

Into this scene of anticipation came a field of 71 other players, amateurs and professionals, notables of that day and days of yore. One of the present-day worthies was Horton Smith. Teeing off at 1:41 p.m. on Thursday, Smith opened strongly, with a share of the lead thanks to a 2-under-par 70 in the opening round, a circuit highlighted by an eagle on the par-5 17th hole. (It's now the eighth hole. In the first Masters, what the world is familiar with as the back nine was the front nine, and vice versa.)

An even-par round of 72 on Friday nudged Smith into solo first, a stroke ahead of Dudley and Billy Burke after 36 holes. Smith added another 70 in the third round, taking a one-stroke lead over Burke into the final 18 holes. Dudley and Wood were two back.

The intense pressure associated with the final round of the Masters was not yet evident at Augusta National. This inaugural edition attracted only a smattering of people, and few came from farther than Atlanta. Sunday's gallery of between 1,500 and 3,000 was the biggest of the week by far. Most of it, along with the sportswriters, were interested in Jones, 10 strokes back of Smith. They trailed him as he walked up and down the hills of Augusta, hoping for more than just flashes of his old form. On the first day, Jones' gallery included Smith himself until he had to begin his own round.

Mere dozens watched Smith tee off after Wood had finished with a 1-under-par 71 for a total of 3-under-par 285 and the clubhouse lead. That brought Smith, standing 4 under on the first tee, the burden of knowing where he was in relation to Wood throughout his round.

All was routine until his second shot on the ninth hole, today the closing 18th. That approach caught the bunker in front of the green, and his explosion out ran 10 feet past the hole, and slightly above it. He made the curler for a saving par to go out in even par 36, then birdied the 10th to go 5-under, two strokes ahead of Wood.

Bogeys on the par-4 14th and par-3 15th (the fifth and sixth holes today), the latter by missing a two-foot putt, dropped him back to 3-under and a tie with Wood. But Smith regained the lead with a 12-foot birdie putt on the par-5 17th after reaching the green on the big uphill test in three strokes.

After a big drive down the hill on the 18th, his brassie second back uphill ran to the back of the boomerang-shaped green. Smith later estimated it as a 40-foot putt for birdie. Then came the drama.

"I made a good drive and hit the green nicely but I left it above and beyond the hole," Smith wrote in his biography. "The cup was on the forward part of the green on a downhill, sidehill slope. I figured that the smart thing to do was to putt by the hole so that I would have an uphill putt coming back. But I did just the opposite. I borrowed too much and struck too lightly and was left with the worst putt I could have; still downhill and sidehill.

"The green was so fast and slippery that if I had missed I would have gone just as far beyond the hole because the wind had swept off the greens and there was no resistance of the grass.

"I was naturally annoyed with myself for missing my first putt so I approached the next one with caution. Then a positive thought came to me which told me that the only way



Late in 2013, Horton Smith's green jacket, awarded in 1949, was auctioned for over \$680,000 to an undisclosed bidder.

Smith wins Augusta Masters

BY GRANTLAND RICE

AUGUSTA, Ga., March 26 – The spinning roulette wheel of golf has an odd way of stopping upon the marker of tradition.

The last golf professional to throw dust into the eyes of Bobby Jones was a rising young star by the name of Horton Smith, just out of the Ozarks.

Smith led Bobby by a stroke in the Savannah Open of 1930. Since that year Jones has retired and Smith has had his share of tribulations, but it was Horton Smith who set the pace in the Augusta National masters' parade, just 10 strokes in front of the famous Georgian, who finished in a tie for thirteenth place with Walter Hagen and Denny Shute.

Smith won the masters' open Sunday with a total of 284 strokes, four under par. His winning total was 70-72-70-72, a remarkable performance over a truly great course with adverse weather conditions and the pressure of a championship field.

The tall, slender pro had a \$1,500 putt of 10 feet to hole on the seventh-first green to take the lead from Craig Wood, who had finished earlier at 285. Just a stroke away from these two followed Paul Runyan and Billy Burke at 286, with Ed Dudley in fifth place at 288. ...

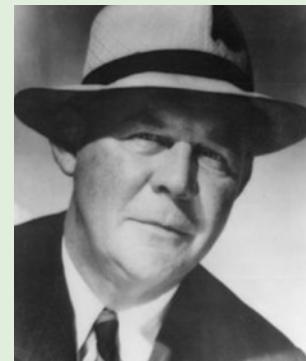
Jones finished further back in this tournament than in any major event he has ever entered since he first began open play in 1920. He discovered that he could not be host and champion through the same week. He never hit his stride, with rounds of 76-74-72-72 over a course he had been playing from 65 to 70 in a

series of steady marches.

"I haven't the slightest idea of ever playing in another championship," Jones said Sunday night. "I hope to make the Augusta National tournament a fixture every year and I expect to play in this event next March. I am sorry I didn't play better, but I think that is unimportant. I played the best I could, with no excuse of any sort to offer.

"I am also glad this idea of invincibility in golf is shattered. The game of golf still dominates the player and there is no one even close to being a superman. I know I am not." ...

But, after all, Horton Smith and Craig Wood deserved their places at one and two. They played grand golf all the way and Joplin can now start another celebration for the young star who came along with so much flame and smoke five years ago. It was a big show in every way, one of the best that golf has ever known.



Grantland Rice

Famed sportswriter Grantland Rice, a friend of Bobby Jones and a founder and board member of Augusta National Golf Club, covered the first Masters Tournament for the New York Herald Tribune and its syndication service. This is his report on the final day of play in 1934, slightly edited.

to make the putt was to be sure to hit the ball firmly because if I let up on it, it would break right off. I knocked the ball right into the middle of the cup."

That brought Smith home with 72 for four-under-par 284, a stroke ahead of Wood, but now Smith had to wait. Billy Burke was still out there lurking. He had birdie attempts on the last three holes, and missed each by inches. Only after Burke failed to hole out for eagle from the ninth fairway was Smith assured of capturing the title and the \$1,500 first prize. Burke finished two strokes back, tied with Paul Runyan for third place at 2-under 286.

The awarding of the green jacket to Horton Smith? It was 15 years in the future, but Smith's feat earned acclaim even if Augusta's traditions were yet to evolve. Reported *The New York Times*, "Smith has never won a major tournament. His victory today probably is his greatest one." (In 2013, that green jacket, owned by his nephews, was auctioned for \$682,229 to an undisclosed bidder. No one would be surprised if it was Augusta National Golf Club.)

The victory was Smith's 22nd in five and a third years of full-time campaigning.

"I feel that I am back on my game after three years of trying," he said at the awards presentation.

After a runner-up tie at the North and South, it was back to Oak Park for a third season. Winning the Masters rekindled the desire to make the most of his game. Three wins during the winter of 1934-35 bolstered it. In the summer of 1935, he finished sixth in the U.S. Open and Canadian Open, along with a quarterfinal berth in the PGA Championship.

With the summer tour expanding, Smith was chafing at playing again. He resigned his position at Oak Park when the weather turned, and went back out on the tour as a full-time player. Spalding signed him to an endorsement deal, reportedly \$10,000 annually.

"I've been out of this storm long enough, and I want to get where it's blowing hard again," Smith said in Sarasota, Florida, in December of 1935. "I'm 26 years old now, and the years are slipping fast. It seems I'd better get busy if I want to cash in, for one of these days my number will be up, and then it will be too late."

There were no hard feelings over Smith's departure. For one thing, his brother Ren was elevated from assistant to head professional. For another, Horton Smith was just plain well-liked, so much so the club made him an honorary member on April 3, 1936.

Smith tied for 19th place in the 1935 Masters, and was an 11-1 choice in 1936, having been 10-1 in the 1934 inaugural. Augusta was lashed by a continuing series of deluges during

the week. Smith trailed "Lighthorse" Harry Cooper, the professional at Glen Oak, by six strokes with 36 holes to play. Because of the bad weather, they would be played on Monday.

Smith's 4-under-par 68 was the best score of the leaders in the rainswept morning round, and jumped him to 3-under-par 213. He still trailed Cooper, in at 6-under 210, and Al Espinosa, sitting at 4-under 212.

Smith charged in the final round, tying Cooper with a birdie 3 on the seventh hole, then twice falling two strokes back. Water on greens played havoc with many, including Smith, who had to chip his way into the hole on the 10th green, covered by a film of water that made putting impossible. The rules committee said to play on.

Smith caught Cooper on the back nine by making birdies at the 14th and 15th while Cooper parred. Smith took the lead by making a 15-foot comebacker for par on the 17th, where Cooper had pushed his drive to the right and failed to salvage par.

Smith finished at 3-under-par 285, winning the Masters for the second time in the first three playings with his closing 72. Cooper's 76 put him at 286. Gene Sarazen was third, at 287, his closing 2-under 34 for a 70 stirring memories of his albatross of the year before.

Smith was thinking along those lines as well.

"This may surprise you, but the shot that won for me was the shot that Sarazen played a year ago," Smith told columnist Joe Williams after the round. "I was thinking of what Sarazen did when I came up to my second shot."

On the 15th, that is, with a creek offering the challenge on the downhill second shot. Whereas Sarazen played from dry ground, Augusta National was now a swamp. That would stop any shot on the green, but first Smith, about as far out as Sarazen had been, needed solid footing and a good lie. He got both.

"I had the notion firmly fixed in my mind that this was the winning hole. And so I took out a No. 4 wood and went boldly for the green.

"Well, I managed to cross the creek, and I wasn't so far away that I couldn't get down in two putts. So if you ask me what won the tournament for me I will have to say it was the long second to the 15th. And I will have to add that I took the chance because Sarazen did the same thing a year ago."

Smith left out the distance of the birdie on the 15th: eight feet. It followed a 45-footer for a birdie 3 on the treacherous 14th.

For all his other skills, putting was Smith's trump card. Associated Press reporter Earl Hilligan once wrote, "The most phenomenal putting touch in golf today belongs to Horton Smith – a player apparently destined to go down in the records as the greatest greens player this era has produced."

The tournament wasn't the only thing Smith won at Augusta National in 1936. The 28-year-old also was introduced to and fell for 26-year-old Barbra Louise Bourne, whose father, Alfred Bourne, was a confidante of Jones and Cliff Roberts, and heir to the Singer Sewing Machine Company fortune. Barbra Bourne was a good golfer, having beaten Babe Didrikson in amateur competition. They were married two years later, Smith leaving his small Chicago home to take up residence with his bride in mansions in Connecticut and Augusta.

Smith would win eight more times on the tour after 1936, the biggest victory in the North and South in 1937, the year he lost an 18-hole Western Open playoff to Ralph Guldahl.

Still a consistent top 10 finisher, he became the playing professional at Pinehurst in the summer of 1941. Then the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and the world was turned upside down. Pinehurst was all but shuttered. Smith enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942. By the end of the war, he and Barbra had separated. Divorce came in 1946.

Smith landed softly at the Detroit Golf Club as head professional, but his larger influence now was felt nationally. As president of the PGA of America, he found a way for world heavyweight champion Joe Louis to play in the 1952 San Diego Open after the PGA's tournament committee barred Louis and pros Bill Spiller and Eural Clark. It was a step toward the repeal of the PGA's "caucasian only" membership clause nine years later. Smith and Louis would play together.

"I'm playing because you have to crawl before you can walk," Louis wrote in a nationally-published column. "This fight to open the ranks of PGA sponsored tournaments is a step in the right direction and I'm happy that I'm driving in the opening wedge. We want to fight this thing until it's straightened out."

Smith was diagnosed with cancer in 1957 and lost a lung, but recovered to play in every Masters through 1963, using a cart that year because Clifford Roberts insisted upon it.

Horton Smith died of Hodgkins lymphoma on November 15, 1963. He was 55 years old. Said British great Henry Cotton, his partner in World War II charity matches, "Golfers of today in America do not give him quite the place he earned."



Horton Smith and bride Barbra Louise Bourne on the grounds of Augusta National.



Samuel "Ernie" Ball

Wiloughby Golf Club
Professional Emeritus

Known as a Walkin' Wilie by the golfing world, a distinguished
player, coach, and a true Director of Golf at one of America's
most famous tournaments, Ernie was honored to play in Bobby Jones'
1930 Inaugural Augusta National Tournament, forever after
known as the "Masters."

During his career, he competed in more than 50 major
tournaments, and as Director of Golf at one of America's
most famous tournaments, he was honored to play in Bobby Jones'
1930 Inaugural Augusta National Tournament, forever after
known as the "Masters."

A talented player, an excellent coach, a generous friend
and very special person, Ernie Ball is a treasure in the history
of that wonderful game called golf.

Dedicated
November 2007

Chapter 5

The legendary Errie Ball

Samuel Henry Ball came to Oak Park Country Club in the late autumn of 1945.

In large measure, he has never left.

A treasure of a man, Errie Ball is the epitome of what the camaraderie of the game should be about. Fun to be with. Always with a kind word. Often volunteering a tip honed by decades of experience. And never in a bad mood.

How many of us can look in the mirror and say the same thing about ourselves?

Everyone can say it without reservation about Errie Ball.

Errie is a Welshman through and through – the nickname comes from the Welsh derivation of Harry, his original nickname – but took up the Scottish game in his youth. His father, a third-generation golf professional, saw to that.

That means Ball, born in Bangor, Wales on November 14, 1910 – more than three years before Oak Park Country Club was founded – has been a part of the game from the days of wooden shafts. He watched Harry Vardon play. He played with Bob Jones and Walter Hagen, heeding the former's nudge and coming to America in 1930. He played with Sam Snead and Byron Nelson and Ben Hogan when they arrived on the scene, well after Errie was established as a leading club professional with no small amount of game himself.

Ball has been a student of the game from the moment his father took him to the first tee. In his teens, he ditched the British swing and sway method for the upright American-style swing, and all but perfected it. Snead, Mr. Poetry in Motion himself, said Ball had the best swing he'd ever seen. Gary Player concurred.

“The British had a flatter swing,” Ball said in 1951. “They were great ones to roll their wrists and used a closed stance. Of the present-day players Americans watch, Bobby Locke is probably closest to the old school. The American style is more upright. Their hands work

Errie Ball poses in 2011 at Willoughby Golf Club with the bronze made in his honor.



New PGA Hall of Famer Bob Toski (left) greets fellow member Errie Ball in March of 2013; PGA of America president Allen Wronowski (right) also stopped to chat.

in unison, and there's less chance for error."

Ball once explained that the whippy early graphite shafts of the 1970s brought him back to the 1920s and his original swing.

"I was brought up on hickory shafts," Ball said in a 2011 interview. "They had a lot of torque in them. You had to swing. You couldn't use them the way these boys play today."

Ball was playing American golf, so to speak, when he used a 1936 trip to Royal Liverpool for a family reunion and to play in the British Open. On the return trip to the States, he fell in love, which was quite something, considering that both he and the woman he fell in love with were already engaged. To others.

More than three-quarters of a century later, Errie and Maxie are still quite the couple.

The connection between Errie and Oak Park Country Club is similarly everlasting. After 24 years as the head professional, he decamped to the year-round warmth of John's Island, a club in Vero Beach, Florida, and it was thought that return visits would be far and

few between. He had previously been wintering in Arizona, at Tucson Country Club.

But Ball was lured back to the area in 1972, to the fledgling Butler National Golf Club, only a few miles away. His reappearance in Chicago meant he would pop in now and again to say hello or play a round, renewing old friendships and making new ones.

But let us start at the beginning. At least, the beginning of Errie's tenure in the Chicago area. We'll get to various other exploits along the way.

Errie did not come to the area by choice. He was happily ensconced as the head professional at Farmington Country Club in Charlottesville, Virginia when he was drafted into the U.S. Navy. He had become an American citizen some years before.

By World War II, the Navy had more than battleships and frigates, with aircraft carriers and naval air support as well. Ball, as fortune would have it, was assigned to the Glenview Naval Air Station, which happened to have two golf courses.

"When they found out I was a golf professional, I got to play more with the admirals!" Ball said.

Errie's proficiency at golf led to light military duty combined with organizing play on the courses, the old Pickwick Golf Course layouts designed by Joe Roseman, which remained open to naval and other military personnel until the base was decommissioned. They were where the southernmost holes of The Glen Club stand today. But one day at the base turned Ball's life around.

"We had a golf clinic with Tommy Armour, Johnny Revolta, and somebody else and myself in Chicago.

"A lot of clubs were invited to the clinic, and Oak Park was one of them. When we got through, they came up to me and asked me if I would be interested in being the pro at Oak Park. I said, 'Sure.' The war was ending, and I was still in uniform."

Ball's old position at Farmington was there for him if he wanted it. But the notion of staying in the Chicago area was appealing. So he interviewed at the club.

"It was kind of wintertime," Ball recalled of that day when snow blanketed the course. "It looked too bright, but I liked the clubhouse. I walked out on the putting green and thought, this is a good golf course."

That quickly, Farmington was in Ball's past. And what a past, even then, beginning with his family's roots in the game. John Ball, his grand uncle, won eight British Amateurs,

ROBERT P. JONES
SAMUEL HERSEY EVINS
E. CLEM POWERS
WILLIAM J. JONES, JR.
WILLIAM WILLIAMS

JONES, EVINS, POWERS & JONES:
COUNSELORS AT LAW
SIXTY-FIVE CIVIC CENTER & SOUTHERN MAIL BANK BLDG.
ATLANTA, GA.

November
7th,
1933.

Mr. Gordon Smith,
Mobile Country Club,
Mobile, Alabama.

My dear Gordon:

I have just learned that your Club is considering Errie Ball for its professional job. I believe that you know Errie and that, therefore, there is probably little need of my writing you this letter. It is my thought, however, that it may aid in crystallizing your thoughts.

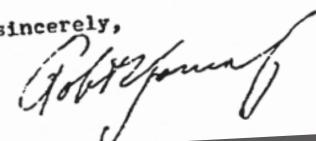
When I start out to write a recommendation for the boy, I find it a little difficult to adequately express the opinion I hold of him. I have watched him very carefully around East Lake and the Highlands, N.C. Club, where he is in the summer time. He is always a perfect little gentleman, exceedingly courteous and well liked by everyone with whom he comes in contact. He sticks on his job, plays, as you know, an excellent game of golf, and apparently has learned an exceptional amount of the teaching end of the game.

Indeed, all things considered, he appeals to me as ideally equipped to handle a job of his own. He is ambitious and industrious and I believe he will work his heart out to make good. I really think your people would be missing a splendid opportunity if they should let this opportunity slip. He is young, of course, but experienced, and it will not be long before someone grabs him up.

I was sorry I was not able to get away from the office to have a game with you and Errie this week. I have been out of town an awful lot lately and expect to be gone all of next week, and I have a number of matters to catch up in the meantime.

With best regards,

Most sincerely,



RTJ-Jr:J.

As letters of reference go in golf, one from Robert T. Jones Jr. – the great Bobby himself – was the gold standard.

and, along the way, the 1890 British Open. W.H. Ball, his father, was a longtime professional at Lancaster Golf Club in the U.K., serving that membership for 50 years.

Yes, young Sam Ball would be a golfer as well, and began his professional career as an apprentice under his father. It wasn't easy work.

"We'd get all these balls that were found on the golf course, and we repainted them," he recalled. "You had to repaint them a certain way. If it was a mesh-marked ball, you had to make sure the mesh stayed. You couldn't fill it up with paint, it wouldn't fly."

But even as he was advancing in the game, the world outside the United Kingdom might not have known him as well but for the advice of two men.

Uncle Frank Ball, first in the family to the United States, put a bug in his ear to follow him across the Atlantic, and to the club where he was the head professional: East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, Georgia. He was not the first to give the lad with the man's game that advice.

An East Lake member had done so as well: Robert Tyre Jones Jr.

It was 1930, a big year for Bob Jones. Errie got to know Bob – and would never call him Bobby – during the 1926 British Open at Royal Lytham & St. Annes. At this Open Championship, Errie was a bit of a novelty – a youth of 15, he was thought at the time to be the youngest player to tee it up in the Open, though more recent research, Ball said, uncovered a lad of 13 doing so – while Jones was a sensation, winning the Claret Jug for the first of three times. But Jones, with the world outside beckoning him, took a few moments and told Errie the future of the game was in the U.S., that a golf professional's fortune could be greater there.

Two years later, at 17, Ball turned professional, and by the late fall of 1930, he was on his way across the Atlantic to start his professional adventure in earnest.

And what adventure! Ball won the Southeastern PGA in

1931, not long after he'd switched to steel shafts. An eight-footer on the final hole for a birdie, a closing 72 and a total 297 in Greensboro, North Carolina, knocked defending champion Eddie Miller out of first place. It was big enough news to make the New York papers.

The following year, he won the Atlanta Open. Soon he was a head pro in Mobile, Alabama, which sounds like a job at the end of the world, but the courses on the Gulf Coast then and now saw plenty of tourist trade, so Ball was busy. He jumped to Farmington in the mid-1930s and was there for seven summers before he was drafted, not only running the shop and giving lessons to members, but becoming the unofficial coach of the University of Virginia golf team.

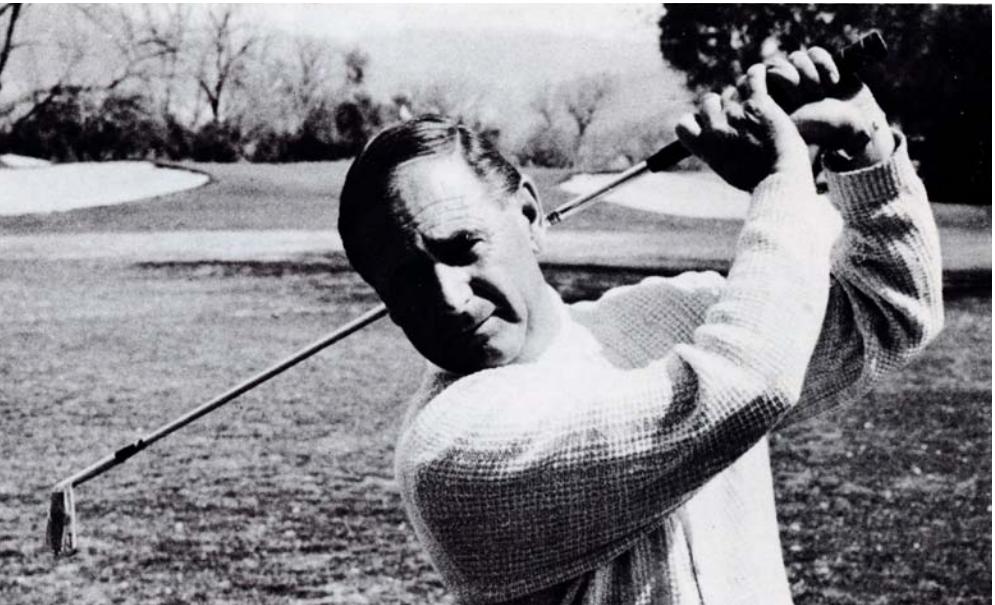
Ball would win another Southeastern PGA as well as the Virginia Open before landing in Glenview, and play various other tournaments on the fledgling PGA circuit. Among the stops on the trail: the inaugural edition of the Augusta National Invitation Tournament.

"Well, Bob Jones and Cliff Roberts were starting this club in Augusta, Georgia, and I knew something was going on, because he was spending some time there designing the golf course," Ball recalled. "The golf architect was (Alister) MacKenzie.

"I didn't know it was going to get this big. The first Masters was more like an invitational tournament. There were 70 of us invited to play. Charlie Yates and myself got an invitation. When we got the invitation, we were thrilled to death, because we knew anything Bob Jones went into was going to be good.

"You see how it's turned out."

Ball finished tied for 38th in the inaugural Masters, 25



Errie Ball striking a familiar pose in 1964.



Every Oak Park member's bag carried a reminder of the man they could turn to.

strokes behind Oak Park's Horton Smith. He now happens to be the last player alive from the field of 71 competitors.

"I'm the last man standing," he quipped in the locker room of Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart, Florida, where he's the pro emeritus.

Despite the connection with Jones, Errie wouldn't play in another Masters until 1957, when he and longtime friendly rival Bill Ogden, the head professional at North Shore Country Club, had high finishes in the 1956 U.S. Open. That produced the sought-after invitation to the Masters. For Ball, it was 23 years between drives down Magnolia Lane and hearing the traditional introduction by starter Phil Harison on the first tee: "Fore please, Errie Ball now driving!" No player in Masters history has had a longer span between appearances in the tournament.

Two years after the inaugural Masters, Errie traveled back to England for the Open at Royal Liverpool. He qualified, then stood seven back of co-leaders James Adams and W.J. Cox after the first 36 holes. A big 36-hole final day, and Ball would make headlines. A third round 72 helped, but a final round 79 left him tied for 23rd, 15 shots adrift of Alf Padgham, the champion golfer of the year.

But don't feel poorly for Errie. It was on the trip back to the States that he and Maxie Wright crossed paths.

"Maxie had just graduated from Harry Baldwin in Virginia, and her parents gave her a graduation present of a trip around Europe," Errie said. "I had finished playing in the British and had seen my family. We were sitting together, and became very friendly, and we ran all the events aboard ship. It took a long time to cross, some eight days, and Maxie and I ran shuffleboard and all that stuff and became very close."

Maxie told the PGA of America's Bob Denney they met thanks to a ship steward.

"He said, 'You know, Mr. Ball here is a pretty famous golfer,' " Maxie said. "I thought, 'So what?' Well, we have been together ever since."

They were married two months later.

In between those Masters appearances, and 10 years after meeting his dream girl, Errie Ball arrived at Oak Park. He would stay for nearly a quarter century.

"Oak Park in those days was almost a men's club. Ladies were allowed to play, but at certain times," Ball remembered.

"I remember that I played more than I taught, mostly with the members, and I made a lot of good friends there. Eddie Bush was the pro and resigned, and that's when I came on."

Ball scored as low as 63 at Oak Park, and recorded a 29 on each nine on other occasions. But one day in 1962 topped them all.

"It was a Wednesday afternoon," Errie recalled. "I was playing with Don Heppes, Ray George, and Emmet Burdsall, and just shot the two 1s."

Errie mentions it like someone would note a bird flying by a window. He made two aces in one round. In fact, in one nine. Ball aced what are now the 13th and 17th holes, but then were the fourth and eighth, with a pair of perfect shots. Two 1s on the same card.

The odds on that: roughly 67 million to one.

"They were kind of thrilled when I hit the first one in, and when I hit the second one in, we were all thrilled!" Errie said.

But there's more.

"I almost had three!" Ball added, a twinkle in his eye.

The next day's *Chicago Tribune* recounted the details. Errie went out in 32 and came to the 15th hole – today the sixth – brandishing a 3-iron. His arrow-like shot landed inches from the hole and stopped behind the cup. He'd almost collected a third ace in one round on the fly.

For those who want to recreate his feat, Errie used a 7-iron from 144 yards for his first ace, and a 3-iron from 199 for his second.

Three years earlier, he came to the penultimate hole in the Illinois Open at Oak Park, which is now the eighth hole, in contention. And not for the first time, he came in contact with a tree.

"Hah!" Ball exclaimed. "It was right on the edge of the green, on the left side of the green, one branch hanging over the green. If you had the pin there, you had to hit a pretty good iron shot and not get it too high, else you'd hit the damn branch. You had to keep it under. But it was always wet in front, so you couldn't punch it down in the fairway. It would get stuck in the mud. So you had to take your chances and keep it under this branch."

"I hit it!"

With that went a chance at an Illinois Open title to go with the one he captured in 1953. Ball also won a pair of Illinois PGA Section titles, plus the section's match play crown,

knocking off Al Huske on Medinah's treacherous No. 3 course. And when he didn't win, he was usually battling someone like Ogden or Sunset Ridge's Bob Harris for first money.

One of his Illinois Section titles came at North Shore, Ogden's stomping grounds, with Ogden coming up short.

"It gave Errie tremendous pleasure to win it on Bill's home course," said Steve Dunning, Oak Park's pro emeritus. "So much so, he ended up sleeping on a couch in the clubhouse! He got home at 10 the next morning, holding a bouquet of flowers for Maxie. She said, 'I will not be married to a damn drunk!'"

Ball also kept his hand in on the national scene. The 1956 U.S. Open wasn't a fluke. He played in 20 U.S. Opens and 18 PGA Championships.

"Well, a lot of times I'd qualify, but not make the cut!" he chuckled.

Oh, but the places he went and the people he played with.

Say, that time in 1960 when he made the cut in the National Open at Cherry Hills Country Club near Denver and was lockered next to Arnold Palmer. After getting some guff about being out of the running from Pittsburgh sportswriter pal Bob Drum at lunch between the third and fourth rounds, Palmer threw down his sandwich, went to his locker and told Ball and all those within earshot, "I'll drive the first green."

You know the rest.

"I enjoyed playing an awful lot with Sam Snead and Byron Nelson," Ball said. "Ben Hogan, I didn't play much with him, only a couple of times, but I liked Ben. He was very quiet. And Jimmy Demaret and Toney Penna, who became one of the best clubmakers in the game. And Toney Penna's brother, Charlie."

For 20 of the 24 years he ran the golf shop at Oak Park, Errie and Maxie traveled to Arizona, and Tucson Country Club, for the winter. As at Oak Park, the occasional Hollywood celebrity came through, especially during the Tucson Open, the PGA Tour stop that headquartered at the club for years. But once upon a quieter time, he walked to the Tucson practice tee to give another celebrity, the Duke of Windsor, a lesson.

"I was much bigger than he was, and I'm small," Errie quipped. "He had too much going on to be a good player. He had to give it the time."

Ball gave it the time. He was as competitive in Arizona as he was in Illinois, winning two Arizona PGA Section titles, plus the 1954 Arizona Open, the only time in the

first 15 playings Johnny Bulla didn't win.

Errie might have stayed at Oak Park forever, but left after the 1969 season, lured by a year-round job in Vero Beach, Florida, early in a real estate boom.

"I left Oak Park to go to John's Island here in Florida, just up the road. They hired me thinking I was a real estate man. Then I got a call."

It was a friend of Paul Butler, the Oak Brook industrialist who was turning the land from the old public York Golf Club into the private Butler National Golf Club.

"I didn't even ask how much they wanted to pay," Ball said. "I couldn't wait to get out of Florida."

Less than two years after leaving Oak Park, Ball was back in town, this time for another 27 years, first as head professional, then pro emeritus. But in taking leave of John's Island, he brought two assistants from the Florida coast to Chicago's suburban sprawl: Gerry Knebbels and Bruce Patterson.

Knebbels would eventually become the head professional at Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart, Florida, and tab Ball as his pro emeritus, while Patterson would succeed Ball at Butler.

Butler National remembers Errie as fondly as Oak Park. The winner of Butler's club championship hoists the Errie Ball Trophy.

Ball had always had an eye for quality assistants. One of those he hired at Oak Park, Bill Erfurth, went on to a fine career as head professional at Lincolnshire and Skokie country clubs. And, like Knebbels and Patterson, he's never lost touch with Errie.

"He immediately gave me three don'ts," Erfurth remembered at the centennial birthday party Willoughby threw for Errie in 2010. "Don't ever leave me in the shop alone. Don't ever wear shorts. Don't ever date the members' daughters."

Erfurth also recalled that the one weakness in Ball's game was putting. He could go on hot streaks, though they weren't as frequent as he preferred.

"But," Erfurth told the revelers, "he finally found this black mallet Freddy Haas putter that he loved. One day he came in very upset after three-putting the 18th green to lose a \$2



Rick Jacobson's renovation of the golf course received the ultimate endorsement.

Then Errie told Steve a tale about Horton

Steve Dunning is a storyteller. Some of the stories, he tells on himself. This one goes back a few more years, with Steve merely the conduit for a tale that originated with Errie Ball:

Errie told me a story about Horton Smith, the only great Horton Smith story I've got. It's one of the best golf stories I've ever heard. After Horton won the Augusta Invitational – I don't know if it was the first or third, but it doesn't matter, because he was here both times – a couple of days after he won it, he was downstairs in the pro shop and he had his sport coat on.

Any time he had his sport coat on the end of the day, that meant he was about to leave. He was the only person in the whole clubhouse, except the club president was out on the putting green putting. It was a drizzly cold April day. It was only about 45 degrees and getting colder. It was almost a little foggy.

Horton was standing there at the door to the pro shop looking out at the president. The guy putting was the new club president as of the previous fall. He's putting, putting, putting. Horton's standing there looking at his watch, standing there, looking at his watch. Putting, putting, putting.

Finally, after about a half hour, it's almost pitch dark. Horton's just dying to get out of here.

It's one of those days where you know you can get out early, except this guy's not letting you. So he comes through the door, Horton's still standing there. He hands Horton his two balls and his putter, and he says to Horton, "Do you know who I am?"

"Of course I know who you are, you're Mr. so-and-so, and you're the club president."



A pair of pro's pros mugging for the camera in the shop.

The guy says, "I understand you just won a big tournament down in Georgia, and you won it on the strength of your putting."

Horton smiled, very pleased that he knew, and Horton said, "Yes."

"Well, you being the golf professional, me being the club president, you standing there by the door, me out there in the rain, where you know I must be having trouble with my putting, or why the hell would I be out there. Why wouldn't you come out and give me a tip, a little help?"

Horton, without batting an eye, said, "I'm sorry, I didn't realize you were putting. I thought you were out there waving at me."

Could you imagine saying that to the club president in 19-thirty-whatever it might be?

I guess I like that story so much because that's my sense of humor. And Errie liked it because he couldn't believe he got away with it.

press. He slammed that putter on the floor of the pro shop and it broke into two pieces, one breaking the glass of the showcase. Errie swore me to secrecy – and I've never told anyone."

Then there was the evening Ball and pro Chuck Gamble went to dinner and, over a glass or two of Dewar's, concocted a plan. Then went to a driving range.

"Chuck talked Errie into taking a lesson from this young, unsuspecting pro," Erfurth said. "Errie pretended to be a beginner and even whiffed a few. After some instruction and the 30-minute lesson was over, the young pro was beside himself. Errie was hitting it like a pro. He thought he had performed a miracle! Errie and Chuck left without confessing."

The honors and accolades have piled up for decades. In 2007, at 95, he was introduced at the first tee of the Tour Championship at East Lake, the first year of the PGA Tour's playoff format. In a triumphant return to the club that started his American career, he slammed his tee shot 235 yards, straight down the middle. The gallery in the grandstand responded with a standing ovation.

In his toast at East Lake, Dick Beeman said, "When I was on the grounds crew in 1948 and you were a young pro, you gave me my first golf lessons." He smiled. I said, "Whenever I break 90, I tell whoever I'm playing with I received my first golf lessons from you." He said, "I don't need you on my resume anymore." That kinda brought the house down."

Ball entered the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame in 1990, and the PGA of America Hall of Fame in 2011 – on his 101st birthday. Months before the big day, he said, "I'm kind of thrilled about it."

Amazingly for someone who made the game his life, things might have gone differently. Golf is not Errie's only specialty.

"I was a pretty good singer back in those days, and I almost thought I would take it up," Ball said in 2011. "Golf got the better of me. The more I played, the more I liked it. Singing, I wasn't too sure of myself. But if it wasn't for golf, I would have gone that way."

Errie Ball remembered many a name from his Oak Park days, from Harry Radix, Walter Leninger and Charles Ward Seabury to Don Heppes, Ray Anderson and Kent Snyder. But aside from remembering them as good fellows – and noting that Radix, along with his interests in figure skating, was the donor of golf trophies bearing his name – didn't want to tell stories about them.

A gentleman doesn't do that. And Errie Ball, first and foremost, is a gentleman.



Chapter 6

From Simpson to Bruno

Most country clubs with any kind of history have at least one professional who has stood out as either a player, a teacher, or a mentor.

Oak Park Country Club can fill a leader board with professionals bursting with accomplishments in all three categories.

It's not just Horton Smith and Errie Ball, though the feats of those two luminaries would do any club proud. From the club's opening day, Oak Park's members have had someone to turn to who knew the game intimately.

The tradition started with George O. Simpson, the club's first professional. He was the head man at a club in Wheaton close to Chicago Golf Club when he entered and almost won the 1911 U.S. Open at Chicago Golf. Simpson's final round 75 launched him into a tie for first with John J. McDermott and big Mike Brady. McDermott won the Open with a playoff score of 80, compared to Brady's 82 and Simpson's 86, but Simpson's star rose with his achievement, and was further bolstered by top-10 U.S. Open finishes in 1912 and 1914.

A Scottish import, as were virtually all the early professionals, Simpson first gained fame by winning the 1907 British Amateur, arrived at La Grange Country Club as a budding pro the following year, and lost to Chick Evans in the match play final of the 1910 Western Open.

He was the right man for the big new club at Oak Park, for a few years doubling as the superintendent. Club members so revered him, when he died suddenly of the flu early in 1920, the club took up a collection to pay for his funeral.

Simpson had added the superintendent's role to his portfolio in 1918, the club bringing in 20-year-old Elgin-born Bill Mehlhorn to give lessons, though Simpson was still in charge of the shop. Mehlhorn, whose stay at Oak Park was short, would have a

Sreve Dunning rolled into Oak Park from the Glen View Club in 1982, and quickly became a fixture.



George O. Simpson, Oak Park's first professional, in a photograph reproduced from the 1919 fifth anniversary brochure.

distinguished career on the tour, winning 20 times, including a victory in the 1924 Western Open at Calumet Country Club. By that time, thanks to his penchant for wearing cowboy hats, he was known as "Wild Bill."

Simpson was succeeded in 1920 by James Lindsay, who was hired as the combination professional and superintendent. Like Simpson a Scot, though from Gullane rather than Carnoustie, Lindsay was foremost a superintendent, and had recently supervised the construction of the Biltmore complex in Rye, N.Y. He held both posts through 1928, yielding the professional's position to Ray Croslin in 1929. While at Oak Park, Croslin set the course record with a 68.

Croslin gave way to Horton Smith in the spring of 1932, after the Missouri native's meteoric rise on the winter tour was duly noted. His winning the first Masters Tournament in 1934 vaulted him to even greater fame.

Like Simpson, Smith was a favorite of the members, and the board voted Smith an honorary membership when he took a job with Spalding after the 1935 season. That, and his brother Ren's ascension to the head professional post, kept him around the club in his spare time. Smith remained a familiar face at Oak Park until he moved to Detroit, some years after Ren Smith left and was replaced by yet another star performer.

Many players have held the dubious title of best player never to win a major championship, but, at least for the first two-thirds of the 20th century, it might rightly have belonged to Dick Metz, Oak Park's head professional from 1940 through 1942. His star-crossed finishes in the U.S. Open nearly rivaled those of contemporary Sam Snead.

Metz won 14 tournaments on the circuit now known as the PGA Tour – curiously, only 10 are recognized as official today – and knocked on the U.S. Open door almost continually. Despite never playing across the pond, he registered 15 top-10 finishes in today's current majors, with nine in the National Open, with those in 1938 and 1939 the most memorable.

He was representing Albert Lasker's fabled Mill Road Farm club when he arrived at Cherry Hills Country Club near Denver in 1938. At midday on Open Saturday, Metz led the field, standing at 4-under-par 209. Defending champion Ralph Guldahl was four strokes behind, but not for long. He surged to a 2-under 69 while Metz blew up, finishing with a 79 and ending up second, six strokes behind the back-to-back winner.

Undaunted, Metz bounced back strong in 1939. He won four tournaments, was named to the American Ryder Cup team – the matches were cancelled when the Germans invaded Poland, triggering World War II – fell to eventual champion Henry Picard in the semifinals of the PGA Championship, and finished seventh in the U.S. Open at Spring Mill in Philadelphia.

Lasker's donation of Mill Road Farm to the University of Chicago meant Metz needed a new posting, and Ren Smith's departure from Oak Park provided it. Metz still played the big tournaments – he lost to eventual champion Byron Nelson in the third round of the 1940 PGA – but was more of a club professional at Oak Park than he had been at Mill Road Farm. While he had three top 10s in majors in his three years at Oak Park, Metz also took pen in hand and wrote two of his three instructional books, including "The Secret to Par Golf."

Those Oak Park members who ventured to Tam O'Shanter Country Club in Niles were among a gallery of 8,000 able to watch Metz annex the Chicago Open title, and the \$1,500 that went with it, in the summer of 1940. He finished a stroke ahead of Ben Hogan and Johnny Revolta, then returned to his home across the street from Oak Park's fifth tee.

When Metz arrived at Oak Park, he inherited Ernest Joe "Dutch" Harrison as his teaching assistant. Harrison, a native of Little Rock, Arkansas, worked as an assistant under both Horton and Ren Smith, and then under Metz. His tournament game bloomed while at Oak Park, and he led the 1939 money list until Henry Picard nipped him down the stretch.

Harrison and Horton Smith had made the 1939 PGA Championship of particular interest to Oak Park members when they met in a quarterfinal match at Pomonok Country Club in New York. Dutch scored a 4 and 3 victory, but fell to eventual champion Picard in the semifinals.

The playing career of the "Arkansas Traveler" included a victory in the 1953 Western Open, two wins in the Bing Crosby National Pro-Am (including in 1939, the first of his 18 Tour titles, won while representing

Working Out with Lloyd Mangrum

"Stylist" Mangrum, '46 U.S. Open Champ, is a short-game artist. Always practices putting before the tee-off. Lloyd's workouts under scorching sun are rough on his hair... so he plays it smart with Vitalis.



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I beat the bogey of blistering sun and drenching showers with the Vitalis '60-Second Workout.' says Lloyd Mangrum. Don't let sun, wind and water weather-beat your hair. Protect its good looks as so many top (and up-and-coming) men do. Get Vitalis.



Lloyd Mangrum (above), an Oak Park assistant in 1940, won the 1946 U.S. Open in a 36-hole playoff over Byron Nelson, Vic Ghezzi, and a lightning storm during the final three holes. Mangrum worked for Dick Metz (left) at the club.



James Lindsay, seen here in military dress, was head professional and superintendent for much of his tenure.

Oak Park) and an appearance, at age 61, in the 1971 U.S. Open. At the time, he was the oldest to qualify for the National Open.

When Harrison left, Metz called on another Tour stalwart, signing Lloyd Mangrum for the 1940 season. Mangrum had battled both Metz and Byron Nelson for the Western Open title at Medinah in 1939 before Nelson prevailed. Wounded in the Battle of the Bulge, Mangrum recovered to have a fine Tour career, capturing the 1946 U.S. Open, a pair of Western Open victories, a like number of Crosby Pro-Ams and one of George S. May's World Championships at Tam O'Shanter among his 36 triumphs on the circuit.

Metz left Oak Park after 1942, and was succeeded by Ed Bush for three seasons. He would be Oak Park's fourth head professional in a decade, but stability would arrive in the person of Errie Ball. His 24-year tenure, filled with infectious laughter and no small amount of common sense teaching – including some by assistant Bill Erfurth, who like Ball would eventually gain induction to the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame – was followed by the two-year stop of Ron Bakich. Subsequently, Paul Lemcke and Earl Puckett each enjoyed a five-year stay in the shop.

Puckett was a Chicago-area mainstay for decades, and, following the authorship of Smith and Metz, edited an instructional book, "495 Golf Lessons," making a cohesive read out of Arnold Palmer's syndicated newspaper column, plus a paperback encyclopedia encompassing those lessons. But for two years, Puckett employed someone who took instruction to greater heights than either himself or the King. In 1979 and 1980, the teaching professional at Oak Park was David Leadbetter.

Born in England and raised in what was then Rhodesia, Leadbetter was 27 when he left a club job in England and arrived to seek his fortune in the United States. He landed at Oak Park because Phil Ritson, the golf boss at Disney World who knew Leadbetter from their days in South Africa, recommended him to Danny O'Neil, the club member who, along with his many entertainment connections, was also the agent of tour player Andy Bean.

"Earl Puckett offered me a job as the teaching professional," Leadbetter remembered. "Among the teachers in Chicago then were Jim Hardy, Hank Haney and John Jacobs. I knew John Jacobs, and they wanted me to teach his philosophy. I did that as best I could, but if you've got to teach, teach what you believe in."

Leadbetter eventually would do so, in the process becoming one of the leading teachers of top-tier professionals beginning with Nick Price and Denis Watson, then notably with Nick Faldo through six major championship titles. Leadbetter also became an entrepreneur whose over two dozen golf schools include a youth academy. Recently, he started a radio show on the SiriusXM satellite service.

Indeed, Leadbetter was one of the first teachers with a large stable of stars. As he said, before the 1980s, aside from Jack Nicklaus' longtime relationship with Jack Grout, "the top players figured it out on their own. Now, it's the exception to not have a teacher."

But at Oak Park, it was one lesson at a time, many of them given to H.K. Snyder.

"He sort of took a fancy to me," Leadbetter said. "H.K. was a fanatical golfer who enjoyed working on his game. He sort of made my life easy at the club."

Leadbetter arrived at Oak Park with a work permit arranged by a lawyer who belonged to the club, bringing clothes and a set of clubs. Almost everything else, he left in England – including a longtime girlfriend.

"I got room and board, and I was paid something like \$1,300 to \$1,400 monthly, plus lessons," he said. "At the time, I didn't have any expenses. It was enjoyable. I got to teach a lot. At times, my giving lessons sort of upset the powers that be. But I'm good friends with Earl Puckett now."

"It was very interesting, seeing the politics of a country club. You could make a TV series from it. It was entertaining and eye-opening at the same time. Members would try to get you to marry their daughters, that sort of thing. There were some real characters, for sure."

For Leadbetter, "room and board" was just that, meals and a room in the old employee quarters that otherwise housed some of the seasonal maintenance crew and a few of the female clubhouse employees.

"It was not exactly the Ritz," Leadbetter said, chuckling. "It was 300 yards if you wanted to shower in the men's locker room. On occasion, I'd use the ladies locker room shower in the dorm, usually late at night. I'd sneak in there. But three or four ladies would get very upset, including one lady who must have been 80. She could have been in the Gestapo."

"But one time I was going out on a date or something and used it at about 5 p.m. They



David Leadbetter worked the lesson tee for two years under Earl Puckett, then became one of the best-known teachers in golf.



Ernest J. "Dutch" Harrison, a.k.a. "The Arkansas Traveler," had enough game to deserve two nicknames.

heard the water running and I heard the ladies banging on the door. I left the water running, dressed and climbed out the window.

"I came around and asked what was going on. 'He's in there!' they said."

Leadbetter said he was "ashamed" to have only come back to Oak Park on one occasion since leaving after the 1980 season.

"Through Danny O'Neil and Andy Bean, I was able to go to Florida in the winter," Leadbetter said. "Bean represented Grenelefe, a well-known course. We started the Andy Bean Golf Studio, and after one year it reverted to my name. That's really where I started, where I was when my career really took off. Nick Price won the World Series of Golf, Denis Watson won, and subsequently I started to work with Nick Faldo."

Today, Leadbetter schools a variety of stars, from Suzann Pettersen to the recently-signed Lydia Ko, the prodigy from New Zealand who won four professional tournaments as an amateur, and won again shortly after turning pro.

"I wouldn't be where I am today without Oak Park," Leadbetter said. "It was a stepping stone to the next level. There's luck and fate in life. The stars are all lined up. Oak Park afforded me the opportunity to come to America.

"Oak Park definitely kick-started my career, no question about it."

Puckett's departure for Twin Orchard Country Club at the end of 1981 opened the door for an Oregon-bred young assistant pro from the Glen View Club.

His name was Steve Dunning. Unlike Bakich, Lemcke and Puckett, Steve Dunning came to stay. His tenure of 28 years before becoming professional emeritus exceeded Errie Ball's tenure at the club by four years.

Dunning credits a budding friendship with Errie Ball, including a match in the Radix Cup in which the old pro carried the kid, as critical to his getting the job.

"When I was hired in 1982, Errie was one of the first people to call me and congratulate me," Dunning said. "He said the cutest thing. The eighth hole had a tree that hung out over the green, and that tree got his second shot on a regular basis. It was one of those trees where if you hit it and you were hitting kind of a pull hook, it might save your bacon. But if you were hitting a good-looking shot, you'd get rejected so often. It hung out over about half the green. It was on the front left corner and if there was ever a tree that was impinging on the play of a hole, it was that one."

“So he said to me, ‘Before the ink dries on the contract, get a McCullough chain saw and cut that thing down.’”

Dunning had given countless lessons at the Glen View Club, and continued in that vein in Oak Park.

“I came here to broaden my base,” Dunning said. “The way I was going, I was going to become a total teaching machine for the rest of my life. I was teaching 10 hours a day, six days a week, at Glen View Club and at Paradise Valley and at Royal Poinciana. All three, pretty much maxing out the number of hours in the day, teaching.

“I was in my early 30s, and my boss at Glen View, Ed Oldfield, was one of the best teachers in the country. He said, ‘Dunning, you’re going to kill yourself teaching. Why don’t you get a head pro job so you can take life easy?’ Which we’ve laughed about many times, because there’s nothing easy about being a golf professional.”

He was hired in January of 1982, too late to hire a staff, so he kept Puckett’s two assistants. They were gone by midseason, so Dunning innovated.

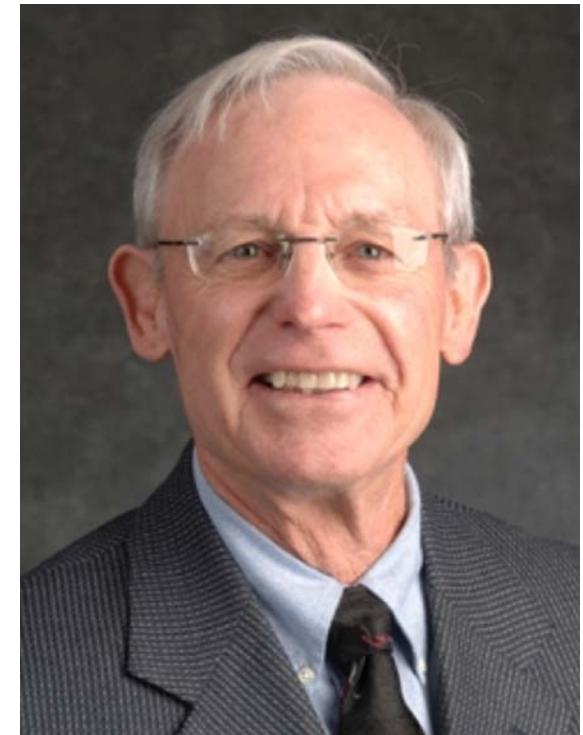
“I hired Alicia Ogrin, Dave Ogrin’s sister, to be my assistant for the balance of the season,” he recalled. “She was great. She came in just at the right time and she was good. She’s gone on to be very successful in corporate America.”

Steve’s bride Connie became a fixture behind the counter, but Dunning had to make a decision early on how he divided his time. One holdover from his Glen View tenure was schooling some players on the LPGA circuit.

“A number of them came here, and a couple of them wanted me to leave here every Saturday night, come watch them play on Sunday once a month – two of the biggest-name players on tour – and watch them play the last round, then stay over Sunday night, watch them hit balls on Monday morning, then come back here,” Dunning explained. “It was my first year here. I just wasn’t comfortable with anything that wild. Plus I was newly married, and I don’t think my wife was that crazy about the idea.”

Additionally, in the back of his mind was a recurring question from the interview process with club members.

“It was ‘If we hire you, would you consider staying here for a long time?’ I said, ‘That’s my style. I’m coming to you right now for this interview from a club where I’ve been for a long time and in many ways don’t want to leave. It’s just that I want to become the golf



Bill Erfurth worked for Errie Ball as an assistant, soon became a head professional, and still betters his age in his 80s.

Oak Park's head professionals ...

1915-1920	George O. Simpson
1921-1928	James Lindsay
1929-1931	Ray Croslin
1932-1935	Horton Smith
1936-1939	Ren Smith
1940-1942	Dick Metz
1943-1945	Ed Bush
1946-1969	Errie Ball
1970-1971	Ron Bakich
1972-1976	Paul Lemcke
1977-1981	Earl Puckett
1982-2009	Steve Dunning
2010-	Frank Bruno

... and the superintendents

1915-1916	William Matthews
1916-1917	R.R. Lucas
1918-1920	George O. Simpson
1921-1930	James Lindsey
1931-1951	Edward B. Dearie Jr.
1952-1954	Merrill Kirchner
1954-1969	Wesley Updegraff
1970-1976	Leon Hartogh
1977-	Alan T. Fierst

professional. I want to be the guy that signs the checks. I want to be the guy that you come after when your putter-head cover's lost. I want to be the guy that runs your golf tournament, all those things, not just the guy standing out there giving 20 lessons a day."

That meant not flying to the LPGA tournament site once a month, which would mean missing interaction with his membership on a typically busy Sunday.

Dunning said he should have played golf with the members more, but admitted, "Ed Oldfield's idea of taking life easy didn't take. I'd never worked harder than the first 15 years I was here."

Eventually, he said, he learned how to draw a line in his lesson book, able to say no. Not that it was easy.

"The greatest thing about being a golf professional is helping people play better, helping them to a better swing," Dunning said. "The hardest thing about being a successful teacher, one of the hardest things, is getting people's mind off the ball and on the swing. If they're ball-bound, you cannot help them. If they hit a good shot and they don't do it right, you've got to blast them for it. If they hit a bad shot and they do it right, you've got to praise them for it."

"But there's a period of getting used to something, and if a guy's been holding it like this and you put his hands on the club like that, he's not going to be able to hit it for a month. The second month, he's going to be as good as when he started, and the third month, he's going to be better. You've got to sell it. They call it the game of a lifetime."

For Dunning it is, and that's true of his successor, Frank Bruno, who all but grew up at Oak Park as a teen, thanks to his father.

"He drove me over, introduced me to caddie master Bill Survilla, and said I'd like to caddie. I said, 'I would?'" Bruno recalled with a chuckle.

He did, becoming more than proficient at the task. All-state recognition in high school was followed by four years as a leader of the golf pack at Millikin University in Decatur, including three all-CCIW laurels. After a fling at the pro tour, he returned as one of Dunning's assistants, spending 14 years in that capacity before his elevation to the head professional post late in 2009.

"There is history and heritage here," Bruno said.

Much of it written by those who have run the golf shop for a century.



The super supers

There have been nine superintendents at Oak Park Country Club, beginning with William Matthews in 1915. Two stand out. One is Edward B. Dearie, the superintendent from 1931 to 1951, and a member of the construction crew that built the course.

The other, pictured to the left, is Alan T. Fierst, in charge since 1977. This is his 38th year at the helm, the most for an Oak Park grounds boss, and among the longest tenures of any area superintendent.

Fierst, a longtime member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, is the first person on the course every day, and often the last one as well. He knows the grounds intimately, from the soil to the grass to the flora and fauna that populate it. Minor project or major, such as overseeing the club's participation in the Elmwood Park water mitigation project that took up the summer of 2013, Fierst is the authority.

He's also a historian and photographer who cares deeply about the heritage of Oak Park Country Club and the surrounding communities. Several of the items in the club's memorabilia collection were found by him.

Undoubtedly, his toughest duty came when grounds committee chair H.K. Snyder Jr. wanted a tree removed for whatever reason. Except in emergencies, board approval was needed for tree removal. On one occasion, it was because the tree in question interfered with the floor plan for the giant tent for the Invitational party. Snyder ran interference.

Aside from those few instances, Fierst's word was law. He's been a benevolent ruler, and Oak Park's course is regarded as one of the best conditioned in the Midwest.

Like Fierst, Dearie took great pride in his golf course.

"He went to work every day in his tie, his jacket and his fedora," former president Dick Beeman recalled of Dearie. "I remember that clearly. He wasn't in a cart. He'd walk around to kind of be sure that not only the high school guys were working, but the grounds crew."

"I remember clearly being on the grounds crew as a 15-year-old and seeing Dearie standing under a tree and watching whether I was raking the bunkers fully. The rakes then were huge, very wide, 6 feet wide on the rake end, and heavy, wooden rakes. The cross bunkers between Nos. 3 and 11 crossed through what is now wooded and served both holes. You could get in one of those and you thought you were in the Mojave Desert, trying to rake those babies with the big, wooden rakes. I'd lean back to get a drink of water and there's Mr. Dearie, standing next to a tree, blending in and peering in on my work habits."

Caddies and scholars

Maryclaret Ndubuisi-Obi is still in college, but the Oak Park caddie is already a success story.

Her background was not in golf. Her early upbringing was not even in the United States. She was born in Nigeria, and moved here after her father, having moved to the U.S. first to provide a better life for his family, called for them in 1999.

That good fortune was built on by Mary in the form of superior grade school work, earning her a Daniel Murphy Scholarship. Attached to that was an opportunity to caddie. She lives an hour from Oak Park on in a rough part of Chicago's south side, but opted to stay in a dorm with other Murphy scholars to be closer to the courses. Then came the inaugural trip through the club's gates.

"Actually, I knew absolutely nothing about golf," Mary admitted. "My first day there was my first time actually being on a golf course. It was a little scary. A different environment to adapt to. My first time they taught me the skills of golf. You go around with an honor caddie and they teach you all the things that you need to know. It was pretty scary, but nice, because the honor caddies were pretty nice to us."

And intriguing to her. Ndubuisi-Obi would become an honor caddie, earn an Evans scholarship, and has completed three years of biomedical science study at Marquette University, with an eye toward becoming a doctor.

"I love medicine and I love biology," she said. "I know it's going to be hard, but I've pushed through the first two years. Now it's kind of like



Ten Evans Scholar alums who caddied at Oak Park attended a scholar selection meeting at the club early in 2014. First row, from left: Bill Sullivan, Allison Heraty Gonsowski, Tim Pruyn, Mike Pruyn, Jim McGrail, Rich Excell. Second row, from left: Joe Dorzd, Gary Matula, Peter Schiltz and Jay Javors.

the last run. I'm not going to say it was easy at all, because it wasn't. I'm a fighter. I really wanted to do it, and I'm going to go through with it until I can't, I guess."

Mary is one of 120 Evans Scholars from Oak Park, including the three selected at an Evans meeting at the club in January who will begin their college studies this fall. That's one of the larger totals of any Chicago-area club, especially one with one 18-hole course, and testament to not only the hard work of the caddies, but the

dedication of the membership through strong support of the WGA's Par Club and other fund-raising activities, including an Evans Scholar Day, one of the first at a club that was a specific fund-raiser for the scholarship fund.

Her origin is unique, but her story is the essence of the Oak Park caddie experience, which has played out thousands of times over. Learn how to caddie, learn about life, learn to interact with successful adults from all walks of life.

And Oak Park does more than train caddies

and help the best and most in need aim at the Evans. There's also a club caddie scholarship, separate from the Evans program, which aspiring caddies chase after along with chasing the little white ball at a club where carts do exist, but walking is favored by a substantial portion of the membership.

Caddies at Oak Park, of course, go back to the start of the club, as do caddie masters. A man named Hopkins was the first in charge of the meandering brood, but more notice, and the domestication of the group, came with a subsequent leader, Mathilda Eggener, a former schoolteacher in Wisconsin and California who arrived in July of 1918. A report in the Chicago Daily News in May of 1919 described the methods of the Wisconsin graduate:

"Caddies are of the age when they quit getting sick every time they smoke," the reporter noted. "In fact they'll learn to like it if they keep it up a few years longer. But they don't smoke out here. Miss Eggener said not to.

"And not only that, boys like to shoot craps. ... Some of the boys thought they could shoot 'em once in a while at the club. Of course they knew Miss Eggener said they mustn't. Well, those boys are gone now. Crap shooting is over. And there are as many as 300 boys on busy days. It takes a forceful man – we mean woman – to manage them and make them like it. Any men who want to know how to manage healthy boys, address Miss Eggener at the club."

Eggener explained her theory of adolescent male management in a 1919 issue of Oak Leaves: "(I) acted square; let them know I was boss; gave swift punishment to offenders. Kids will worship the ground you walk on if you let them know



Maryclaret Ndubuisi-Obi, currently at Marquette, is only the latest Evans Scholar caddie success story from Oak Park.

you're sticking up for them."

As such, Eggener made sure members and guests treated their caddies with respect, while gentrifying her charges, manners taught at ice cream parties.

"Such ruffians they used to be before I came," she said. "Smashed up the caddie house, trampled over the flowers, sassed the players, fought amongst themselves.

"And now look at them! They're darling little gentlemen. They wash their faces and never forget the ears and neck, say 'Yes sir' to the golf players and tip their hats to me."

Eggener so liked the job, she twice turned down an offer to teach at a Wisconsin high school, the second time after a \$50 raise was proffered.

While an educational background for a caddie master is not unusual today, it was unique in 1918. The author of a 1911 study of the Menominee Indians published by Wisconsin after her graduation, Eggener eventually left Oak Park. By 1923, the golden west beckoned for a second time, and she was teaching at Union High School in Fullerton, California. Eggener eventually married LeRoy Williams.

The number of regular caddies is only a third of what it was in Eggener's day, and half of what it was a decade ago.

But with a stable of about 100 caddies, current caddie master Ted Heller, like predecessor Rimmy Dunlop and his predecessor, Tom Geraghty, has a very good crew, one that is well-mannered in the Eggener tradition, and thinks on its feet.

Maryclaret Ndubuisi-Obi is proof.

"As a caddie, I don't know everything, but sometimes the golfers want you to know a little bit more than you think you do," she said. "During the tournaments, there were times I'd get a little bit of confidence in my skills as a caddie from them.

"We'd be on the green, and the golfer would ask, 'What do you think?' Whenever I'd try to read a putt, I'd think I knew what I'm doing. And I did know what I was doing after a couple of years. You'd guess, but then you'd need your skill also. You're running on luck and skill at the same time.

"I'd tell them what it is, or what I think it is. The best part of my experience was having golfers take my guess, or opinion, and use it. They'd putt the same way you told them to putt. Having them trust me in a tournament is one of the craziest things golfers do, but that confidence golfers have in my guess or skill, whatever it was, gave me confidence in myself.

"It was fun to do that and learn from that. They wanted me to take risks, to take shots, and I incorporated that into making myself a better caddie or a better person in general."

At Oak Park, that happens all the time, one caddie at a time.



Chapter 7

Harry Radix

Harry Radix, say those who knew him, was diminutive.

Only physically. He cast a long shadow, and continues to, in more than one sport.

His twin legacies in golf, the Radix Trophy and the Radix Cup, live on.

The former is less familiar than the latter, but is the tangible manifestation of the longtime Oak Park member's love for the professional game. And the latter's creation, played annually at the club for a half-century, was not by him, but to honor him.

Radix himself was a character, one of Chicago's great sportsmen. A better ice skater than a golfer – and he regularly shot in the 70s in his prime – he was highly influential in the world of figure skating on both the amateur and professional levels. That was felt as far back as the mid-1930s, when he led the Chicago Figure Skating Club to produce an ice show at Chicago Stadium. Two shows drew 31,000 people, nearly filling the old barn, helping convince Stadium co-owner Arthur Wirtz that a traveling ice show would be profitable. Wirtz created one and signed three-time Olympic champion Sonja Henie as the headliner.

Radix then helped the Shipstad brothers and Oscar Johnson create the Ice Follies in 1937, plus went in on the development of the Chicago Arena, an ice rink on McClurg Court in the renovated former home of the Chicago Riding Club. That building eventually became CBS' Chicago headquarters and remained so for over a half-century.

When the ice melted each spring, Radix turned his attention to golf. He joined Oak Park on November 22, 1932, several years after joining nearby Ridgemoor Country Club, where he had already been club president. He would also serve as the president of the Chicago District Golf Association from 1933-35.

For most men, the influence ends there. Not Harry Radix.

Harry Radix, friend to all, cut an imposing figure in business, figure skating and golf.

The end of the Radix Bridge

Harry Radix donated the first \$6,500 toward the 1964 installation of the Radix Bridge, which spanned Lake Wilbur from the 18th green to the 16th tee. But it didn't last forever. It came down with a crash years before the pond was enlarged in the 2006 renovation.

"There were a lot of people who thought (the bridge) was a wonderful thing, and it had a history," professional emeritus Steve Dunning recalled.

"A lot of pictures were taken there at weddings, etcetera. But the strange thing about the Radix bridge is it was not something you could go across. You could in my early years, but then the bridge got kind of wobbly."

Al Fierst remembered it coming down "on a calm and sunny Saturday morning. The laminated support arches for the bridge deck had, over time, delaminated and rendered a twist or wind to the bridge form. With the sharp report of shattering wood, the bridge collapsed into the water."

As in figure skating, Radix knew everyone who was anyone in golf. He was acquainted with most every big-name professional – many of whom, including Oak Park's own Horton Smith, were headquartered in Chicago.

He also rubbed shoulders often with Bobby Jones. When Jones and Clifford Roberts decided to start their own tournament shortly after opening Augusta National Golf Club, Radix was quick to offer congratulations, and until his death was the proud owner of Masters badge No. 1.

It was in 1934, the same year that Smith won the first tournament destined to be renamed the Masters, that Radix took a long look at the fledgling professional tour and decided it needed a season-long competition, not for cash, as became the case with the creation of the FedExCup, but for glory.

And for a trophy. The Harry E. Radix Trophy. In keeping with the non-monetary aspect, Radix decided not to award it to the player who made the first money in a calendar year. Instead, he looked at the lowest scoring average as the season's proper indicator of excellence. The trophy was made, and Radix presented it first to Ky Laffoon. In 1935, Paul Runyan's name was added, and in 1936, "Lighthorse" Harry Cooper was the recipient.

Sam Snead was the winner in 1937, and it seemed the youngster from the Virginia hills would put his name on it for years more, when PGA president George Jacobus and tournament chairman Bob Harlow began to snipe at each other. The argument soon escalated, and encompassed anything Harlow had a hand in.

That included the Radix Trophy, for Harlow, who went on to found Golf World, was a friend of Radix. Somehow, Jacobus was not. Because Harlow was, the Radix Trophy was cast aside, at least officially. The PGA of America created a new scoring trophy and after considering naming it after Walter Hagen – he was managed by Harlow, so that disqualified the Haig in Jacobus' mind – it was named after Harry Vardon, the turn-of-the-century British star who was in ill health.

Radix' award lay fallow for years, until after his death in August of 1965. On June 21, 1966, at a luncheon at Oak Park, the Harry E. Radix Trophy was reborn. Radix had made a provision for it in his will. Herb Graffis, the irascible publisher and writer who was as gruff as Radix was gentlemanly, presented it to Billy Casper for his successes in 1965, one



day after Casper had beaten Arnold Palmer in a playoff to win the U.S. Open in San Francisco.

“He was a warm, personal favorite of mine and of my wife and our children,” Casper said of Radix when receiving the award. “He’s here. Oh yes, he’s with us today.”

Wrote the *Chicago Tribune*’s Charles Bartlett, “Uncle Krausie would have loved that luncheon they had at Oak Park Country Club.”

Uncle who? Radix was named Uncle Krausie by his pal Graffis, he said, “because no one knew what the heck kind of name Radix was.”

There was good reason for that. Radix was a name made up by his father, Stanislaus Korzeniewski, after emigrating from Poland in 1867. Radix sounded more American than

A circa-1970 gathering on the Radix Bridge, donated to the club by the man himself.



Oak Park member Jim Andersen treasures this money clip watch from 1956, with his name engraved on the front and presenter Harry Radix's initials on the back.

Korzeniewski to his ear, and it stuck. After living in Burrton, Kansas and in Denver, the family moved to Chicago for the 1893 World's Fair, when Harry was 11. He was soon the star athlete in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, first in baseball, then in golf, and always on skates.

In business, Radix moved from Marshall Field's to the Thomas J. Dee Company, which dealt in precious metals. Radix proved so canny in anticipating the market, he was president of the firm before he was 40.

Graffis told the *Chicago Tribune* in 1977 that Radix' sunny outlook on life was a contributing factor to his largess.

"He couldn't think of anything mean about anybody," Graffis said. "If I were to nominate somebody as the world's premier SOB, Krausie would just shake his head. He couldn't believe anybody was that bad. And hell, I could have made up an impressive list."

Radix did more than give out big trophies. He also gave prizes smaller in size but no less heartfelt to friends, and sometimes even to friends of friends.

"Harry Radix gave me a watch," longtime Oak Park member James Andersen said. "It has 'H.E.R. 1956' on the back. And I guess it's a money clip. He and my dad, Charles A. Andersen, kind of grew up together on the West Side. I got to know him that way. He was a friend of my dad's, so I was a friend of his."

This was not unusual. Throughout Chicagoland, many golfers of note carried watches or wore cufflinks with Radix's initials, or at the least presented with his good wishes, for decades.

And despite the snub of the PGA, Radix and the golfers on the Tour continued to have good relations. He was especially close to Ben Hogan, whom he had gotten to know when the Hawk won the Hale America National Open at Ridgemoor, Radix' other home club, in 1942.

Two years after escaping death in the accident in which a bus hit his car, Hogan was playing on the final day of the 1950 U.S. Open at Merion. The final day of the Open was a 36-hole marathon, and the heat at Merion was stifling on this June day.

Hogan was coming off the 12th tee in the afternoon round and suddenly felt woozy. His legs locked up, and he couldn't move. Quickly, a familiar face was by his side.

"My friend Harry Radix grabbed my arm and kept me from falling down," Hogan

said after capturing his fourth Open. Hogan leaned on Radix as they walked down the fairway, regaining his bearings, and six holes later struck the 1-iron shot captured by *Life* magazine's Hy Peskin for all time.

Radix was always there, always at the Masters, the U.S. Open, the Western Open and the PGA. And he'd show up when least expected at other tournaments, run-of-the-mill tour stops, as well.

Radix' penchant for giving away baubles was not confined to friends and golfers. His figure skating connection led him to the presidency of the Chicago Figure Skating Club and beyond. Along the way, he came up with the idea for a commemorative pin. He would award it to the medalists in each year's regional and U.S. championship, each year's World Championship, and the skating medalists in the Winter Olympics.

If you stood on a podium in one of those high-profile championships, which carried enormous pressure, along with the medal or trophy and the flowers and the hugs, you would soon receive a pin from Harry Radix. If you were the champion, it was a diamond-studded pin.

On five occasions, Radix was at the Olympics in an official capacity, captain of the U.S. figure skating team – he was called “chauffeur, chaperon, ice inspector and chief worrier” before the 1956 Winter Olympics in Cortina, Italy – and would hand them out himself.

The pin was not large, but it soon became large in meaning.

“It makes you feel like a champion to wear it,” Barbie Swade Harrington, pairs champion in a regional competition in 1967, told the Colorado Springs Gazette in 2006.

Today, the awarding of what has come to be known as the Radix Pin continues, sponsored by the U.S. Figure Skating Association and financed by the Radix Trust. The champions at this year's Olympics in Sochi, Russia, all received the Radix Pin.

Radix's annual trip to the World Figure Skating Championships began in 1948, a year after their postwar resumption, and continued through 1960. He would have traveled with the American team to the 1961 championships in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in mid-February, but a side ailment sent him to Tuscon, Arizona, on doctor's orders, instead.

Thus he wasn't on the ill-fated Sabena Flight 548, a Boeing 707 that crashed in Belgium, killing all 72 aboard, including the 18 members of the American team, plus



Olympic champion Carol Heiss won several Radix Pins in her illustrious career.



Harry Radix awarded this silver-plated tin to the professionals who captured the 1964 Radix Cup, the second held at Oak Park.

officials, judges, coaches, family and friends. The world championships were canceled as a result of the tragedy.

"It was like a family," Radix told reporters at the time. "We all helped to bring up these wonderful young skaters in the last 10 years. Now this terrible calamity has happened. Now we've lost them."

The loss, and his being spared by a quirk of fate, affected Radix for months.

"We met him that year at Augusta," Mary Lou Anderson remembered. "He was absolutely devastated. He cried for three days. He was supposed to have been on that flight."

With everything Harry Radix awarded, what was named for him is his best-known legacy at Oak Park Country Club. Radix was a good friend of Errie Ball, and also close to North Shore Country Club professional Bill Ogden, a friend and rival of Ball's. In 1962, Ball and Ogden conspired to create a team competition modeled on the Goldwater Cup, held annually in Arizona and pitting the state's top professionals and amateurs in golf combat.

They insisted on naming it the Radix Cup to honor their pal. At the start, it was a day-long competition with 10 players on each side. The first would be played at North Shore, Ogden's lair. Oddly, grateful though he was to be honored by a tournament with his name on it, Harry Radix was not at the first Radix Cup competition. He was with his wife, who had taken ill shortly before.

Radix was on hand in 1963, when the affair, quickly popular with players on both teams, was played at Oak Park for the first time. The membership also embraced it, and Oak Park became the permanent home of the Radix Cup Match. Only in 1969, when it was conducted at Northmoor Country Club, and 1971, when Indian Hill Club hosted, has the Radix Cup been played away from Oak Park. That makes 2014's playing, while the 53rd overall, the 50th edition at Oak Park Country Club.

Radix was so taken with the concept of a competition named for him, he provided the trophy, and his will also included a large bequest to fund the tee times and a post-round dinner for the players and their wives. That money ran out a few years ago, but the Illinois PGA, CDGA and Oak Park Country Club continue the tradition. As Howard Johnson, the executor of his estate, said in 1966, "Above all, it was spelled out that the event was to be a 'class' event."

That it is.

The Radix Cup Match



There is neither a purse at stake nor an individual trophy.

The trophy itself is a little funny looking, a bowl with the edges rolled over, as if an elephant looking for a seat had gotten the better of it.

It's meant to look that way, supposed to be holding a bounty of fruit, as it did when it was first played for in 1962.

It's the Harry E. Radix Cup, and the annual competition, which in 2014 will be held at Oak Park Country Club for the 50th time in 53 playings, has become the most anticipated one of the season for those who have earned the right to

play in it, whether professional or amateur.

"I think it's the premier event in Chicago golf," said Joel Hirsch, whose 23 appearances are the most for any amateur.

Earl Puckett, Oak Park's head professional for five years, said it perfectly in 1989: "It's just pride. You don't want to lose to the amateurs and they don't want to lose to us. It's a matter of pride on both sides. After it's all over, we get together and share a drink. It's fun."

It's also competitive. After an opening stretch where the pros dominated, winning the first dozen playings, the amateurs began a long climb to respectability. Their 9 1/2-5 1/2 victory in 1974, in which Radix Cup co-founder Bill Ogden, the esteemed professional at North Shore Country Club, lost a match for only the second time, presaged the current era, in which the amateur team has walked into the club's ballroom the happy winners more often than not. The professionals hold a 33-17 lead, with two tied matches, after 52 playings, but the amateurs have won nine of the last 15 starts.

Ogden conspired with longtime pal Errie Ball, at the time Oak Park's head professional, to create a team competition modeled after the Goldwater Cup in Arizona and honor mutual friend Radix by naming it after him. The Illinois Section of the PGA of America and the Chicago District Golf Association would each select a 10-man team – it was raised to 12 on each side in 2005 – for an afternoon of best-ball golf matches, scored Nassau style, with a point on offer for each nine holes, and another point for the match overall. There were a few years with morning and afternoon play, sometimes with alternate shot for one session. The team scoring makes it the local



The Radix Cup is now on permanent display at Oak Park Country Club.

equivalent to the Ryder Cup or the Walker Cup, albeit on a scale with less pressure.

"This is our Ryder Cup as a PGA professional," said current Oak Park club professional Frank Bruno, who has played in eight Radix Cups and caddied in three more. "It's got history. It's got heritage. It's great fun. If you don't enjoy playing in an event like this, you're not a golfer."

Exactly 349 individuals – golfers all – have teed it up over the first 52 editions, including the

best and the brightest in the state. The fields have included Tour winners Dick Hart, Gary Groh, Jim Jamieson, D.A. Points and Gary Hallberg, career amateurs Hirsch, Bill Shean, Bill Hoffer, Todd Mitchell and Dave Huske, and longtime club professionals Mike Harrigan, Jim Sobb, Steve Benson and former Oak Park assistant Bill Erfurth.

For a few years, the pairings on the professional side seemed decreed rather than made. It was an upset if Benson didn't team with

Harrigan – they were 7-3 together – while Sobb and Doug Bauman were also frequent partners, going 3-2-1 in a half-dozen outings. These days, Bruno is often teamed with David Paeglow of Kishwaukee Country Club. They've broken even in five Radixes together, going 2-2-1.

The amateur collaborations have been more varied, partly because the roster of players has changed more often, especially in recent years, as a continual stream of collegiate contenders have bolstered the CDGA side before chasing their dream of riches on the professional circuit.

What lingers over the years are the individual performances, efforts like Puckett's nine-birdie binge on his own ball in 1973, when he sank putts of anywhere from eight to 35 feet – and, thanks to three bogeys, could only muster a 6-under-par-66.

There was the time in 1977 when Errie Ball himself, playing in the Radix for the first time in a decade, hooked up with Glen View Club assistant pro Steve Dunning – his second visit to the club he'd eventually call home – and scored a 3-0 victory over amateurs Phil Kenny and John Baldwin. Errie was only 66 that afternoon, and came within four strokes of shooting his age.

That magical moment was seen around the area, because for three years beginning in 1975, the Radix Cup was carried by WGN-TV thanks to a handful of underwriting sponsors. Cameras covered the last four holes, and on at least one occasion, no less a personality than Jack Brickhouse clambered up the tower on the 18th hole to call the action.

As it happened, the television years coincided with the best crop of amateurs golf in Illinois had seen in decades, a group that included Gary Hallberg and Lance Ten Broeck, and would have

included Belleville sensation Jay Haas on one occasion, in his last year before turning pro, but for a prior commitment. But Haas wasn't needed, as the amateurs won that 1975 engagement, then repeated in 1976 and 1977 for four straight victories over the professionals, the performance of the Ball-Dunning duo in the latter year notwithstanding.

Overall, the kids got the job done. In 1976, half the amateur team was 23 or younger.

"These are players of national caliber," amateur Dave Huske said, unselfishly excluding himself. "They're not afraid to play the pros. They just play the course and shoot for low numbers."

Some of those 349 players have had backstories that varied from the standard golf resume. George Glickley, the amateur from Olympia Fields, was one such case. He played in the 1985 Radix Cup five months after a bout with viral encephalitis triggered a stroke. Then 35, Glickley was hospitalized for three months and had to learn to walk again. Playing with David Lind, Glickley topped his second shot, and Lind wondered how long the day might be.

"He hit his best shot of the day on his third shot and was the best partner you'd ever have," Lind told the *Chicago Tribune* after their 3-0 victory over Gary Groh and Jack Anrico. That third shot of Glickley stopped 15 feet from the cup, and he sank the putt for the birdie that started he and Lind on their way to victory.

"I was real lucky," Glickley said of his return. "Usually, you're dead."

Coming back from that made a pressure putt something to laugh at. The following year, Glickley and Gary March teamed to score an eye-opening 3-0 sweep over the usually

dependable duo of Harrigan and Benson.

Such turns in fortune have become a regular feature in the Radix Cup. A strong team on paper is routed. Rookies romp. Match play golf is that way, and team match play golf is the same, only more so. Amazing things happen. Dunning, for instance, was the author of a 60-foot birdie putt on the 12th hole in 1988, one of four birdies he made on the inward half that afternoon.

While galleries are usually small, the excitement of the competitors is contagious. Witness 1990. Amateur Tom Studer, a Joliet standout who always plays hard, teamed with Hirsch to heist a point from pros Bob Ackerman and Tom Waitrovich on the back nine.

That point proved crucial when fellow amateurs Mark Small and Glenn Przybylski ran up a lead on pros Randy Cochran and Dave Erickson in a latter match.

Studer was on the patio when word crackled over the walkie-talkie that Small and Przybylski had won the 17th hole. And the back nine. And the match, 3-0, giving the amateurs the 8-7 victory, their first in five years.

"We won! We won!" yelled Studer. He might have waved a flag had one been handy.

"What the amateurs always say is this is a great honor," Studer said when he calmed down. "We're trying to get amateurs to stop walking around saying it's a great honor and start toughing it up and beating these guys."

Since then, the balance has been achieved. Everyone smiles for the team pictures at the start of the afternoon, then plays hard for four hours, after which the smiles return and the glasses clink in celebration of a match well played. And Harry Radix's memory is rekindled once again.



Chapter 8

Ray and H.K.

They were powerful personalities at different ends of the spectrum, but with the same end goal: To make Oak Park Country Club a better place for every member, present and future.

H.K. Snyder Jr. and Ray Anderson were Oak Park's version of Doc Blanchard and Glenn Davis, the famed Army football stars of the 1940s. They were Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside.

Snyder, Mr. Inside, concentrated on the club's course and inner workings, doing so working behind the scenes. At the club almost every day during the season, he knew most of the property intimately as grounds chair and was tireless in his quest to make things a little bit better each day. And his stewardship of the star-studded Oak Park Invitational became the stuff of legend.

Anderson, Mr. Outside, rose to become club president, following Snyder by five years, and was at the helm for three years, the last president to preside that long. In contrast to Snyder, whose reputation remained within the gates of the club, Ray Anderson was the face of the club to the world of golf. He rose to the presidency of the CDGA and the WGA, plus served on the USGA's executive committee and worked major championships as a rules official.

"Snyder and Anderson were two real characters," professional emeritus Steve Dunning said. "They were both very powerful. They went through periods when they weren't getting along, and then they'd come right out and they'd be best of buddies. The last thing you wanted to do was take a side. You had to treat them both with a lot of respect. You never quite knew where they were with each other, so stay in the middle of the fairway."

Here, from the middle of the fairway, are their stories.

Caddies, including this one in the special Invitational garb, were favorites of both Ray Anderson and H.K. Snyder.

Ray Anderson

“**I**f you need anything, just holler.”

That was Ray Anderson’s signature line to the outside world. Always ready to help someone from the world of golf, Anderson was among the best-known people from the club since his dear friends Errie Ball and Harry Radix.

A executive in the paper industry, Anderson was named one of the 18 most influential men in Chicago-area golf by the *Chicago Tribune* in 1996, and few besides Anderson himself doubted the designation was correct. But Ray? He couldn’t understand it.

That was because of either modesty or myopia, for Anderson’s standing in the game among insiders was without peer, and stood the test of time after his death, at 73, in 2003. That included when Chicago Golf Club hosted the Walker Cup two years later.

“I went to the previous two Walker Cups, plus the one that was here, and I can’t tell you how many people I ran into that knew Ray Anderson,” Walker Cup co-chairman Jack Gleason said. “Guys from Scotland would ask, ‘Did you know Ray Anderson?’ He was more well-known on the outside than he was at the club.”

Anderson, a solid player who was also fascinated by the lore of the game, studied the rules closely and became an expert on the subject. He also studied people, was a good listener and a better storyteller, and if the story involved golf, so much the better.

“He just loved golf, and he always said he wanted to give back to golf as much pleasure as he had had in golf,” said Mary Lou Anderson, his widow. “He loved working in golf. In fact, when he was in high school, he kind of thought he might become a professional golfer.”

Fine play at Oak Park-River Forest High School led to a spot on the Carthage College golf team. He also qualified for the U.S. Amateur in 1953. After serving in the Army during the Korean War – so impressing the brass, he ran a service golf team – Anderson remained an amateur and went into the printing business. He would start two firms over the years.

Within the area, Anderson rose to the top of the Chicago District Golf Association’s volunteer corps, president for two years beginning in 1984. A decade later, he led the



Two-time Western Open champion Nick Price is flanked by Mary Lou and Ray Anderson after Price's 1993 wire-to-wire triumph at Cog Hill.

Western Golf Association and the Evans Scholars Foundation, doing so in 1994-1995.

"He was very devoted to the scholarships for caddies," Mary Lou said. "That's what really swung him over from the CDGA to the Western. At his funeral, these young men – they came in groups, usually, of two or three – and they would say, 'Do you remember me, Mrs. Anderson? I used to caddie for you.'"

In between, he was also moving up in the ranks of the United States Golf Association. Such a combination of local and national stewardship is not unprecedented, but Anderson took it a step farther when he was elected to the USGA Executive Committee in 1989, holding a seat for five years. Nobody else in the storied history of golf in Chicago has been the president of both the CDGA and the WGA and held a seat on the Executive Committee.

For the USGA, Anderson oversaw the Green Section, which deals with golf course

agronomy, and the U.S. Senior Amateur – which he had qualified for and played in twice.

“I’m really complimented,” Anderson told the *Chicago Tribune* when the USGA nomination became public. He also had a theory on how it happened.

“Bill Campbell was head of the nominating committee, and Ed Updegraff was on it,” he said. “I played in a lot of tournaments with them. They were contenders, and I was a non-qualifier. My name popped up, and they decided I was the guy.”

It wasn’t a popularity contest. They knew Anderson had the work ethic to see a project through. He was, after all, the first three-term club president at Oak Park in a decade, serving from 1981 through 1983. No one else has served more than two years since.

Anderson thus wore nearly as many coats as Joseph’s coat had colors – he was nicknamed “Mr. Sportcoat” in the *Tribune* story lauding his influence on the game – and did so with great flair. He seemed to be everywhere at once, either presiding or officiating.

On one occasion, he found himself in New Zealand, working an international amateur championship that few in the United States would ever hear about. On others, he was stationed on a hole at Augusta National, working the Masters Tournament, the magical week every golfer in the world yearns to attend. But Ray, a native of Oak Park who joined the club in 1965, was as happy working the Radix Cup as he was something more worldly.

“And it involved a lot of time and money,” Mary Lou Anderson remembered of the trips. “New Zealand, the World Cup was there. It was a long, long airplane ride. We went to Scotland, Ireland, Spain. In those big tournaments, at least one rules official goes with every foursome. They go the whole 18 holes. And that’s not easy, because the rough is really high. I remember Ray’s back hurting at times. It’s a lot of work. You’re out in that heat and sun for eight hours.

“There would be a lot of people who would not be interested in doing that, and he was. In Scotland, he would get on a bus at 6 in the morning to get to the course, because he might have been with the first tee off, at 7. And the days were very long. And then the USGA would have cocktails and a dinner party. It was grueling. And you’re paying for it. But it was a wonderful experience, and we did meet a lot of interesting people.”

Club presidency aside, Ray Anderson probably had more influence on golf outside the club than inside it. In 1993, for instance, the USGA announced that for the first time since 1897, two of the association’s crown jewels would be played in the same metropolitan

area: Chicago, of course. The U.S. Senior Open was awarded to private Olympia Fields, the U.S. Amateur to public Cog Hill. Anderson's presence in the USGA hierarchy surely helped that happen.

Amazingly, Ray Anderson is the last Chicago-area person to sit on the USGA's governing body. The lack of an area voice coincides with the absence of the bigger USGA championships in America's most enthusiastic golf city since Olympia Fields hosted the 2003 U.S. Open.

"He was certainly our member most knowledgeable about golf in the years I was here," former president Chuck Doherty said in 2003. "I learned an awful lot about golf, not only about playing the game, but about how to conduct myself on the course. Ray probably didn't get as much credit as H.K. (Snyder), because much of his work was outside the club, but he was a major, major factor in how Oak Park has been regarded by clubs around the country, and certainly in the area."

Anderson joined Oak Park when Errie Ball was the head professional, but the friendship preceded that. They met, of all places, near Ball's old club in Charlottesville, Virginia. That commenced a lifelong friendship well before Anderson joined the club.

"We had a lot of really good times together," Mary Lou Anderson said. "On Mondays, we'd go downtown and Maxie and Errie and I would go to a movie. Then Ray would meet us for dinner and we'd go to another movie at night."

The rest of the week, they'd see each other on the course.

"Ray and Errie were close all the way," said Steve Dunning, hired as professional when Anderson was club president. "They were, if not best friends, they were in the top



Ray's daughter-in-law Tracy made this collection of crests to present to him at Christmas of 2003. Sadly, he passed away before that could happen. It includes the crests of the USGA, WGA, CDGA, Illinois Seniors, Oak Park and the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame.



A standout at Carthage College (left), Ray Anderson didn't dream he'd be on the USGA executive committee.

five. Later in life, toward the end of Errie's tenure coming back to Chicago, once a year, H.K. Snyder and Anderson and Dunning and Errie Ball would play Butler National. Errie would always say, 'Steve, the minute you get there, put your bag on with mine, because if I ride with either of those two, they're going to bug me about the golf swing all day long.' Errie and I would just sit in the cart and have a good time."

Sometimes, the times had to be seen to be disbelieved. Ball's winter club was in Tucson, Arizona, but he'd return for a few days each winter. Once, he left the keys to his Oak Park townhome back in Tucson. Errie and Ray took matters into their own hands.

"We were going out to dinner," Mary Lou remembered. "There was a window on the second floor that was open. I stood out on Harlem Avenue, and they found a ladder where

there was some painting going on. So he and Ray, the most unhandy men in the whole world, carried that ladder and put it up against the building. Ray held the ladder while Errie climbed up. And I'm laughing my head off. Errie went up and went in the window and came down and opened the door, and we all had to go in and have a drink. Nobody fell off the ladder and he got in!"

Anderson also revered Harry Radix, who preceded him as a president of the CDGA from Oak Park. He spoke admiringly about Radix, but never explained the jeweler was likely a mentor to a young printing executive.

"When Ray died, Tom Geraghty called me and said, 'You've got to come over. I'm going to go through Ray's locker.' " Jack Gleason recalled. "And we pulled out some stuff, miscellaneous articles about Harry Radix. I think Ray, either consciously or sub-consciously, was trying to be the Harry Radix of the next generation."

Said Mary Lou Anderson, "That could be true. That could be how he figured out how he could personally do things himself for golf."

Anderson's friends spanned the spectrum of the game. Many of those notables came through Oak Park's front gate with Anderson. One was USGA president Grant Spaeth, who bought a cap in the golf shop, then said, "You know, if this club was in San Francisco or some place like that, people would know about it all across the country. You're buried in a city that has more good golf courses than it knows what to do with."

Ray was a fine player long after college, winning the men's championship in 1968, 1969, and again in 1972, when he was just starting to wade into golf politics. Anderson was someone who knew how to build a consensus, though not always through diplomacy.

"Ray had a tough side to him," former president Steve Lamon recalled. "He had a habit of drilling his finger into your chest and made sure you kept your standards at his high level. He was a real force to be reckoned with when he didn't think you were working as hard or keeping your criteria as high as he had them."

The combination worked, and was noticed. He's one of the few volunteers the CDGA has honored with its Distinguished Service Award. And in 1992, even before he helmed the WGA, Ray Anderson was inducted into the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame, one of the first 25 members selected for that august body. The only other people in the hall associated with Oak Park Country Club are John Gleason Sr., Errie Ball, and his assistant, Bill Erfurth.

H.K. Snyder

People who were there remember the elephants. They remember the fireworks. They remember the big-name stars from Broadway and Hollywood entertaining under the roof of the big tent late on a Saturday night.

And they remember the man who organized – no, who imagined, created and orchestrated – the entertainment portion of the Oak Park Invitational most vividly.

Harlan Kent Snyder may be Oak Park Country Club's most unforgettable character.

But there is much more to remember about the man generally called H.K. than a guy who knew how to throw a big party. This astute businessman also knew how to run a club.

"He was affectionately called 'The Owner' by some of the caddies," said longtime member James Winikates.

That wasn't far off. A second-generation member, Kent Snyder had a hand in club affairs well beyond his stewardship of the club's Invitational across several decades.

"Really, he was the club," former assistant pro David Leadbetter said. "Whether it was a tee position or a bunker moved, whatever H.K. wanted, H.K. got. He ran the place with an iron fist."

For two years, 1975-76, he was club president. For most of the others from the mid-1950s on, whether on the board of governors or not, he was the man behind the curtain.

"Kent was here every single day," former president Jack Gleason recalled. "He'd go to his factory in the morning, and he'd come here and play golf every single afternoon. He'd sit down here in the corner and have lunch, then go out and play."

"He was a consummate marketing guy, but he wasn't a marketing guy like you and I know, the happy guy. He was very reserved, and almost liked to make sure he was in the background but make sure he was in control of everything. He wasn't necessarily an outgoing person. It wasn't like he tried to know every single person at the club. But he was always the politician behind the scenes, making the calls."

For years, Snyder was the chair of the grounds committee. That gave him a large say



Kent Snyder (left) with three friends whose names went unrecorded at the 1958 Auchtermuchty. The tent behind them would be much larger when Kent created the Invitational.

in how the golf course not only played, but how it looked. Dutch Elm Disease was ravaging Oak Park and most of the Chicago area during the early part of his tenure, but he had the solution: trees of many species would replace those grand elms, and then some.

A group had overseen the planting of about 3,500 trees in the early 1950s, and Kent Snyder emulated that. He had trees planted by the thousands. Fairways became corridors.

“Kent liked it so you couldn’t see someone playing on the next hole,” said Dorothy Snyder, his widow.

So it was until tree removal necessitated by the need for sunlight on greens and fairways, and then a larger removal associated with Rick Jacobson’s course renovation.

Not everyone liked the thinning out.

“I don’t know whether it was any neater to maintain, because now you have the



This pre-renovation aerial of the 15th hole shows the H.K. Snyder influence on the course: Tree-lined fairways creating holes in isolation from each other.

mowing that had to be accomplished all the way through from one fairway to the other," said Gene Silveri, a proponent of keeping what many deemed to be overgrowth.

But there are still plenty of trees. Any seriously off-line shot can still find one.

Snyder had other influences on the course.

"Many of the things that we take for granted about the golf course, the way the first tee is set up, for example, were H.K. Snyder designs," former president Chuck Doherty said in 2003. "H.K. presented a diagram of the current practice range almost in the form it was developed, at least 10 years ago. He had a vision and was able to convince other people to go along with most of his ideas."

With Oak Park generally on flat ground, Snyder liked the idea of elevated tees – a few feet would do – to display the hole a player was about to negotiate. Because of him, Oak Park has elevated tees.

"H.K.'s greatest achievement was his ability to establish the continuity of the club," Doherty said. "He made sure the club had good management year after year after year, and moved forward with a sense of common purpose. He was wonderfully passionate about the club and even more so about the golf course specifically."

Kent Snyder was first elected to the board in 1964. He had already long influenced it, and now would be more closely associated with it, either on the board or as grounds chairman, for another 20 years, his influence always felt.

"My dad had enough people in his corner," said Bill Snyder, one of two sons who were club members. "He didn't squash everybody else, but he ran the show. People said, 'Talk to Snyder. He runs the show.' A lot of people didn't like that, but a lot of people did. He got off his butt and did something. Ninety-nine percent of the time, he was right. It was good for the club and he did it. If you want to squawk about that, go ahead. He was a strong-willed man, a strong executive. I love him for that. He was take-charge, run the show. He had good ideas, imaginative, creative."

A large portion of the membership believed he was right. Oak Park was so well run, most members simply left it to Snyder.

"When it came to who was going to be on the board, Kent told you who was going to be on the board," said longtime member James Andersen. "I remember the last time I was chairman of the nominating committee, I asked Kent, 'Who do you want?'

The nominating meeting was the shortest on record. It lasted no more than five minutes.”

Former president Richard Brennan recalled both Snyder’s process for lining up the votes, and his reasoning behind it.

“He approached that as he approached the running of his own business,” Brennan said. “Getting people on board who would do a specific thing, the house committee, the golf committee – and he’d always be grounds chair. He would identify those people and give each person on the nominating committee, a week before they met, a little slip of paper and said, ‘This is who you’re going to nominate.’

“In retrospect, you could say this doesn’t sound very democratic, and the right way to run a club, but I’ll tell you, it ran well and worked well.”

As Andersen said, “That’s how the politics ran. We had a clique and that’s how it was.”

Snyder supported Oak Park Country Club in ways large and small.

“He loved, loved, to take lessons, and by that I mean he liked to take a lesson every day,” professional emeritus Steve Dunning recalled. “The locker room man, Bill Survilla, said, ‘Mr. Snyder’s going to want a lesson every day at 11 o’clock.’ I said, ‘Oh yeah, sure.’

“And it turned out he did. Not only did he want a lesson every day at 11 o’clock, even though some days he wouldn’t show up until 11:15, and he’d leave at 11:25, he would say to me about once a month over a period of many years, ‘If I ever see a charge on my bill for less than an hour, you’re in trouble.’ He always wanted to be charged an hour.

“Now, there were days he couldn’t come. There were days that I couldn’t do it. There were days he couldn’t do it. So it wasn’t really like he was taking six lessons a week for 20 years, but the number of lessons he took nicely paid for the addition on our house.”

For all of Snyder’s influence with the membership, he went out of his way to make sure Dunning knew he wasn’t trying to buy his allegiance.

“He and I talked about that,” Dunning said. “He said, ‘The amount of money I spend with you is strictly because I want to support you. It doesn’t have any effect. I don’t want a special starting time. I don’t want a special price on anything, ever. I’m just another member.’ I liked that a lot, because that would have been hard for me to do.”

Snyder wasn’t above making a bet, on or off the course. He had a regular traveling game with a group of members of other clubs that for a time included pro football Hall of Famer George Blanda. And he was active at the poker table as well.



"Snyder always wanted to buy the pot," Gene Silveri remembered. "We played a lot of draw poker, and it was a bluffer's game. You didn't see any cards. Everything was done in the blind. He would consistently overbid his hand. It was unbelievable. He would try to drive you out by intimidating you with a large bet."

"It wasn't too long that I figured it out. What you ought to do is, every time the man throws the money in the middle of the table, if you've got anything in your hand, call!"

The most public manifestation of Snyder's sway came with the Invitational. Oak Park already had the Auchtermuchty, and the Calathumpians, and the Hoot Mon for the ladies, but the Invitational was something else again.

"It was like a Great Gatsby party," Gleason said.

One lasting three days, with golf in the daylight and entertainment in the evenings, the latter under a tent constructed behind the clubhouse, and nearly as big as the clubhouse.

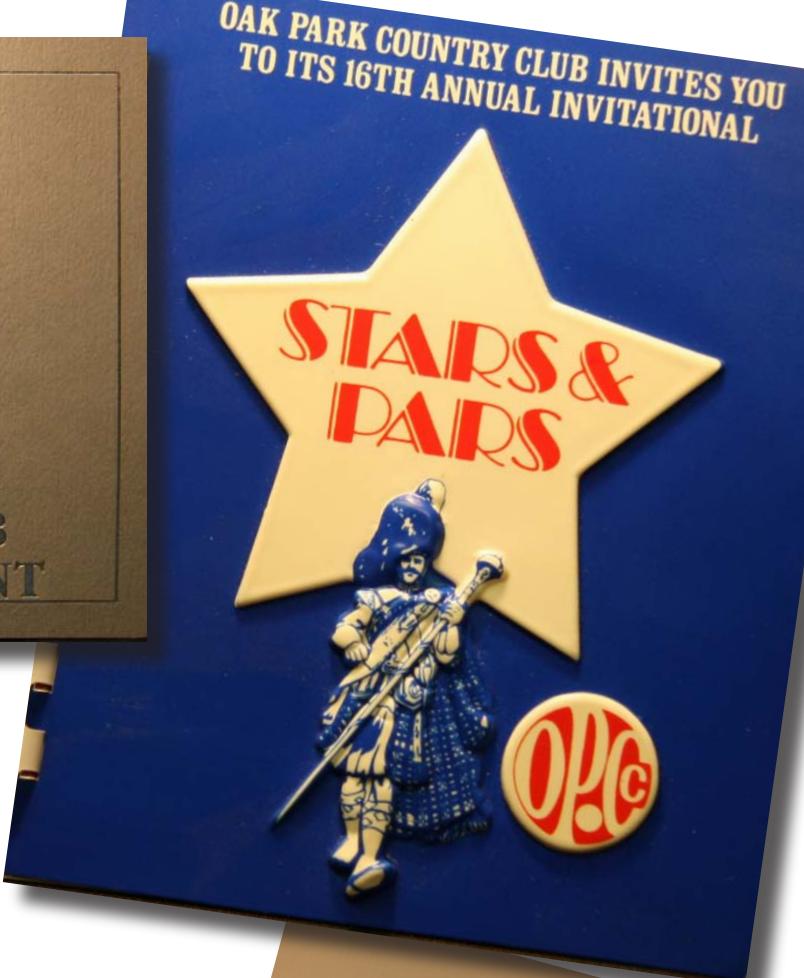
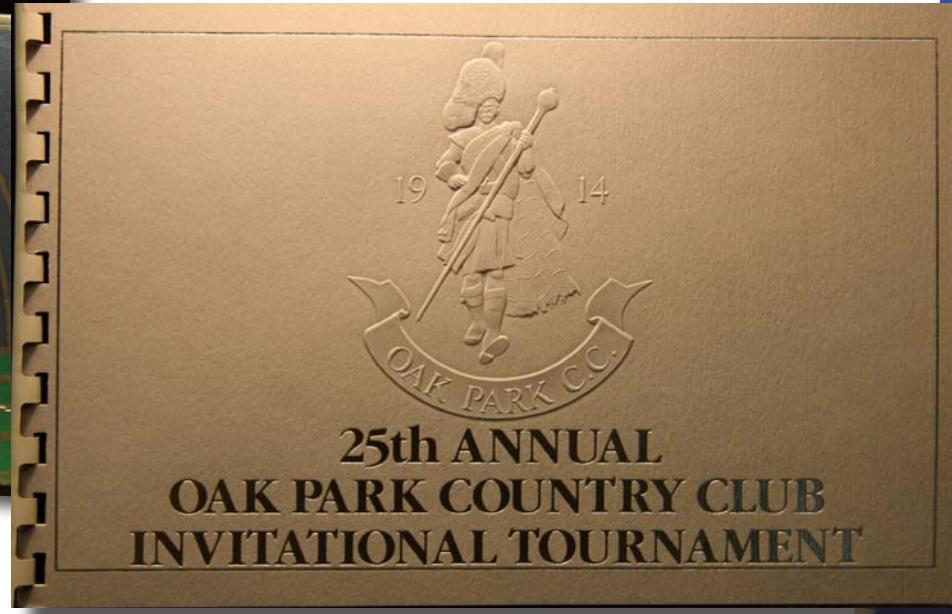
The golf had a different format every day, usually best-ball on Thursday, alternate shot on Friday and combined low net on Saturday, with the course groomed to championship standards. Caddies were clad in special uniforms. No less than Charlie Kimmel, longtime scorer for the Western Open and much of the tour, often did the scoreboard calligraphy.

Handicaps were calculated, and sometimes recalculated.

"The Invitational was rarely won by anybody from Oak Park," Doherty said. "It was usually won by somebody from Medinah or Riverside. I don't think most of the Oak Park members were in any shape to win anything by the time the third day came along."



In the Snyder years, the Invitational's invitations were works of art.



There was one Medinah duo that cleaned up.

"They must have gotten their handicaps from the financial section or something," former president Steve Lamon said. "They won handily the first time they came in. They were so far ahead, the next year they came back and our handicap committee arbitrarily lowered their handicaps, but of course, it made no difference. They still won handily. They were able to progressively lower their golf scores with their lower handicaps. I think after three years of these guys running away with it, they were banned from our Invitational."

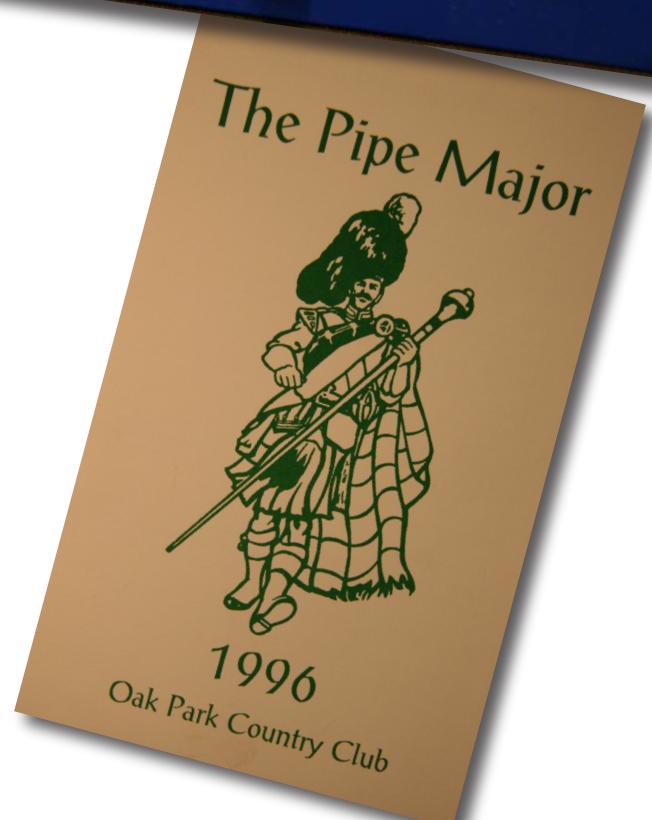
The golf competition was handled by the golf staff, with some of Snyder's close friends in charge of procuring prizes. Much of the behind-the-scenes work for the show was done by Snyder's secretary, Pat Enright, with the club the beneficiary. His family was also involved.

"I thought it was too much for him," Dorothy Snyder said. "But he got me involved. He had me go to a dressmaker, and she made the Scotch outfits with the little kilts and everything. The caddies looked really sharp. They had little caps on. It took a lot of work."

The evenings, which took much more work, were what people remembered.

"Kent was the producer and director and manager," Brennan recalled. "Rumor had it Kent invested no small amount of his own money in that to make it better, and he brought in incredible talent to perform in it."

The first night was a stag evening for years, though it was a co-ed night by the time of the 25th anniversary, in 1992. The second night and third nights were always for couples,





Legendary performer Milton Berle, here rehearsing, beefed about working in a tent, but put on a show.

with music on the second night and the big show on the third.

Snyder and his Hollywood-connected friend Danny O'Neil, who was master of ceremonies – more than once singing “Danny Boy” during the evening – arranged a Las Vegas-style revue, with embellishments unique to Oak Park.

Once, one of the acts parachuted in. More often, a group of bagpipers, sometimes followed by a marching band, and invariably accompanied by roman candles and other fireworks, would march down the 10th fairway to the thrill of all.

The big tent, by best estimates, could seat close to 500 people at tables.

“Some people thought it was a little much, but it was different and exciting. People I brought to the Invitational always remembered it,” Don Heppes Jr. recalled in 2011.

A word is needed about the bagpipers. Snyder was so taken by the look of the lead piper, the Pipe Major in bagpipe parlance, that he pushed through a change of the longtime club logo, replacing it with a drawing of a pipe major. That lasted a few years until the original logo was restored, but the Invitational today is known as the Pipe Major, a nod to Snyder’s considerable influence.

An animal act usually led off the Saturday night entertainment, often with elephants. It built from there until the headliner appeared, and Snyder would never reveal who it would be. The brochures for the Invitational simply referred to “the stars of yesteryear.” (It’s probably good that the stars themselves didn’t see the brochure.)

Among those recalled by the revelers over the years: Giselle MacKenzie, Victor Borge, Hildegarde, “Tonight Show” orchestra leader Doc Severinsen, Phyllis Diller, and Howard Keel, who starred on the London stage in “Oklahoma.”

Another year, a star from the movie version of the stage hit was the attraction.

“We had Shirley Jones come in in a surrey with the fringe on top, like from ‘Oklahoma,’ ” Bill Snyder remembered. “The Butterfield Invitational was nice, but nobody did this.”

The list goes on: pianists Ferrante & Teicher, Rosemary Clooney, ventriloquist Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, orchestra conductor Nelson Riddle.

Often, the stars were picked up at O’Hare by Snyder’s friend Tom Tarpey, first

the police chief of River Grove, and later the mayor. Riddle was a passenger.

As Jack Gleason tells it, "Riddle gets in the car and Riddle says, 'I hate traveling; I hate staying in hotels.' Tom says he's living in an old bungalow in River Grove. 'You can stay at my house if you like.' 'Really, you mean that?' 'Yeah, I've got an extra bedroom.' So Riddle stays at his house that night.

"Tom says, 'The next morning I get up, Riddle's sitting in the back yard. I've got an above ground pool, and Riddle's sitting in one of my lawn chairs reading the newspaper. My neighbors think it's some old man, and it's Nelson Riddle sitting there.'

Another notable was Milton Berle. Uncle Miltie himself, Mr. Television. Berle was the main act in 1978, but wasn't the fun-and-laughs guy off stage that he was on camera. He wasn't pleased to be following an animal act, was adamant that he wasn't about to perform in a tent, and so on. He was, after all, Milton Berle.

"He was not a happy camper," Gleason said.

So Snyder confronted Berle during the rehearsal and said, "You can leave."

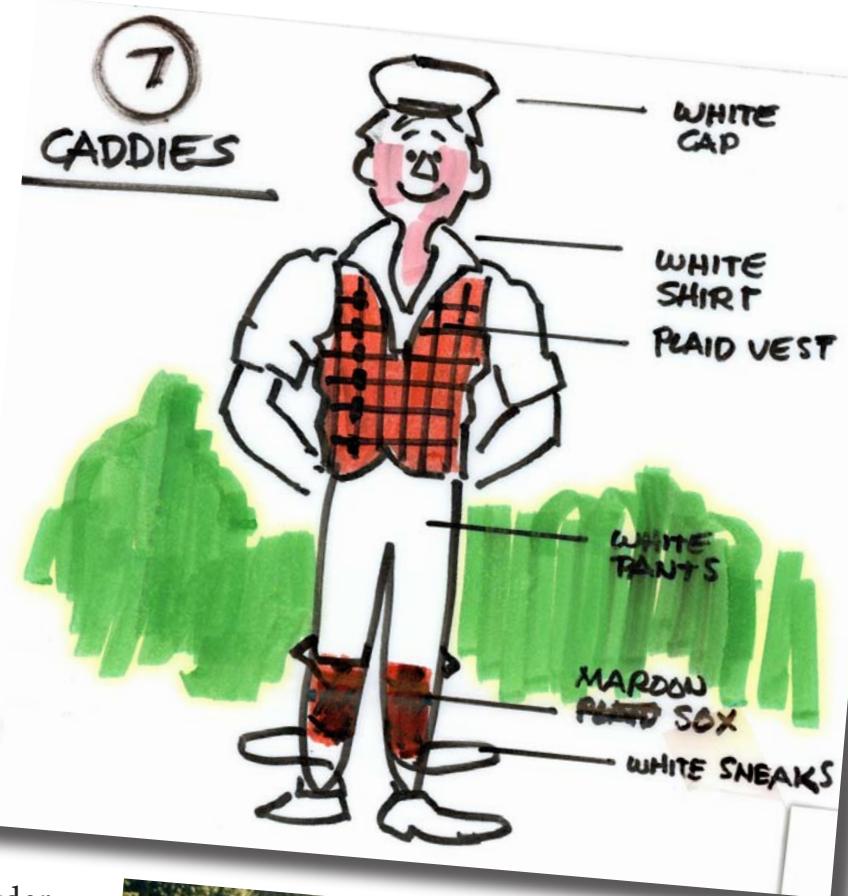
Berle, suddenly realizing a five-figure check would not be forthcoming – rumor had it the going rate for the top act was a minimum of \$10,000, something Snyder never would confirm – changed his tune. He stayed. He worked, canvas roof and all.

Some years were without the big show, and eventually, it was over. And finally, Snyder's grip on the club was loosened. A new generation was rising in influence.

"Some guys were making a stink, so we told him, 'You just can't go back on the board,'" Jack Gleason remembered. But Gleason, then the club's vice president, also knew it would be cruel to cast Snyder aside after his years of service, and offered a compromise.

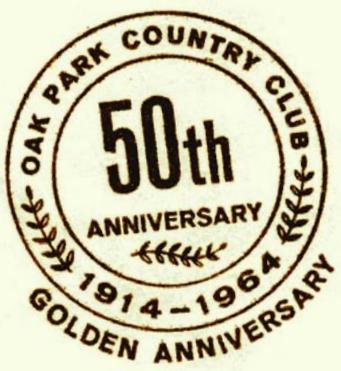
"I told him, 'I'll sit down with you once a month and tell you exactly what's going on around here.' We used to sit at the McDonald's corporate headquarters, the old one on 22nd Street," Gleason said. "They had a McDonald's in there, and I'd meet him over there. Mike Quinlan, who was the chairman, was a good friend. So he knew the building, but I could always buy his lunch. I'd get his chicken sandwich and I'd bring it back and I'd pay for it. He'd ramble on about what was going on and what was messed up, and a lot of times he was right. But he was also missing the change in the club. Or maybe he just didn't want it.

"He was, by 100 times, the most influential guy in the time I've been here."

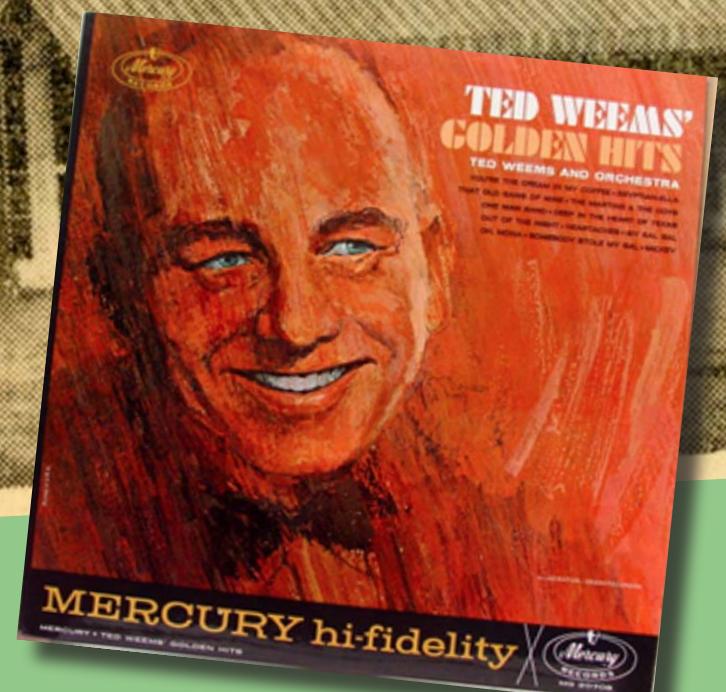


H.K. Snyder designed the Invitational's snazzy caddie uniform, head to toe.

THE SOCIAL CENTER OF OAK PARK



Founders' Day Ball



Chapter 9

Fun & games

There was a time when Ted Weems was a big name in the orchestra business in Chicago. Weems' band could play just about anything, and could play it well. In hotel ballrooms and on radio waves, where dance bands were ubiquitous in the late hours, Weems' band drew listeners.

When Oak Park Country Club had a big party, whether it was a holiday gathering or the president's ball, it often brought Ted Weems' orchestra in for entertainment. On those evenings, rather than playing before revelers at Don Roth's Blackhawk or the Empire Room of the Palmer House, and audible across the midwest on WGN or coast-to-coast on NBC, Weems' orchestra would play "Heartaches" and its other hits just for the Oak Park crowd.

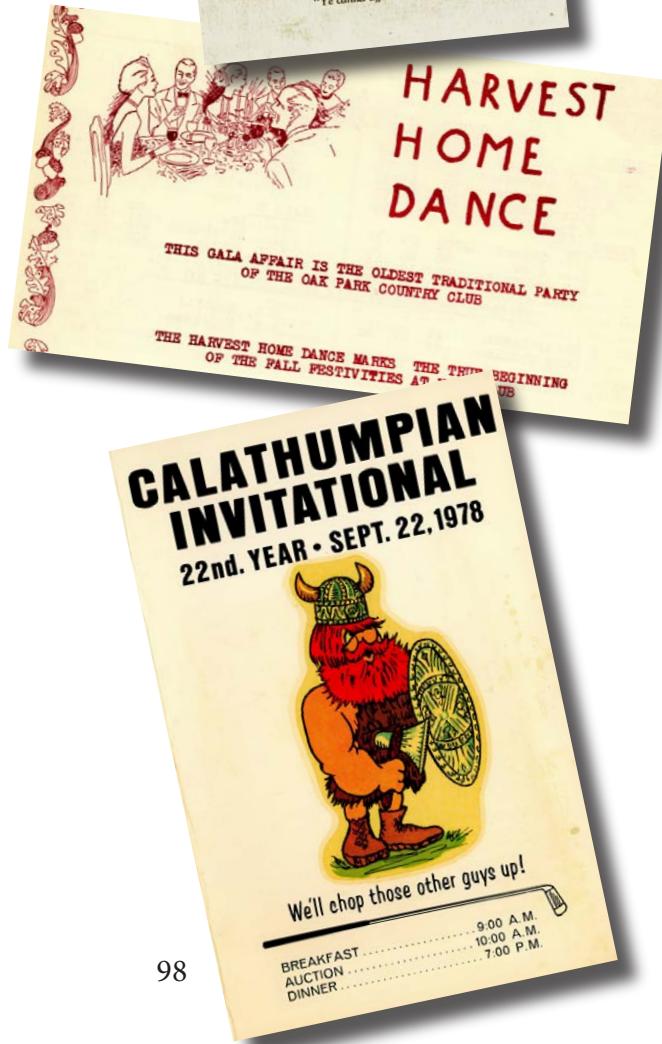
An appearance by Weems or another downtown band, including those of Freddie Martin and Bill Carlsen, proved time and again that Oak Park's entertainment committee only wanted the best. And the best was a common thread for Oak Park's social and entertainment life no matter what the decade or the occasion.

"The Christmas Ball was a magnificent affair," remembered Gene Silveri. "We would never miss it, that's how good an affair it was. They usually had a good orchestra, almost always, and the entertainment committee, George and Jan Jarik, they were a force on the committee. They would come up with a night's entertainment, and one I recall was the Viennese Waltz night. The way the people were dressed, it was really a nice affair."

The mode of dress carried forth not only for special occasions, but for most everything held on the clubhouse's main floor. Oak Park wasn't snooty, but it was stylish.

"You had to make reservations," Dorothy Snyder recalled. "It was very formal. You had to have a tie and a jacket in the dining room. It was social, but people were more formal in how they acted. Kids had to behave themselves, or you'd get a letter from the board."

Evenings at Oak Park Country Club have always run the gamut.



Much was different in the first half-century. And for the longest time, if you wanted a drink, once Prohibition was lifted, you had to go to the lower level to get one. No alcohol was served upstairs. Both bars were downstairs.

Wrote a reporter bylined only as "The Chaperon" in the August 26, 1938, *Chicago American*, "Mint juleps are the Summer specialty dispensed at both."

Well, not always. Aside from the first Saturday in May, those didn't stay in favor nearly as long as Ted Weems and his fellow bandleaders.

"So if they did have a big party, and they did, with a dance and dinner, the men would go into the men's bar in their tuxedos and have a few drinks, and the women would all be upstairs and didn't drink," former president Dick Beeman said. "It would have been Black & White Scotch and Tanqueray Gin."

Or, upstairs, ginger ale and club soda. It was a different world.

When that changed, the dining room became more popular. In 2011, Don Heppes Jr. recalled the membership's friendly nature meant informal socializing on a regular basis.

"We spent a lot of evenings here," Heppes recalled. "The social life has always been good. Good entertainment, good food, changing cooks on a regular basis, which I guess is normal for country clubs. But I've always enjoyed it, and always enjoyed the ambience of the dining room. It's a warm setting. You get up from dinner and you stop at three tables to say hello to people. I always used to kid my wife, 'Let's go sit down.' It was because of the relationships with people and their kids."

In the early days, some entertainment was provided by club members. An August 1919 issue of *Oak Leaves* notes that "Miss Bonnie Symmes ... has as her guest Miss Frances McCarthy of Hyde Park. A number of informal entertainments have been given in honor of the guest, including theater parties and several dinner dances at Oak Park Country Club."

A month later, the newspaper breathlessly reported on some holiday fun:

"The Oak Park Country Club celebrated Labor Day with an afternoon musicale and a dinner-dance. From 3 until 4:30 there was a musical program.

"Harold Ayres gave several violin selections, and Miss Howard of the Chicago Musical College sang. There was also a pianist and a cellist. Dinner was served from 6:30 until 8, after which a large crowd enjoyed the dancing."

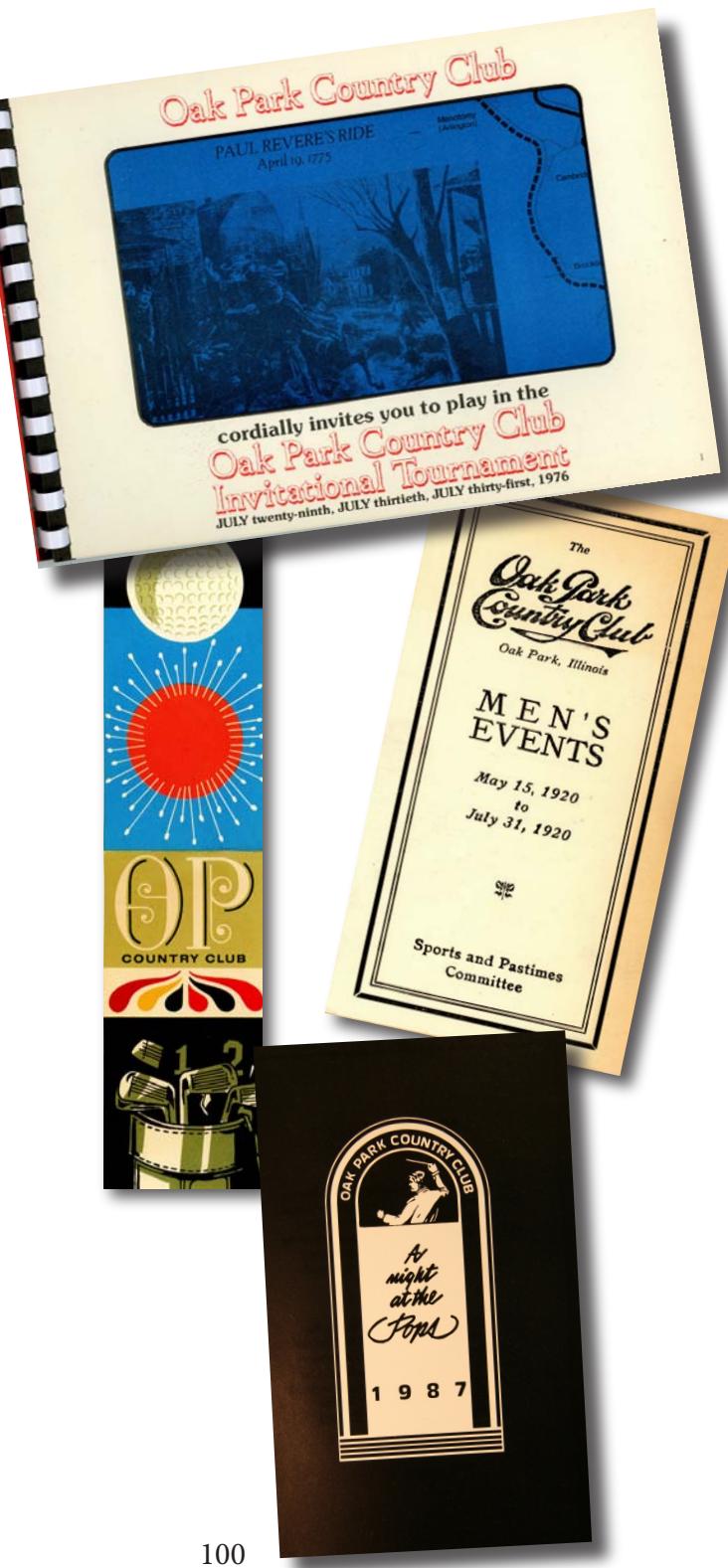
This was before radio, before motion pictures had added sound to movement. The



wind-up Victrola was it, playing 78 rpm records. So live music, both played and sung, was a regular addition to any club's program. Based on the reports in *Oak Leaves*, Oak Park was in the forefront, even bringing in ballet dancers to perform on occasion.

Special events also go back to the start of the club. Long before the Invitational, there was the Masquerade Ball, featuring the Blackstone Hotel orchestra and the members-only Brown Saxophone Sextet. Wrote the *Oak Leaves* reporter, "Intense interest has been aroused by the display at the Club House of attractive posters setting forth mysterious allurements of a fancy dress dance, which are certain to induce the regular 'firesider' from his arm chair to

Harvest Home dinners and dances were a traditional season closing party for years, all of them, like most other functions, starting and ending in the club's iconic Great Room.



a gay and festive evening dedicated to Harlequin and Columbine."

Over 150 members and their wives were in costumes ranging from Oriental dancers to Arabian sheiks. Said a judge later, "We should have had 40 prizes instead of six to award."

Things may not be more sedate these days, but they certainly aren't as well described.

Over the decades, the clubhouse has been more than a spot to dance or dine after a round of golf. It has hosted countless charitable affairs sponsored by members, raising money for hospitals, relief organizations, schools and more. And the number of wedding celebrations that have taken place at Oak Park has to number in the thousands. In some cases, the mother of the bride at an Oak Park wedding dinner was once the bride herself a generation earlier. Like most everything else at Oak Park, throwing the bridal bouquet in the club's ballroom runs in the family.

Like the rest of the clubhouse, the ballroom itself has been updated several times over the years. There was a great struggle at one point to get the sound correct, eliminating the echo that naturally results from a rectangular room with windows on three sides. Ted Weems never sounded go good.

The dining room has gone through several generations as well, as has the kitchen that serves it and the rest of the club. Some older members recall that the Sunset Room was the original dining room. The current facility has been expanded to the north, bisected by the panels that separate the lounge.

At one time, there was an outside staircase that led to the patio near the pro shop. That was replaced by the staircase to the west of the dining room that leads to the common lounge on the ground floor.

Eventually, outside dining was accomplished with the rooftop dining area to the east of the clubhouse when the building was enlarged for an expanded bag room. The great renovation of 2002, in which \$1 million was expended to bring the clubhouse into the modern era, created the dining and ballroom areas members enjoy today.

The pleasure of membership at Oak Park goes beyond golf and the clubhouse whirl. For decades, there was curling on site, and several members still belong to the Oak Park Curling Club. Swimming and tennis are popular in the summer, especially with the younger set, while skeet shooting has been a winter weekend activity almost since the club's founding, joined by cross country by those looking for hearty exercise.

The Otters in the swim

The idea of a swimming pool to complement the golf course and clubhouse as a key facility at Oak Park Country Club was first broached in February of 1935.

Among those proposing a pool: Gus Babson, the man most responsible for Oak Park Country Club's birth. He and a pair of fellow members went before the board on Feb. 18, 1935, with a complete plan for financing a pool, based on the successful subscription by Exmoor Country Club members for their pool the year before.

A committee was quickly formed, and the following month, it was decided the concept was worth submitting to the membership.

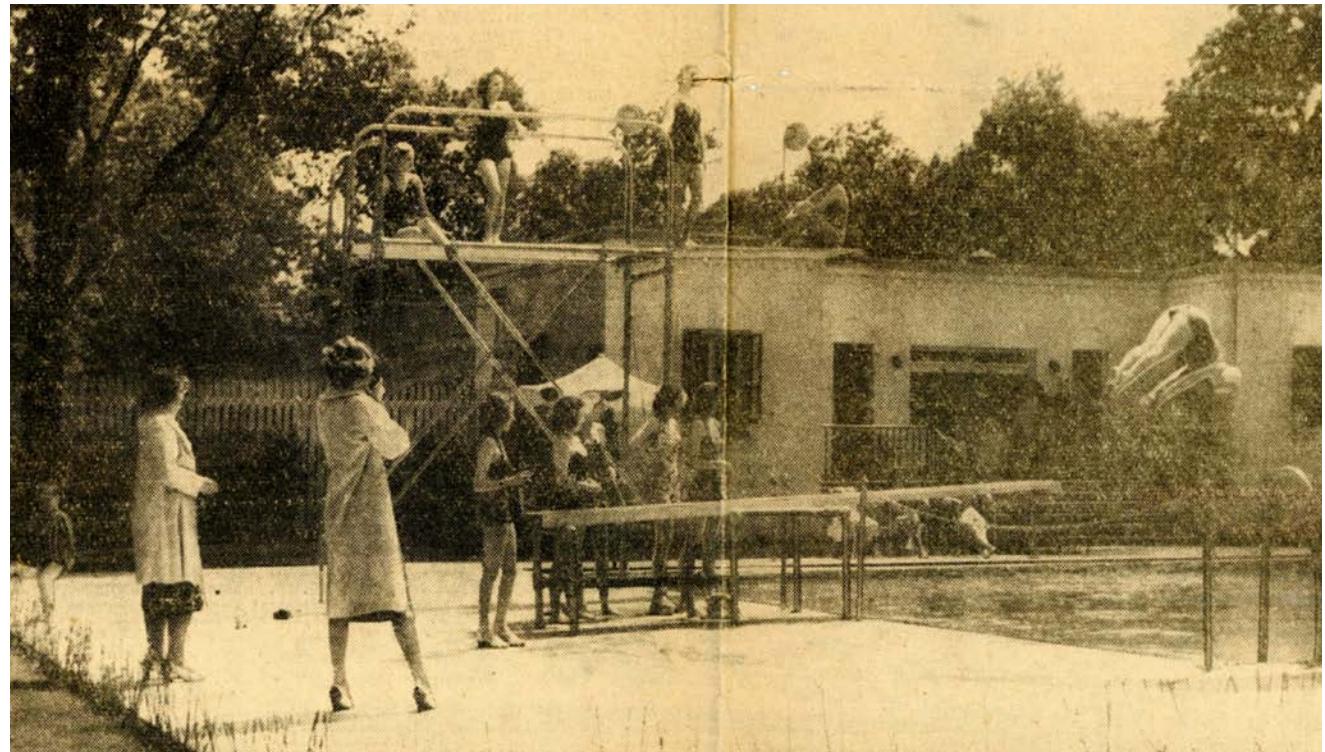
For reasons unknown, it stalled. In August, the board decided to mail postcards to members to see if they wanted to consider a pool at the 1935 annual meeting. The results were, according to the board's minutes, "evenly divided," so the plan was tabled.

There would be no pool at Oak Park Country Club in 1936.

By that summer, the concept was once again in play. This time, there was more than a financing plan. There was also a plan for the pool itself, drawn up by the architectural firm of Mayo & Mayo. The board looked at it hard, and decided to put it on the agenda of the 1936 annual meeting.

It failed. No vote was recorded in the minutes, but there would be no pool at Oak Park Country Club in 1937.

Interest remained. Other clubs, including the River Forest Tennis Club, just blocks away, were



The original pool in August of 1938, a few months after it opened.

adding or had already added pools.

On June 8, 1937, an evening when the board approved the sale of miniature bottles of liquor – overturning a ban that had dated from Prohibition – and agreed to raise fees 10 cents for caddies in the wake of a strike – talk once again turned to a swimming pool.

The previous occasions saw the board investigating and approving of a pool, but making no recommendation. The third time was different. This time, the board was in favor of a pool. A

special membership meeting would be called, but not until September 27. By then, the pool and the pool house that would accompany it had become only one part of a \$75,000 facility improvement plan that included a new men's lounge, a remodeled ladies locker room, an improved pro shop, and a rebuilt kitchen.

It worked. The plan passed 178-103, the financing to come from a \$330 assessment that, at \$2.75 per month for 10 years, members would barely notice.

There would be a pool at Oak Park Country Club in 1938. And it would be busy, filled with families eager to cool off from the swelter of summer.

Immediately, it enhanced club life as no other addition to the facility had. The *Chicago American*'s reporter gushed about it in the August 26, 1938 profile of the club:

"Approached through a stretch of formal gardens, it lies like a great sparkling aquamarine, its deep blue bottom the share of the shutters of the whitewashed brick bathhouse," wrote "The Chaperon." "It is characteristic of the way things are done at the club that in the dressing rooms are an abundance of big, thick, soft bath towels. For those who like to take their sports in a spectator's role, there are lounging chairs around the pool, shaded by bright beach umbrellas."

Robert Keck would serve as the swimming instructor for the inaugural summer, but in 1939, Orin K. Noth was hired. Noth would earn \$500 for the summer, his assistant \$350, but charge for lessons – \$1 for 30 minutes, and the club received half the revenue until the original \$850 was earned back. Messrs. Noth and Phillips had to love their jobs.

Noth certainly did. While club managers, professionals, superintendents and caddie masters came and went, Noth ran the pool facility at Oak Park Country Club for 27 years, through the summer of 1965.

That was hardly a surprise, for he was a legend in the community for his work at Oak Park and River Forest High School, where he taught and coached for a generation. Aside from swimming, he coached basketball for five years and was a football coach at various levels for 36 seasons



A Day At The Races



It was a long time from 1938, when Oak Park Country Club helped found the Country Club Swimming League to celebrate the occasion of the club's new pool, until 1990, when the Otters captured their first championship. Another followed, and another, and another, until they had won 10 in a row. The success continued in 2013, when, as seen here, Oak Park not only hosted the 75th anniversary meet, but won it as well.



until he retired following the 1966 season.

Noth's teams won more than their share of games, but he saw coaching as a higher calling.

"I have to admit that a coach's greatest satisfaction doesn't come from victories," Noth told the *Chicago Tribune* in 1964. "It comes from finding the young men – the raw material – and seeing those young men develop. You watch them find themselves."

Ken Sitzberger found himself early. A River Forest resident and Fenwick High School product, if he took a dip in Oak Park's pool as a youth, it was as a visitor.

But Sitzberger excelled as a diver from the first time he saw a pool. He was a six-time finalist in AAU national competition before graduating from Fenwick.

At age 19, after his freshman year at Indiana, Sitzberger won the gold medal in the springboard competition in the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, passing teammate Frank Gorman on his 10th and final dive. He'd go on to capture five individual NCAA titles at Indiana.

A few years later, Sitzberger, who had moved to California and became ABC's expert commentator on diving telecasts, became a non-resident member of Oak Park Country Club.

Most pool activity, and all of the competitive action, centered around children of members. Oak Park was a charter member of the Country Club Swimming League, the Otters competing annually.

Astoundingly, even though Oak Park led in organizing the league after a meet in the new pool in 1938, the Otters didn't win the trophy their club had donated until 1990.

The success began when Dave Perry took over

as swim coach. The aquatic director at Fenwick High School since 1987, Perry was instrumental in getting water polo approved for IHSA championship play.

The Friars won nine of the first 10 state crowns, including eight straight, once that happened. At Oak Park, the transformation from contender to champion was just as dynamic. The Otters won 10 straight CCSL championships with Perry at the helm, from 1990 through 1999.

Perry died in September of 2011, far too young at 63, but the Otters swim on, and keep winning. Oak Park hosted the 75th anniversary meet in 2013, and the home team won.

Over the decades, the original pool aged noticeably, as did the pool house. New facilities were needed, and as with the original installation, there was a long discussion as to their merit.

The notion of an additional pool for young children around 1990 led, after some considerable argument and a narrow vote against, to the creation of just that, a pool where those just learning to swim could do so in shallow water. One member even donated two big concrete frogs that spouted water and kids could climb on. They were rarely unoccupied.

The children's pool cost money, and not all board members were convinced, but it proved to be worth every penny, showing the path to increased family activity at Oak Park.

But the old pool was still the old pool. More than a few cumulative pages of minutes are devoted to tales of leaks, of pool chemicals being flushed away, of a system that was modern in 1938 but after more than 60 years of service and countless upgradings was worn and outmoded.

The campaign began for a new pool, tied into a renovated golf course, a refurbished clubhouse, and an expanded tennis center. In other words, something for every contingent of the membership to approve.

It took until 2001 for the membership to vote approval – by a 117-86 margin – for a project billed at \$6 million and eventually valued at over \$7 million. The pool, at \$2.9 million the biggest part of the project, would open to acclaim in 2003.

Jack Gleason was club president when the vote was cast. He had seen the need for a new facility for some time. Before he was president, he tried to dissuade H.K. Snyder from pushing through a new snack shop to replace the original building, which itself had seen better days.

"He was going around trying to line up his votes, and I said, 'Kent, I've got a real problem with this,'" Gleason recalled. "He said, 'What's your problem?' I said, 'I think we're wasting money.' I don't remember the cost of it, but it was six figures at the time. I said, 'Ultimately, what's going to happen is, the pool isn't going to be there anymore. The pool's going to be somewhere else. It's going to be a larger pool.'

"The pool is falling apart. The people coming into the club now are coming in the club for a country club experience. They want all the different things. We're going to need a bigger pool and a more modern pool. Maybe it's going to be over by the caddie house.'

"He said, 'That's ridiculous.'"

But Gleason was right, and Oak Park joined a list of clubs that parlayed a new pool and expanded tennis facility into a more involved membership. It would also position Oak Park



The new pool and tennis complex is a modern facility wrapped in a classic motif, with the central entrance court leading to the tennis facility to the south.

Country Club smartly for the future.

“Our goal is participation,” said Jim Pizzo, the club’s swimming and tennis chair. “The 75th anniversary meet of the country club league was packed. We had close to 2,000 people come for three days.”

Some visitors inevitably become members.

“The pool complex has done wonders attracting members,” said Fran Roche, who joined Oak Park in 1986 in part because the

original pool was available for his children to use.

There was also an ancillary benefit to the relocation. The pool was the noisiest place in the club, thanks to the children whooping it up at times. It was also a half-wedge from the 18th green.

“The old pool, you’d find a golf ball in the pool once in a while,” Bill Snyder remembered. “You overdrive 18, you’re in the water.”

More than a few players with more than a few

dollars on the line and a curling 10-footer needed to have Nicklausian mental skills to block the noise out while trying to win a match.

“That was one of the master strokes in the new planning: Let’s get that noisy pool away from the golf course,” said former president Richard Beeman. It also opened up the area for expansion of the 18th hole, with the green sitting only yards from where the original pool stood, making the shift a win for both swimmers and golfers.

Tennis for everyone



Tennis has a curious history at Oak Park. While there have been courts on the premises almost from the beginning, the sport has seen more low ebbs in interest than might be expected from a membership with a multiplicity of sporting interests.

For a long time, the reason for that was simple, and could be found a couple of miles away. Many Oak Park members also belonged to the River Forest Tennis Club, then and now one of the premier places to partake in racquet sports. Founded in 1905, and for decades until the dawn of tennis' open era, the host of the U.S. Clay Court Championships, River Forest's roots are similar to those of Oak Park, centered on the enjoyment of sport and conviviality with neighbors.

Indeed, Charles Ward Seabury, Oak Park Country Club's second president, was also the president of River Forest

Tennis Club at one time. He and Don W. Heppes are the only men to lead both clubs.

With the focus on tennis at River Forest, for years the game took a back seat to every other sport at Oak Park, with one exception. The courts, like the pool, were often a summer haven for the children of club members.

Oak Park's original two courts were west of the clubhouse, reached by a walk along a promenade that stretched for at least 100 yards. In this relative seclusion, closer to the current skeet building than the clubhouse, tennis players could compete in near-secrecy on clay, the dominant surface of the day. (The promenade continued all the way to Thatcher Road, and across to the club's pump house along the Des Plaines River.)

In the 1930s, tennis was evicted from its pastoral setting, and the promenade shortened, in favor of a greatly expanded driving range. That left Oak Park members with a racquet in hand and no place to swing it for decades, unless they joined River Forest Tennis Club or played at the public Oak Park Tennis Center, adjacent to the Cook County Forest Preserve headquarters on Harlem Avenue.

Not until the 1960s was this omission rectified at the club. Then, two asphalt courts were built and lit for evening play. That helped resurrect the game at Oak Park Country Club, with children on the courts during the day and their parents playing at night.

But there still wasn't a great deal of adult play. There was never a club championship, for instance.

"When I came there (in 1990), there wasn't much of a tennis program," longtime tennis professional Jim Sloan recalled. "We had high

school kids and college kids. The program had run down."

Sloan, a self-taught tennis pro whose real vocation was teaching – he was a professor of English at Illinois-Chicago until his recent retirement, and whose other avocation remains writing – took up the cudgel of building the program.

"I arrived vaguely aware there were a couple of courts; they were buried in the trees," Sloan said. "There was no adult play. There had been at one time, because there was an old charge sheet. My first year, seven kids showed up."

Sloan, who left studies at Harvard to become a paratrooper in Vietnam, has never been one to shirk from a challenge. His enthusiasm rubbed off on the players and helped build the program.

"He is the biggest single reason for kids getting involved," Jim Pizzo said of Sloan. "Some kids get in, and after a year or two of just swinging at a ball, a spark goes on. Our girls' program has helped support the high school programs. But he's as much a storyteller as he is tennis pro."

By 2003, when the new pool and tennis facility opened, Sloan recalled having between 60 and 80 young players. The following year, there were 141 kids involved, and 216 players overall, proving the worth of the expansion. It really was a case of "If you build it, they will come."

"We went from seven to 16 to 23 to 35 the first four years. By the time the new facility opened, we'd started to produce some meaningful players, kids who would play on the Fenwick and Oak Park-River Forest tennis teams," Sloan said. "But I'm pleased when I get a kid who isn't terribly athletic and make him into a player."

The expanded facility helped attract new social members to the club, many of whom both used the pool and played tennis. The two-court facility was expanded to four courts, all with a new Har-Tru surface. The lighting was improved, and even better, so was the drainage.

"In the old days, you could go two weeks with lost courts because of rain," Sloan remembered. "Now we started to add adult programs, and then added another pro, Mary Ann Lappe, to the staff."

Lappe grew up playing tennis at River Forest Tennis Club, was part of four straight state title teams at Oak Park-River Forest in the mid-1970s, when IHSA sports were finally opened to girls, and played for Ohio State and New Mexico before turning pro. She helped expand Oak Park's programs before moving to the Hinsdale Racquet Club.

Mike Stoja, whose prep career took place on the other side of the fence at Elmwood Park High School, arrived in 2012 from the Oak Park Tennis Center as head professional. He and Sloan have combined to take things a step further, bringing a full complement of lessons and competition to the tennis fan at Oak Park. And with four courts, there's ample space for casual play as well, but the buds of competitive adult tennis, planted with the new facility, have begun to blossom.

"There are maybe 30 women and 15 men who play regularly," Pizzo said. "There's a parent-child tournament. And the children have an informal championship for all levels at the end of the year. There's also some inter-club play."

But the majority of activity on the courts is still with the kids, one of the three legs to go with swimming and junior golf. That, by any measure, is a full day.

Ladies days

In the back of this volume, the reader can peruse the honor roll of club golf champions of both sexes. A careful accounting finds 36 gentlemen have won the title across Oak Park's first 98 years of competition, but only 25 ladies.

The first champion, setting the trend of dynastic reigns, was one of two for whom research has failed to unearth a given name. Thus, she is known now, as she was then to all but friends and family, as Mrs. Frank Kushel. An advocate for higher education in the West Side Coeducational Club, she won Oak Park's first 15 women's club championships.

That achievement set the standard. In the club's first 39 years of play, only five women won the championship – and Priscilla Pratt was the outlier, capturing the crown only once. Carrie Davis outdid Mrs. K, collecting 17 championships from 1932 to 1951. Only the New York Yankees were as dominant in that era.

Mary Burdsall's dozen titles from 1959 to 1982 comprise the longest stretch between first and last, while Becky Smith moved past her into third place overall with victory No. 13 in 2011, only 19 years after her first.

The annual conflagration, like all club championships, draws interest mostly from the competitors, but Oak Park on five occasions has hosted the country's top women amateurs in chase of the Women's Western Amateur Championship, drawing nationwide attention. While there have been exhibitions by male pros, plus a handful of U.S. Open sectional qualifiers



Mrs. Frank Kushel, the club's first ladies champion.

and the annual Radix Cup, Oak Park hasn't hosted a similar championship on the men's side.

All five occasions had their moments of drama, and produced excellent champions.

The WWGA came calling almost right from the start, in 1920, when Oak Park was only in its sixth season. A familiar name with a multi-sport background scored the victory. Marjorie Letts, known in the newspapers almost exclusively as Mrs. F.C. Letts Jr. (though a junior F.C. Letts was not), knocked off fellow Onwenstia regular Edith Cummings 2 up in their 18-hole title match.

For Letts, it was her third Women's Western title, to go with crowns in 1916 and 1917 and a runner-up finish in 1919, a remarkable record given her taking up serious golf only in the spring of 1914. Prior, she was a tennis player, regularly finishing high in amateur tournaments, especially around her native Cincinnati. When the golf bug bit, it bit hard, and 1914 was the last year of tennis competition for Marjorie Dodd. Even before her marriage to Letts, she was a solid golfer.

At Oak Park, she waltzed through four of her six matches, and was taken to the 18th hole only in the final, when Cummings, 3 down through 13, won the next three holes to square the match after 16 holes. Letts won the 17th, played from 200 yards, with a par, then scored bogey 5 to win the championship at the last.

The Women's Western Amateur was back 13 years later, the 1933 edition part of the golf-related celebration of Chicago's Century of Progress, which also included the U.S. Open at North Shore and both the Western Open and Women's Western Open at Olympia Fields.

As opposed to 1920, there was an upset. Virginia Van Wie, the pride of Chicago's south side and in the middle of her run to three consecutive U.S. Women's Amateur championships, was beaten comprehensively in the Women's Western title match. She fell 6 and 5 in the 36-hole final to Lucile Robinson, a 22-year-old playing out of the Wakonda Club in Des Moines who had been the runner-up in the 1932 Women's Western, and whose best previous



The 1933 WWGA Amateur Championship match between Iowan Lucile Robinson (left) and Chicago's Virginia Van Wie drew a large gallery to Oak Park.

WWGA Champions at Oak Park

- 1920 Marjorie Dodd Letts
- 1933 Lucile Robinson
- 1958 Barbara McIntire
- 1964 Barbara Fay White
- 1969 Jane Bastanchury



achievement was a string of four triumphs in the Iowa Women's Amateur.

No less an authority than Charles Bartlett called Van Wie jinxed when it came to WWGA competition.

"The aforesaid jinx of the Western for Miss Van Wie becomes quite apparent after considering her record in it," Bartlett wrote in the *Chicago Tribune*. "She has played in the Western every year since 1926, with the exception of last year (1932), and the best she has been able to do was to reach the semifinals at Exmoor in 1931. She coasted through the current tournament with considerable ease, and when she reached the final Friday with a 6 and 4 victory over young Elizabeth Abbott of Los Angeles it appeared she had beaten the jinx."

"Instead, she played her poorest golf of the entire week, a capricious breeze which harried the course in the morning doing her game no especial service."

Robinson led 2 up at lunch, was 3 up after 27 holes, then won the 10th, 11th and 13th to finish the job. What nobody knew for years was how hard she had worked to overcome bad putting. Her teacher? None other than Horton Smith.

"I sliced my putts," Robinson told *The Des Moines Register* in 2005. "(Wakonda pro Jack Welsh) said if I ever hoped to do well on the national level, I'd have to change my putting.

"Welsh recommended that I take some lessons from Horton Smith. ... So I went to Chicago about two weeks before the tournament, and I practiced with Horton Smith three times a day for 10 days. He blindfolded me, had me swing putters that way, and changed my stance to a more upright position."

And when she scored the victory over Van Wie, "Horton Smith was as thrilled as could be," Robinson said.

Robinson would win the Women's Western again in 1941, after her marriage to Russell Mann, and lose to Betty Jameson in the 1942 final, but Virginia Van Wie never made it back to the final and never claimed the Women's Western Am. Van Wie, who had won the 1925 Women's Western Junior, retired from play shortly after winning her third U.S. Women's Amateur. There were no more worlds for her to conquer.

Fast-forward 25 years to 1958, and the WWGA's return to Oak Park. The world of women's golf had changed. A professional tour, one triggered by the creation of the Women's Western Open in 1930 and the U.S. Women's Open in 1948, was about a decade old.

Barbara McIntire was not one of those inclined to turn professional. She turned to real estate after graduating from Rollins College and made a go of that even as she made headlines on golf courses. Her 2 and 1 victory over Anne Quast at Oak Park in 1958 would not be an upset, even though Quast had grabbed the title in 1956 and would win the U.S. Women's Amateur later in the year. Two years earlier, McIntire had taken Kathy Cornelius to an 18-hole playoff before finishing second in the U.S. Women's Open.

This, then, was a scrap of first-line players, both of them already Curtis Cup veterans. McIntire, who had beaten Alice Dye 1 up in the semifinals, led Quast 2 up at lunch, but the standout from Stanford won the first three holes of the afternoon round with the first three of nine one-putt greens after lunch.

Quast's rally came as McIntire had her only

bad stretch of the day, playing the first three holes in four over par. She buckled down and played the last 14 holes in 2 under par. She was 1 up after 27 holes and moved to 2 up with a birdie on the 11th hole – today the par-3 second – drilling a 4-iron to within four feet of the cup. Par after par down the stretch brought her the championship.

Six years passed before the WWGA's fourth visit. The 1964 Women's Western Amateur found McIntire eliminated in the first round when her 30-footer on the 18th green to force extra holes against Lida Matthews stopped a half-turn from the cup. Instead, another Barbara, 24-year-old Barbara Fay White of Shreveport, Louisiana, won it all with a stretch of torrid scoring that matched the temperatures for the week.

White, the daughter of a golf pro, was one stroke from medalist honors in stroke play qualifying with a 76, then scored a 9 and 8 victory over 19-year-old Mexican champion Fela Chavez in the first round. Chavez went around the front nine in a respectable 40, but White played it in 32, 5-under for the ladies in that era, when the overall par for the ladies was 73.

The following day, White played 15 holes 1-under for a 4 and 3 victory over Susan Lance. In the quarterfinals, she was 1-under again in defeating future USGA president Judy Bell 5 and 4. That put White's score at 7-under across 39 match play holes, and 4-under including the stroke play qualifying round.

Friday's semifinal round found White a stroke over par, but in control during the second half of a 4 and 3 victory over Jean Ashley. All square at the turn, White birdied the 10th hole, and also won the 12th, 14th and 15th to coast into the championship match against women's college



Mrs. Frank Kelley fakes playing a shot during the waterlogged 1958 LPGA Pro-Am as Mrs. Donald Cotrell and LPGA star Carol Mann (holding umbrella) look on.

champion Patti Shook, a senior at Valparaiso.

Except for a four-hole stretch in the afternoon, White didn't disappoint. She was 4-up via a 2-over 75 after 18 holes – and she three-putted the last – and 7-up after 24. White finally cooled off and Shook won the next four holes with a pair of birdies and a pair of pars. But the law of averages did not apply, and both went out in 2-over 39 in the afternoon – which made White 1-over for the week and 2-under for match play.

White made sure of that when she sank a 33-foot putt on the 12th hole – now the third hole – to steady herself and go back to 4-up.

"Until I dropped that long putt I could feel my

game going away," White told reporters.

The end came on the 15th – today the sixth hole – and Shook dropped a 5-iron five feet from the hole, and after watching White two-putt from 30 feet, missed a birdie putt to extend the match.

For White, it was the signal triumph of a season that saw her win three times in the spring, her best year since returning to golf at 19 after a 10-year layoff. She won it with superior iron play.

"My 2-iron, I used on this track so much that I wore it out," White said.

White's golf was out of this world for the time, but in 1969, when the Women's Western Am made its most recent visit to Oak Park, out of this

world meant tracking the flight of Apollo 11. The adventure of Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins took place the same week.

Down on earth, a funny thing happened. One of the favorites won. Jane Bastanchury, an Arizona State history major from California who had won her previous seven tournaments, including the college championship, and Southern Illinois' Dot Germain, the runner-up in the college showcase, were expected to contend, and did. They met in the semifinals, where Bastanchury scored a 6 and 5 victory.

A series of downpours soaked Oak Park, halting play a day. The schedule was going to get further behind, so the semifinals were played at Flossmoor Country Club. That didn't stop Bastanchury from playing the 13 holes at even par. She won the first four and was never headed.

The final was at Oak Park, damp but playable, and Bastanchury scored a 3 and 2 comeback victory over plucky Carole Jo Skala, who played 102 holes across the week before three-putting.

Skala was 2 up after four, but Bastanchury, despite her 5-foot-2 size and tendency to be outdriven, was more steady the longer the match went. Skala's first three-putt came on the 21st hole of the match, during an opening afternoon nine that saw Bastanchury score three birdies and six pars to take a 5 up lead. She dropped two holes in the back nine, but was never really threatened, even when Skala was outdriving her. Like many shorter hitters, Bastanchury used that disadvantage to her advantage.

"Then I get to shoot first and if I hit a good one, my opponent is immediately put under pressure," Bastanchury said. After winning her eighth straight title, she was over the moon.

Chasing the elusive '25'

Originally, the whirring noise came first.

Then, BANG!

And a clay target is suddenly in pieces, clattering to the turf.

Today, the call of "Pull!" comes first, then whirr ... BANG! ... clatter. "Pull" ... whirr ... BANG! ... clatter.

Occasionally, the pattern is altered. After BANG! ... near silence, with only buckshot hitting the ground, before the thump of the missed target landing intact and skittering along the ground some 50 yards distant.

This is the winter habit at Oak Park Country Club. On many weekend mornings, on the west side of the property where the driving range ends, and a window-fronted building hugs the ground, fathers and sons – and mothers and daughters – gather on weekend mornings to indulge in a sporting pursuit with roots nearly as old as golf.

At Oak Park, skeet shooting goes back almost to the beginning. The original plans pinpointed the practice tee as the firing location for trap shooting.

The sport quickly became popular as a winter activity – space considerations then and now prevented year-round shooting – and every shooter in the early days thanked fellow member George Wilkinson profusely for the shelter house, complete with stove, he provided.

It was destroyed in the tornado of March 28, 1920, a whirlwind that roared from near Joliet all the way to Wilmette, doing most of its damage, and killing 20, in the Maywood-Melrose Park



Hit all 25 targets as they zoom by, and you get to ring the bell.

area just to the southwest of the club.

The club suffered little damage, except for Wilkinson's hut.

Subsequently, the shooting area was reversed, with shooters now aiming south, and doubled in size. By the 1930s, it was modernized with the

addition of skeet shooting equipment. While trap shooting is only at targets going away from the shooter – a simulation of taking aim at a game bird, which goes back to the days when archers pulled their bow tight and fired – skeet shooting involves picking off targets that are crossing from side to side at various heights. The word skeet is a variant on “skyte,” the Norwegian word for shoot.

Following the sale of the northwest corner of the club’s property to Elmwood Park High School, the shooting range was shortened, with the range immediately against the fence on the school-club property line. It was moved soon after – some stray shot landed on the high school’s property one weekend morning when no students were around, alarming the administrator who happened upon it – this time to the current location on the west side of the range, with a modern warming house to go with the modern, whirr-less, target launching equipment that arrived in the 1950s.

As it happened, that move put the skeet range as far as possible from the homes on the north, east and southeast side of the club grounds. That minimizes complaints about noise that other Chicago-area clubs have endured.

The season generally runs from October to the end of March, and attracts a good portion of the membership. And those who shoot are avid.

“It’s a very addictive sport,” said Steve Mandell, a skeet aficionado for over a decade, on one not-so-chilly day during a recent season. “It’s very similar to golf. If you have a problem shooting, you work on the problem, and then another problem starts. There’s a lot of mind over matter.”

The goal in any round is to score a perfect 25, hitting each of those orange targets – less than five inches across and buzzing by at about 60 miles per hour – with buckshot as they sail through the air.

Often when that happens, someone will walk a few steps from the shooting line and ring the big bell that stands just outside the skeet house. It can be heard clearly even while wearing the mandatory headphones to protect hearing, part of Oak Park’s safety-first policy.

But perfection is not easily achieved, and like golf, skeet has handicaps and classes. That makes even the beginner competitive within his class, and encourages both return trips to the range for competition and practice.

It also lends itself to family participation. It’s not unusual to see a father and son, or mother and daughter, at the range on a weekend, alternating at taking a shot at the artificial birds.

One of the more famous father-and-son combinations was longtime member and Oak Park resident Arthur Takayoshi Shima and his sons John and Mark. Art Shima was one of the legends of shooting, and a frequent inhabitant of the skeet range.

A world-class anesthesiologist, he took up shooting skeet as a break from work in 1952, and was as good on the range as he was in the operating room. He was a fixture at the world skeet championship for 27 straight years. (Mark



John and Art Shima

would become a cardiologist, while daughter Amy became a veterinarian and chief of staff at the San Diego Zoo.)

In 2000, the Illinois Skeet Shooting Association created the Art Shima Award, presented annually to “those individuals who have displayed sportsmanship and contributions to the game that are considered ‘above and beyond.’”

Art Shima would claim one Illinois championship, in 1960. John, who started in the sport by both loading targets and shooting on the Oak Park range at 8, won the first of his four state titles at age 17 in 1974, the year after he scored two of the five available junior titles. When, at age 20 in 1977, he won the first two of his five world titles, his father made good on his vow to buy John any car he wanted. There was a Ferrari in the driveway when he got back from O’Hare.

“My Dad loved to see me shoot,” John Shima said. “So there was a bright red Ferrari in the driveway when I got home. But there was a catch. He said, ‘I don’t want you to kill yourself, so you’re going to a (high performance) driving school. And I went to the Bob Bondurant school in California.”

Both father and son are members of the Illinois Skeet Shooting Hall of Fame, Art inducted in 1987, John in 2001. Today, John and good friend Todd Bender carry on Art Shima’s tradition of scoring 25s, and are renowned teachers, traveling coast to coast to spread the word. That includes a regular stop at Oak Park.

“Because of Oak Park Country Club and the skeet fields, I am who I am today,” said Shima, who overcame a severe and long-undiagnosed case of dyslexia to graduate from Trinity University in San Antonio, where he was a

member of the skeet-shooting team. “The sport is the sport. I think I learned it at the Lincoln Park Skeet Club, but I became who I am because of the special relationships and the bonds I developed at Oak Park.”

“I was a kid in an adult world, so I had to act like an adult. Growing up, these people very quickly became an extended family for me. These people watched out for you. If you got out of line, they told you, as I’m sure my father would have done with their kids.

“It made me who I am today.”

Earlier records are sketchy, but the Shimas, father and sons, combined for 10 championships between 1965 and 1989. There were memorable competitions between the fathers and the sons, then between the sons and several other sharpshooters, including Robert Gardiner, Dennis Smith, Ben and Dick Ver Halen, Jim Young, and Andy Gabelman, who supplemented his 17 club golf championships with a trio of skeet titles between 1990 and 1995. In 1990 and 1993, he won both.

“For me, it’s probably the best bonding I’ve ever done with my father,” Ben Ver Halen said. “We just had a ball. There was an standing bet at the club, dad vs. son. If the son beat the father, the father had to pay him \$100. I was 13 when I beat my dad, much to his chagrin.”

There was more fun in the West Suburban Skeet League.

“For me it was the camaraderie of shooting as a team against Medinah, St. Charles, Glen Oak. And Rolling Meadows, which had a team at one time,” Ver Halen said. “That was always fun for me.”

For his father, who did not play golf, much

of the fun came from introducing many of his close business associates to the sport.

“It was a great way to take business people out and entertain them,” Ver Halen said. “He’d bring up skeet, and someone would say, ‘I’ve always wanted to try that.’ And he’d bring them out.”

Occasionally, a guest was put off by the idea of having gun in hand, but even the reluctant ones warmed to the idea, and had a great time, even if more targets fell to the ground in one piece than in many.

“It’s a humbling sport,” Kevin Price said. “I think people underestimate the amount of skill and precision required to do it. There’s a lot of the dynamics you have in golf. The speed of wind, the angle of where you’re standing. There are a lot of things to take into account, to think about to be efficient and excel in the sport.

“It’s very catching. And it doesn’t require what a lot of other sports require. You can pick up a

used gun for \$300. The shells – you buy your own ammo – it doesn’t require thousands of dollars to be active in the sport, which I think is great.”

There are intraclub and interclub competitions, the latter mostly with clubs in the west suburbs that have winter skeet ranges, including Medinah and Glen Oak. But often, the fun is as much in the companionship as it is in the final score.

“We’re very receptive to new members,” Mandell said. “Any person here would be happy to take someone out and assist them with learning how to shoot.”

Like golf, it can become a lifelong pursuit.

“It requires extreme concentration, dedication, passion, commitment and, above all else, a competitive spirit,” said Jay Hutchinson, an Oak Park champion who won Illinois’ 28-gauge title in 1996 and went on to finish eighth nationally. “Because if you miss the first one you still have 24 more to hit.”



From this skeet center, humble though it may look, champions have been made.

Acorns on the rink



It was the most unlikely thing. Four women from Oak Park Country Club, representing their club and their country in an international sports competition in Geneva, Switzerland.

A country club then and now focused on golf. And they were playing on ice.

"It was amazing," said Stephanie Flynn, one of the four who curled their way into the record book.

Led by Ruth Schwenker, who had taken up curling, an icy sport of precision and perfection, in North Dakota as a teen, this intrepid quartet fashioned one of the more amazing runs in any sport. Schwenker, Flynn, Donna Purkey and Kiki Wilson honed their craft on the club's rink, located in the building to the west of the clubhouse that now houses caddies and carts.

But for most of four decades, it was a winter sporting and social center six days a week. And these four ladies became so proficient at the intricacies of the sport, they led the Oak Park Acorns to a pair of state titles, with the 1982 edition the most memorable.

The road to Geneva began on Oak Park's curling rink, all two sheets of it, the building a significant upgrade from the curling club's beginning on a semi-enclosed rink at Ridgeland Commons in 1946. While there were a few attempts to curl on Lake Wilbur, the quality of the ice left something to be desired. Proper curling ice, with a pebbled surface to allow the 42-pound stone to curl, or turn, is best made indoors.

Besides, it's warmer. A little warmer, at least.



Action in the club's curling building was a popular activity for more than 30 years.

By 1957, Oak Park members were curling at the club, firstly under a tent and under the name of the Oak Park Curling Club, Inc. The curling building, costing \$65,000, was soon built, and the curling operation was bought by the country club in 1962, with the investment of the original curling backers paid off over an eight-year span. (The 1961-62 season saw the curlers generate a \$5,000 profit, compared to the country club's \$1,258 loss for the 1961 fiscal year.)

"There were two rows of chairs to view through the windows, then we had a bar, a refrigerator, and changing rooms," Stephanie

Flynn said. "You'd have to put on your proper shoes for curling. It wasn't large, but it was adequate. It was enough to keep us happy!"

"When we first began we had an ice man, John Tunzer, and that was his job. He took care of the ice, he kept the inside area clean, and he bartended. If you brought your little child before they were in school, he'd color with them while you were curling on the ice. It was just wonderful camaraderie."

"We had events within the club and would invite other clubs to weekend bonspiels. We'd change every six to eight weeks, mix everybody

up and have a new competition. We had 45 to 50 women who were curling in the '60s and '70s and into the '80s."

The sport was very popular at the club with both men and women. The men, as well as mixed games, played in the evening. Curling took place more than 12 hours a day in season.

"Because women did it, they kind of dragged the men in. Then you had two nights of men's curling and you also had two nights of mixed curling," said Jack Flynn, Stephanie's husband.

It became the main winter activity, ahead of skeet, which was confined to the weekends. Curling went on even when the clubhouse was closed in the dead of winter.

Oak Park became a Chicago curling leader, joining Exmoor, North Shore, Wilmette, Saddle and Cycle – the area's last outdoor rink – and the Northbrook-based Chicago Curling Club, among others. And a handful of members from other area clubs joined Oak Park as curling members.

"Exmoor had a world-class curler (Gerry Duguid) as the guy who took care of their house and their ice," Jack Flynn recalled. "His brother Don does curling announcing on television. So when we came along and beat those guys, it was kinda fun."

The camaraderie extended across borders, including trips to Scotland – and not for golf.

"When you saw there were places to go – to go curling and compete – we started traveling," Jack Flynn said. "We met the most genuinely friendly people wherever we went. They couldn't have been more generous and caring. Anybody who says the Scots are tight or not generous, they're wrong. Spend some time over there; they just wined and dined us."



They couldn't resist. Lake Wilbur was frozen over, so why not slide a few stones for the thrill of it?

"Every 10 years, a whole group of Scottish women would come to Chicago, and every 10 years, a whole group of Chicago women would go to Scotland. And they would curl all the clubs."

Cornelia Howe, an avid curler, was a leader in that regard, representing Oak Park individually in Scotland as early as the winter of 1966.

The exchanges still go on. Longtime member and curler Tom Michael notes a Scottish team comes across the pond every two years to curl against Chicago clubs, including Oak Park – which is no longer at Oak Park. But we digress.

The Flynns and another couple, Hal and Donna Purkey, became a formidable mixed doubles team. Donna, a Canadian, was a longtime curler. The quartet combined to win the 1981 Illinois mixed doubles title, and had a shot at the national crown.

"Alaska looked like absolutely a great team," Jack Flynn remembered. "All they had to do was take out this one opponent's stone, which they had two clean shots at, and they missed. We would have been first, because we won all our games but one, and we killed this team that won the whole thing. But everybody else fell down."

"We were second. It was very depressing."

But Oak Park, with fewer members and smaller facilities, was beating almost all the big guys.

"We called ourselves 'Little Old Oak Park,'" Stephanie Flynn said.

The biggest moment for Little Old Oak Park arrived in 1982, when the ladies won the state title, then captured the U.S. championship at Bowling Green, Ohio. It was a first for a women's team from Illinois, and only three other squads from the state have done so since.

Oak Park, national champions!

"Ruth Schwenker, she kind of got us all going competitively, going outside the club," Stephanie Flynn said. "She formed this little team of ours, and we went off and did great things."

So it was off to Switzerland to compete against Canada, Scotland and the powerhouse Scandinavian countries in the fourth Women's World Curling Championship.

"Europe, they had trainers," Stephanie Flynn recalled. "We were just a recreational sport. They were working out. They had a big advantage. We thought, 'OK, let's do it again.'"



Our heroes: Ruth Schwenker, Stephanie Flynn, Donna Purkey and Kiki Wilson represented the United States in the 1982 World Womens Curling Championship.

The curling sheets in Geneva were a far cry from what any team was used to, laid on a hockey rink and not well prepared. A glass wall let too much sun in and made the sheets wet, almost slushy. That helped nobody, but the Europeans adapted quickly, and the U.S. took it on the chin, going 2-7 in the round-robin competition and finishing tied for eighth with West Germany.

"Our girls couldn't even throw it down to the other end," Stephanie Flynn said. "You couldn't do a lot of finesse."

Still, what an achievement to have gotten there. Just four recreational curlers from Oak Park who became very, very good at a sport that was well over a decade from breaking into the Olympics.

Successful though the friendly foursome was, and fun though curling is for those who played, fewer played as the 1980s went on. Changes in society took its toll. When women became more

prominent in the workforce, the weekday curling group shrunk to perhaps a dozen at best, and quickly. The ice, always expensive to maintain properly, finally was being used by few, even after a separate curling membership was attempted.

When a compressor, the motor needed to keep the ice intact, broke in 1990, the die was cast. The board voted to close the curling rink.

"I remember that meeting," longtime member and curler Tom Michael said. "I offered to pay for (a new compressor) and had a \$20,000 check in my hand. But they turned it down."

Michael's generous offer aside, the declining interest in the membership was the determining factor. A decade later, American interest in curling began to grow with the sport's inclusion in the Olympics, but that was too late for resurrecting the rink on the club grounds.

"The thing just tipped over," Stephanie Flynn said, recalling the end. "You just weren't able to



maintain the membership."

That was true all around the Chicago area. In the last 25 years, Indian Hill, North Shore and Skokie have also closed their rinks. Wilmette's park district converted its building to a senior center. The two curling rinks left standing are in Northbrook and at Exmoor, with four sheets each.

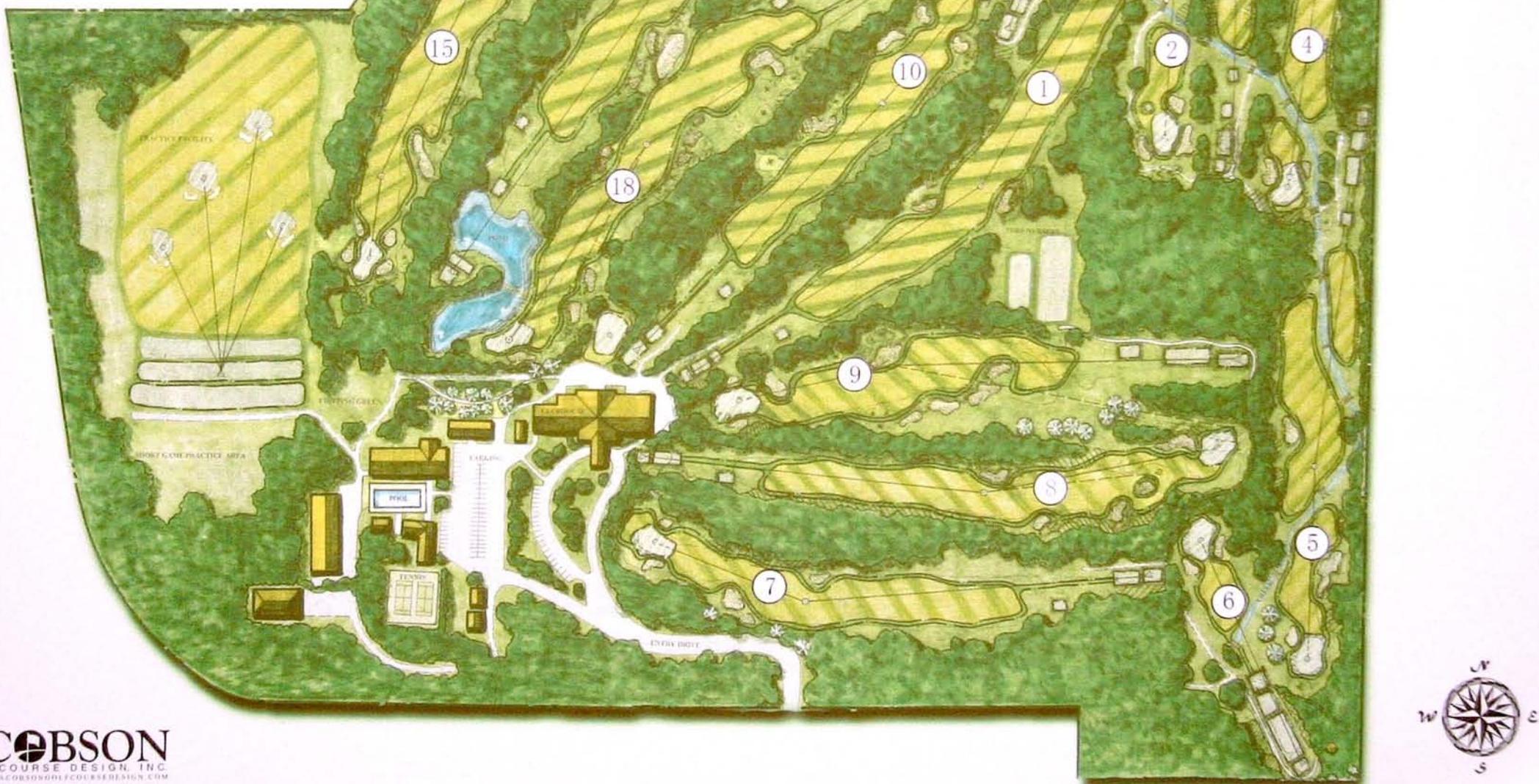
Exmoor is where the reconstituted Oak Park Curling Club meets, renting time as a bowling league would do. Tom Michael and wife Dolores lead about a dozen Oak Park members there. Others traveled to North Shore and downstate Waltham, but Exmoor is the most popular outpost, thriving with the upturn in the game.

"Their revenue is tremendous," said Michael, who gets a call occasionally from area residents who think the Oak Park Curling Club is still located in the the area, or at the club.

The members are here, but the Acorns now curl far from the trees of Oak Park.



MASTER PLAN
2005



Chapter 10

Renovation & renewal

A golf course, even one designed by Donald Ross, continually evolves. In the case of Oak Park, that evolution was slow from the time A.W. Tillinghast's suggestions were put in place in the 1930s, until the renovation of 2006.

For the most part, Oak Park's membership was pleased with its Donald Ross course. Changes were made only after due diligence regarding the effect on play. Aside from a reversal of the nines for six years, from 1959 through 1964, the biggest changes were eliminating some large bunkers between fairways – notably the “Sahara” bunker between the 15th and 16th fairways – and the addition of more trees than Johnny Appleseed could count.

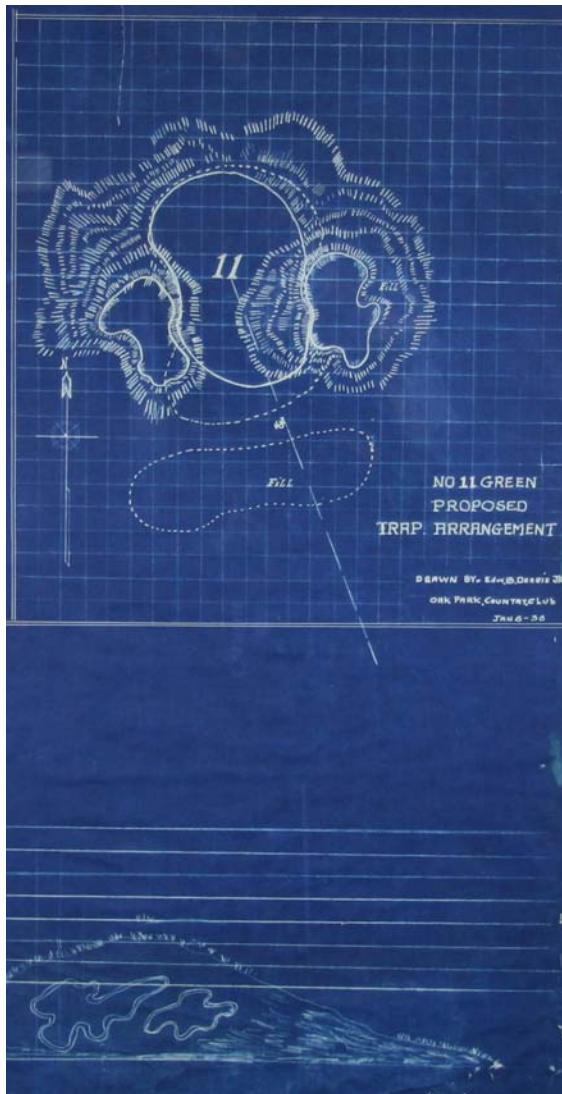
The 1964 naming of Lake Wilbur for longtime member Wilbur F. Pilgrim also saw the installation of the Radix Bridge. That came down before the pond was enlarged as part of the 2006 renovation by golf course architect Rick Jacobson, who had previously renovated Bob O'Link and Northmoor, Ross designs in Highland Park. The 18th hole, along with the eighth, saw major changes, but not before the concept of a renovation itself was thoroughly vetted by a group headed by Mike Walsdorf and Jack Gleason.

“I was not in favor of it,” Gleason said. “I had been on the board for a number of years, been on committees over the years. I had gone off the board, and was off it for two or three years. They came to me and said, ‘Do you want to be grounds chairman?’

“I was not in favor of it. I thought it was a fad that everybody was going through. First I said I didn't want to go back on the board. When you're done, you should be done. I don't like the old guys going around saying, ‘This is what should be done.’ Then I thought about it and said I've got to get involved in this because I can stop this from happening. It's kind of what my attitude was.”

Jacobson, selected ahead of Mark Mungeum and David Esler, won Gleason over.

Rick Jacobson's plan for the renovation of the course was complete in every detail.



A. W. Tillinghast's 1935 design for the 11th green, as drawn by Ed Dearie, Oak Park's superintendent at the time, with a greatly exaggerated plan of elevation at the bottom.

"He took us up to Sunset Ridge, where he was working," Gleason recalled. "I looked around and saw what he was doing, and I was like, 'Man, this is what we need!' Then when we actually started the project, and I saw the shape take place, where just the look of the golf course was changing because of the bunkers, I thought this was really, really neat. I was so glad. I just didn't understand before what could be done."

Jacobson wasn't about to redesign the golf course. Rather, he wanted to restore shot values that Ross built in originally.

"There was a level of excitement seeing what could be done to restore some of the strategic elements back into the golf course, while being sensitive to what the course had evolved into," Jacobson said. "I think that's part of the key of some of these historic restoration projects. You try to be sensitive to the original design intent of the golf holes, while fitting that into the physical layout, the terrain, landscape, vegetation, the foundation that you're working with. Integrating that design intent into the character of the course as it is today is kind of the balancing act that you do on a project."

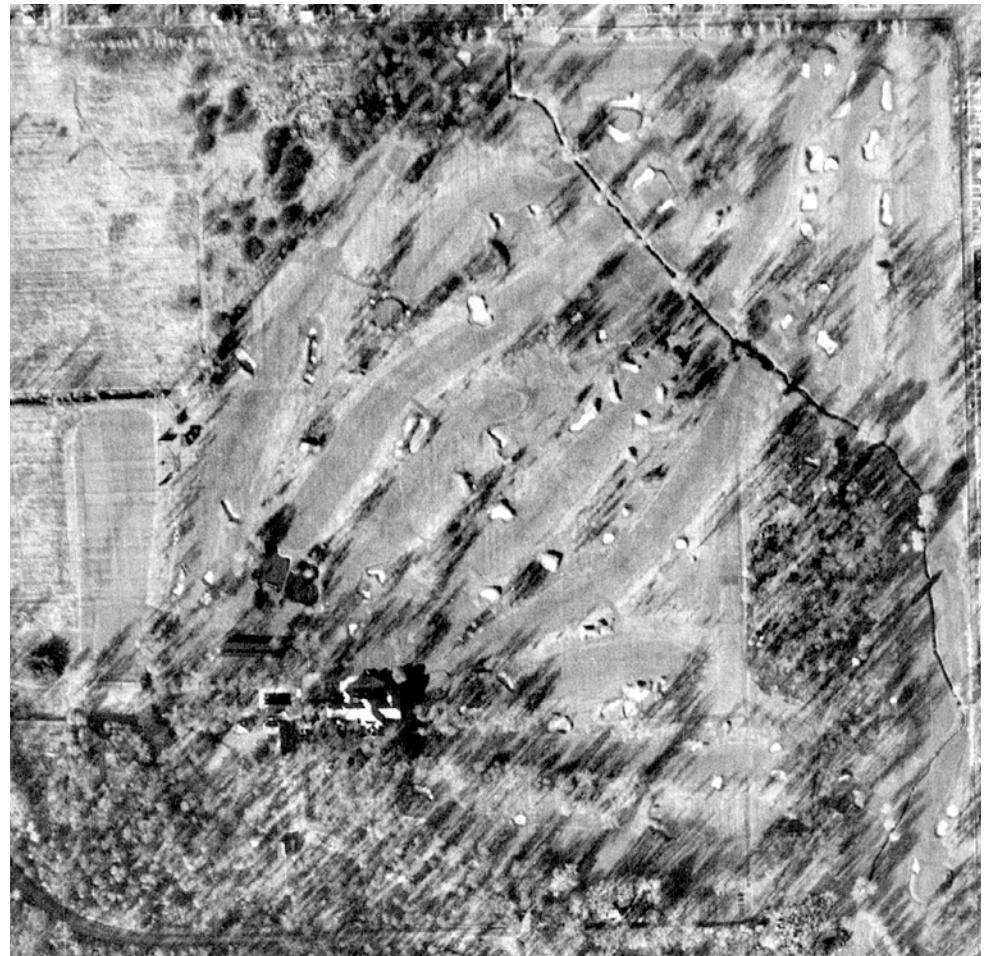
As hickory shafts yielded to steel, surlyn replaced balata, and fairways were cut like greens, the golf course became shorter. Challenging bunkers became ornamental. And Donald Ross was not one for ornaments on a golf course. Or, for that matter, trees.

What needed to be done first was tree removal. A lot of tree removal.

"We had a number of old photographs; we were able to see what it looked like in 1930ish days," Jacobson said. "There were very few trees out there with the exception of the old growth oak groves that are still there. There were huge bunkers that came into play on the paralleling holes. Those were taken out of play and corridors of trees planted. So it was pretty much converted into a parkland golf course over time, which is typical of what we see in these courses from the early 1900s and how they've evolved into how they are today."

Jacobson identified about 400 trees that needed to go, for reasons of getting morning light on greens, for playability, and because they simply cluttered up the landscape, hiding other trees that deserved the spotlight. So he appealed to Walsdorf and Gleason to help win the board and the membership over.

"Ross always believed that trees should not interfere with a properly played shot, so we tried to be sensitive to that in our tree removal and evaluation of the existing vegetation as we went through the process," said Jacobson, who prepared a tree-by-tree diagram.



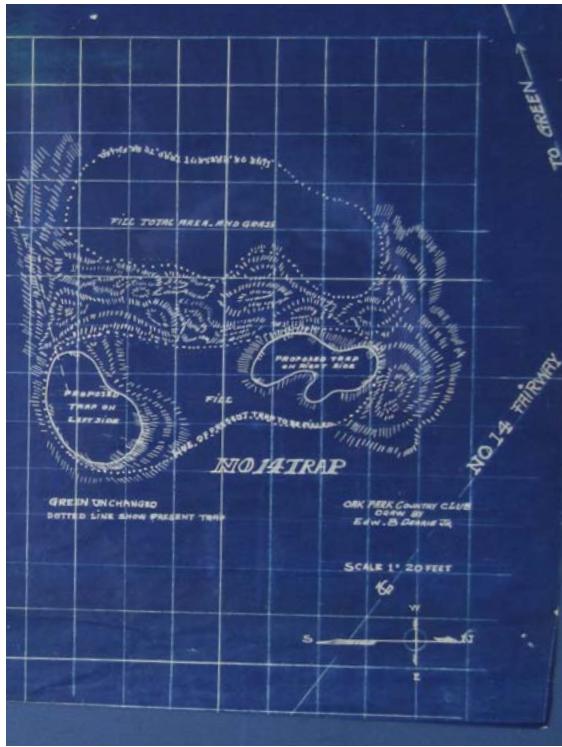
"I took it to the board and said, 'Here's all the trees that are coming out,'" Gleason said. "There's five trees you're going to know about. Let's talk about those five trees and then let's vote. But if you're going to talk about all 400 trees, this isn't going to work."

"And that's what we did. There were a couple trees that were very visible, that had been here for a long time. Here's why Rick says these don't belong. And the board was very supportive at the time.

One of those trees was the Errie Ball Tree in front of the eighth green.

"We're on the eighth hole and it's drizzling out and it's an October day," Gleason said of a stroll he and Al Fierst took with Jacobson. "He's looking there and he says, 'Is that tree

Aside from the elimination of some bunkers around the 13th, 14th and 16th greens, the golf course changed little from 1938 (left) to 1951 (above).



Tillinghast's plan for the fairway bunkers on the 14th hole included the elimination of one and the division of another into two.

in front of the green?' We laughed. We stood underneath the tree and we looked at it and he measured. And he said, 'This is probably one of those untouchable trees.' And I said, 'Yes, it is.'

"He came back with a picture to show that the tree was covering 70 percent of the front of the green. Unfortunately when that tree got cut down – so many trees were diseased and dead and hollowed out – that thing was solid as a rock. It was a big old oak tree.

"Al called me that morning and said, 'Today's the day they're going to cut that tree down. Are you sure? Is the board sure? Do you want to come over and take one last look at it?'"

Everyone was sure.

Jacobson redesigned the eighth hole, moving it back into what had been deep woods, lengthening and increasing its difficulty.

"The trees back in there were so dense, they couldn't even keep turf on the putting surface," Jacobson said of the old eighth green. "From an agronomic standpoint it was just a struggle. With some selective tree clearing to open up some sunlight corridors and air circulation, it really, really helped. In doing so, we were able to integrate some bunkering that was set up very much in character with Donald Ross-style bunkering and approach areas, and the contours. The eighth is one of my favorite holes out there. I really like it."

He also devoted significant attention to the ninth, which had been a dead flat run back to the clubhouse. It's still flat, but hardly dead.

"There were a string of bunkers up the left-hand side of the dogleg, and if you carried the furthest bunker to the left, you had the better angle into the green, which is set up on an axis from left to right, with a bunker guarding the front right," Jacobson said.

"That's a classic strategic style of design that Ross used."

Jacobson made the bunkers more prominent, set into hillocks flashing just enough above ground level to get the player's attention.

The other big change came on the 18th. The old green, a topsy-turvy surface where a straight flat putt was an accident, was abandoned for a new green about 40 yards to the back and right, square in a grove of trees. Jacobson hadn't thought of the location, because of the old pool, but it became available when the pool was moved. Steve Dunning suggested it.

"It was my only contribution to the renovation," Dunning said. "We were out there one day on a Monday, the whole committee. We'd just spent several hours on the golf course. We were right on the 18th green, and I'm sure everybody was itching to go home, including



Mr. Jacobson, the architect. He said, 'Anything else? Anybody have another thought?'

"I said, 'You know, I haven't said much. It looks like you know what you want to do. Other people on the committee have given you some fine input. But if we walked over there to where those trees are' – there were about nine trees – "and just stopped there for a minute and looked around, and visualized that being the center of the green, how would you feel about that?' He said, 'Let's walk.' We walked over there, and fortunately it was in the shade. He walked around for five minutes without saying a word, and came back and said, 'I think your golf professional missed his calling.' And that's where the green is today."

The relocation did several things. It made the second shot more dramatic and precise,

The expansion of Lake Wilbur and planting of trees to enclose holes is evident in 1962 (left), while by 1972 (above) the trees have grown and a few bunkers have been eliminated.

Oak Park by the numbers

	Yardage		
	Out	In	Total
Black	3,440	3,415	6,885
Blue	3,220	3,233	6,453
White	3,006	2,909	5,915
Red	2,675	2,548	5,223

	Rating / Slope	
	Gentlemen	Ladies
Black	73.1 / 128	
Hybrid	72.1 / 136	
Blue	71.3 / 134	
White		74.5 / 132
Hybrid		72.8 / 128
Red		70.7 / 124

	Course Records	
	Men	
Black	67	Frank Bruno (pro)
	67	Andy Gableman (am)
Blue	63	Errie Ball (pro)
	65	Ed Madden (am)
	Women	
U.S. Women's Open qualifying		
6/29/2005	69	Amanda Blumenhurst
		6,271 76.7 / 140

with the expansion of Lake Wilbur now a factor. It also made the tee shot more demanding, because length wasn't always an issue when the hole measured 407 yards from the member tees. (It's now 420, but with bunkering, plays longer.) And it was safer for those on the putting green, which was so close to the original green.

"When you're hitting a medium-length shot, pulls have a way of going left to left, double-cross or whatever you want to call it," Dunning said. "We had people hit on the putting green every year. And I had a day, a very strange day, when I was nearly hit twice in one day."

The changes approved, Jacobson and his construction crew from TDI International went to work, with Walsdorf, Gleason and Fierst keeping a watchful eye on the project.

"Those guys were just an excellent group to work with," Jacobson said. "It's funny, Ross was one of those early architects who was a proponent of making sure the club committees were unified and that was vital to the continued success of the club. Those guys were, for sure, a good committee to work with, represented the membership well, and made decisions that were all geared toward benefitting the membership. That was a neat process to go through. To know this was a Donald Ross course, that that was his philosophy, and those guys were so on target and on line with his philosophy was neat."

The course closed after play on July 31, 2006, and reopened June 2, 2007. It was a hit.

"We were not trying to be literalists and restore the golf course to its original design," Walsdorf said at the time. "We wanted to make it a modern golf course while maintaining a strong link to its past. I think we've succeeded."

Some things, such as the sod-faced look of the bunkering, were links to the past. Others things were new.

"The little chipping areas around the green, we added quite a few of those," Jacobson said. "That reinforced Ross' concept about finesse shots around the green complexes. We evaluated every hole and went as far back as we could wherever we had the opportunity. But that's often the case in these old courses that are landlocked and sit on acreage that's much less than you're able to build a course on with today's design standards."

At 6,855 yards from the black tees, Oak Park's par 72 course is about as long as it's going to get. But length alone does not determine degree of difficulty, either in course rating and slope (a sturdy 73.1 and 138, respectively, from the blacks), or in a player's mind.



In the latter case, the experience as a player moves along, what he sees – and feels under his feet – means a great deal.

As a member of another prominent Chicago club said as he looked out the window during a mid-winter visit, “At our place, you can stick a peg in the ground and just hit it. Here, no. Here, you have to think.”

Donald Ross wanted the player to think on every shot. As he wrote concerning bunkering in 1914, the year Oak Park Country Club was founded, “Often, the very highest recommendation of a bunker is when it is criticized. That shows that it is accomplishing the one thing for which it was built: It is making players think.”

By 2002 (left), those tree plantings have matured, and are crowding both bunkers and fairways. Rick Jacobson’s renovation, seen above in 2007, thinned the trees, created new greens on the eighth and 18th holes, and made the tee shot on the ninth more demanding. Note also the new pool and tennis complex.



Chapter 11

The course today

Step on the first tee at Oak Park Country Club, and you are transported back in time. Before you is a golf course that has seen a century of play, yet thanks to the genius of Donald Ross and the restorative work of Rick Jacobson, provides as much challenge to the modern player armed with graphite and other exotica as it did to the hickory-shafted set that opened the course in July of 1915.

Bunkers threaten. Auchtermuchty Creek lurks. The greens challenge. Inevitably, inexorably, the strokes add up.

Three par-4s of over 400 yards are stern examinations. Back-to-back par-5s on the back nine combine brute strength with precision. Each par 3 seems innocent until the first putt is struck.

Indeed, every hole offers the possibility of birdie, if the tee shot is well struck and the approach lands on the proper spot on the green. But every hole also brings forth the chance for disaster, small or large, if the stroke is poor.

Oak Park is a strategic golf course wrapped in a pretty package, a golf damsel capable of delight or distress. Professional emeritus Steve Dunning notes the seventh through 12th holes are the holes to score on. In other words, beware the start and finish.

There are enough trees to cause trouble, but no longer quite so many that they obscure the more dramatic specimens, nor what vistas there are on ground that is largely flat. The combination creates a course that is both challenging and fun to play, whether from the tips – first-timers discover that at 6,855 yards, Oak Park is more troubling than mere yardage indicates – or from up front, where even a high-handicapper can have a good day when the putts fall.

Put on your golf shoes – soft spikes, please. Let's walk the course.

Oak Park Country Club in all its glory, from an aerial photograph taken in the summer of 2012.



1

Par 5 • Handicap 9 / 3
516 • **497** • 478 • **420**



Those who dare will find both risk and reward involved in this opening par-5. The tee shot should clear the fairway bunker on the left, but favor the right side of the fairway, where a pair of bunkers lurk. If you're even with or past that duo, feel free to go for the green.

Otherwise, lay up short of Auchtermuchty Creek with a 5-iron or less. In either case, stay below the hole with the approach shot on this canted green. A putt from above the hole can trigger a three-putt green, while the bunker to the right is also bogey territory.







2

Par 3 • Handicap 17
177 • 158 • 137 • 122

A charming par 3 that can be a beast if the tee shot ends up on the wrong side of the ridge that runs across a green guarded by a quartet of bunkers, including a nasty little one on the front right, truncating an easy bailout position. It's 158 yards from the blue tees, within everyone's reach, but if you miss, miss to the left for a more forgiving recovery shot.

The best play is to aim for the middle third of the green, for the bell-shaped putting surface narrows considerably the farther back you go.







3

Par 4 • Handicap 1 / 9

437 • 409 • 379 • 354

The first par 4 is the No. 1 handicap hole for the men, and with good reason. From the blues, it's a 409-yard trip down a fairway not much wider than an alley, though there is extra room in the tee shot landing area to the left. But there are also a pair of penal bunkers there.

The approach is to a green guarded by three bunkers – a fourth some 30 yards short of the green is decorative unless a shot is foozled – and with a Ross-inspired Pinehurst-style collection area behind. That's a treacherous up and down. It's better to be just short of the green than long.







4

Par 5 • Handicap 7 / 1

478 • 468 • 447 • 401

The second par-5 in the first four holes is a classic, and shortest of the four. Even at 468 yards, head professional Frank Bruno suggests it's a three-shot hole thanks to Auchtermuchty Creek's presence to the front and left of the green: "Hit a fairway wood or hybrid off the tee and take the temptation out."

At 23 yards, the fairway is narrower than the third hole. Overhanging trees on the left impinge as well. The best angle to the smallish green is from the left center of the fairway. The right greenside bunker is the more challenging of the two guarding the green, but either may be preferable to the chipping area behind and well below the putting surface. It's the No. 1 handicap hole for the ladies.







5

Par 4 • Handicap 3 / 5

414 • 392 • 363 • 316

A Ross classic, probably the first hole he designed at Oak Park. It's barely been touched over the years beyond the removal of a bunker in 1919 and the repositioning of the original back tee, now the blue, 392 yards distant.

Keep the driver in the bag and bang a 3-wood toward the right bunker to avoid Auchtermuchty Creek off the tee. Then take enough club to get to the squared-off elevated green, Ross's original shape, from about 160 yards out. Try to get near the hole, for there's many a subtle break on the putting surface. Named Oak Park's best and toughest hole by *The Daily Journal's* Bill Jacobs in 1926, it still is.







6

Par 3 • Handicap 15
198 • **170** • 141 • **114**

A pesky par 3 thanks to a kidney-shaped undulating green and the prevailing southwest wind. The creek doesn't come into play except for a dub, but bunkers flanking the front of the green can if the shot is a half-club short. A half-club long and you're in the trees.

Hit the right club, and the problem is being on the proper level of a green that isn't level. There's a good four feet of slope from front to back, and no gimme pin position, not even dead in the middle of the green, though that's the place to aim. Play safe, while your opponent gambles and loses.







7

Par 4 • Handicap 11 / 7

393 • **375** • 358 • **312**

A sweeping dogleg right that starts with a tee shot that must find the fairway for a chance at par, and a second shot that must finish below the hole for any chance at birdie.

“Hit a draw off the tee and a cut into the green,” recommends head professional Frank Bruno. The bunkers on the left side of the fairway are a good tee target, and keep you safe from the nasty bunker creeping into the right side of the fairway. The green is sloped from back to front, with a chipping area behind it and a deep bunker to the right. The left bunker is the closest thing to a bailout.







8

Par 4 • Handicap 5 / 11

447 • 403 • 377 • 349

Just enough of a dogleg to get one's attention, this par 4 was extended some 43 yards by Rick Jacobson, with a new green built to emulate the original square shape of Ross, but with a right to left pitch rather than the old back to front. Bash a drive down the middle – don't get into that left fairway bunker – for an approach that's best taken through the air.

A run-up here is hampered by the bunker front left. Short approaches may be gobbled up by a pot bunker about 25 yards short of the green. A major challenge compared to the original.







9

Par 4 • Handicap 13
380 • **348** • 326 • **287**

It's only 348 yards, and the fairway is generous, but don't take the ninth hole lightly. Nine bunkers pockmark the front side's closing hole, with four cascading along the left side of the landing area, the preferred position to a green that runs away to the right.

From the right of the fairway, the green is partially obscured, with bunkers front and left rear coming into play. Par is a good score from the right, but from the left, birdie is a real possibility.





10

Par 4 • Handicap 10 / 12

390 • **374** • 358 • **302**

There's more room to place a drive than it appears from the tee, but it must stay in the fairway. Miss and punching out is the best option. That's the case from fairway bunkers as well, with mounds added by Jacobson to turn a dullish flat hole into one with character, and one that appears narrower than it is on the approach.

A pot bunker to the front right of the green is particularly devilish, and the smallish green can cause trouble from the back.







11

Par 4 • Handicap 12 / 8

368 • **346** • 323 • **288**

There's illusion at work here. Auchtermuchty Creek crosses in a depression well in front of the tee, but the tee, fairway landing area and green are all at the same height. Effectively a wider fairway once a huge willow and other trees were removed, a straight tee shot is still the gold standard.

A good drive may leave no more than 9-iron in, but the approach has to avoid bunkers on either side of the entrance to the reverse pear-shaped green, the smallest on the course, plus a collection area behind it. Another green where it's best to be below the hole. Take a par and go quietly to the 12th tee.







12

Par 4 • Handicap 8 / 14

349 • [334](#) • 317 • [260](#)

Parallel to Fullerton Avenue, this par 4 is the shortest on the course, but makes up for that with a maddeningly difficult second shot to a tilted, elevated green. Out of bounds to the right and a series of bunkers to the left, with a huge oak tree to boot, effectively narrow this fairway, and Auchtermuchty Creek shortens it.

The prime landing spot on the green is the front left quadrant, no matter where the cup is located. Miss to the right, in the bunkers or not, means bogey or worse, and it's not much better from behind the green.





13

Par 3 • Handicap 16 / 18

172 • **149** • 129 • **103**

Something of a breather following the 12th, if you hit the green. The 13th is guarded by a pair of bunkers, neither of which makes for a comfortable escape. The green slopes to the right and to the front, but curiously, the better area to miss it is behind the putting surface.

The renovation by Rick Jacobson removed many trees, including those behind the green that once acted as a jail for errant tee shots. It's the No. 16 handicap hole for men and No. 18 for women.







14

Par 4 • Handicap 14 / 6

381 • **354** • 329 • **277**

The most severe dogleg on the course bends left, opposite Donald Ross' original intention. Big hitters will be tempted to drive over the two cross bunkers on the inner corner of the dogleg, but there's no need.

The smart play is with a hybrid or 3-wood to the fairway on the right, and a clear second shot to a green that opens up from about 175 yards. The green complex was redesigned by Ross in 1921, and updated by Rick Jacobson in 2006, with the bunkering made more prominent around what plays as the flattest green on the course.







15

Par 5 • Handicap 4
528 • 504 • 459 • 415

The first of back-to-back par 5s, the tee shot is spiced by the presence of a pot bunker in the middle of the fairway, installed by Rick Jacobson to make a player think. A wise player who can reach the green in two will flirt with the out of bounds on the right to gain the best angle in.

Otherwise, this is a three-shot hole, with the approach needing to stop on a green sitting between a quartet of bunkers, and almost twice as long as it is wide. Says head professional Frank Bruno, “You want to birdie the 15th to offset disaster on the 16th.”







16

Par 5 • Handicap 2
575 • 562 • 499 • 450

The par-5 16th hole never really ends. Deservedly the No. 2 handicap hole, it wanders to the northeast through two landing areas, the first featuring three bunkers, the second with one precisely where the second shot is best placed, and then over Auchtermuchty Creek, which waits patiently for a poorly struck approach, and finally ends at rectangular green with bunkers left, right and aft.

The green is the largest on the course – a 70-foot first putt is not unheard of, and a third putt often follows the second – but it has a false front that can reject seemingly perfect approaches.







17

Par 3 • Handicap 18 / 16
207 • 190 • 153 • 134

With the best of the greens A.W. Tillinghast designed in the mid-1930s, the 17th has always been a great test, with many a match decided upon it. A short tee shot can be snared by a bunker 30 yards short of the green.

One pulled ever so slightly could find a bunker, or a collection area that, as seen here, leads to the 18th tee, giving the player the option of a pitch, chip or putt from well off the green. One faded right might plunk into a bunker with a severe lip. The green moves like a roiled ocean, with nary a flat spot on it. Two-putting for par is a pleasure, and birdies are cherished.





18

Par 4 • Handicap 6 / 10

445 • [420](#) • 342 • [319](#)

A delightfully devilish journey ends on a grand note, with a tee shot that must be fit into a landing area strewn with bunkers, and a second shot that demands equal precision. Stray left off the tee, and either trees will block the second shot or bunkers will shorten it.

Go right, and the second is forced to flirt with Lake Wilbur for the last 50 yards. The water is a factor regardless, and so are a pair of bunkers short and left for those forced to lay up. A miss left of the green means danger from the newly expanded bunker, one created from two. With the cup back right, the hole plays 460 demanding yards from the tips.





Chapter 12

To the second century

The first quarter of the 21st century has brought changes to country club life in the Chicago area and beyond. The Great Recession of 2008 shriveled waiting lists at almost all clubs. Ravisloe Country Club, the Homewood hallmark with more than a century of history, was sold by its remaining members and went public. Some other clubs have questionable futures.

Oak Park Country Club's future is bright.

A committed membership living in vibrant communities point toward decades of prosperity, providing the right decisions continue to be made.

The club's leadership has been doing that for decades already.

Oak Park stands tall today because members have consistently met the challenge of keeping the club on track when outside forces threatened to derail it financially.

Entering the 1930s, for instance, Oak Park offered members much of what it does today: There was a fine golf course, a clubhouse with fine dining, and tennis courts, along with skeet shooting in the winter, and all of it close to the homes of almost every member.

Thanks to the Great Depression, the club was struggling, though hanging on. While Oak Park was in better shape than many area clubs, some of which were technically insolvent, and others doomed to closure at an early date, solvency did not equal bounty. Members were resigning, or simply not paying their bills and being dropped from the rolls.

In June of 1932, the initiation fee was \$200. The minutes of the June 7 board meeting noted three new members coming on board, but a net loss of 11. That more than offset the arrival of six new members earlier in the spring.

The drain continued through the summer, a net loss of 10 more, with only two new faces, despite the club getting a great deal of publicity from the one-day exhibition match of

Day and night, Oak Park's clubhouse has welcomed the membership for a century.

The warmth of John Gleason

John Gleason Sr. never wanted a big deal made about himself.

He loved golf, golfers, the game and everything surrounding it. But toot his own horn? Good luck with that.

His 1999 Illinois Golf Hall of Fame biography was short, noting an Illinois Senior Amateur title, three U.S. Senior Open berths, three club championships at Oak Park, plus another at Butler National. But the key to this former caddie's love of the game was his devotion to youth, from caddies – he was a director of the WGA, focusing his interest on the Evans Scholars Foundation – to the disadvantaged.

He was also a founder of the Maryville Golf Academy, created to give the teens at Maryville the chance to learn not just the game, but the lessons in golf that can be carried over to life in general.

Along with Oak Park's Jack Flynn, Gleason and two Maryville board



U.S. and foreign professionals arranged by Horton Smith. (It made a profit of \$5.15.)

Had the trend continued, the circumstances might have triggered a mass exodus from the club. A half-dozen resignations in December brought the total number of departures since February to 25. It was time to act.

Early in 1933, the board headed by president Cecil Marten made two bold moves. First, the club was put on an austerity budget, with \$14,000 cut from the original plan. Every department was cut to the bare minimum. That, it was hoped, would limit the 1933 loss to no more than \$4,000. Second, even as 10 more members resigned, the price of a membership was halved, set at \$100 until 25 new members joined the club. As much as the halved initiation fee money was needed, the regular cash flow from dues was also welcome.

The results were immediate, and gratifying. In a month, 19 new members were welcomed to Oak Park, and the board authorized an additional 15 memberships, for a total of 40, under the half-price plan. By the April board meeting, the net gain in membership was 27, with 39 new faces and 12 departed. The plan was judged a success and the fee was returned to the \$200 standard. On September 19, 1933, with renewed interest, the initiation fee was raised to \$300. By the end of the year, the budget for 1934 showed projected income of \$54,200, including dues of \$180 from each of the 265 regular members, and expenses of \$54,197. With a \$3 profit expected, manager Charles Bangs had to run a tight ship!

Midway through 1934, membership was starting to slide again, and there was no waiting list. Making that budget was contingent on a full club. So the board, by now headed by president William B. Henri, went back to the plan that worked so well in the spring of 1933, and lowered the initiation fee to \$100.

It worked again. While there were six resignations over the next two months, 42 new members, for a net gain of 36, joined Oak Park Country Club. Once again, the membership roll was full to the brim. So confident was the board that it would remain stable, on February 18, 1935, it authorized a free market in memberships. Once approved, a new member could buy a departing member's membership from him at whatever price they agreed on.

The solid financial ground Oak Park was now on would remain solid, even through World War II, when more than a few members were in the armed forces. An annual membership, at \$50, was created to bring in revenue to replace that from service members who were relieved of paying dues for the duration.

But Oak Park has always had a special advantage. It attracts employees who stay for many years, sometimes many decades. The first was superintendent Ed Dearie. He helped build the golf course, then returned to replace superintendent James Lindsay in 1931. Dearie, heading staffs at Oak Park, Ridgemoor and even far-south Flossmoor during the Great Depression, was able to present the membership a quality golf course, and did so for 22 years. He was briefly a consultant to his successor, Merrill Kirchner, after retiring.

Long-term superintendents are an Oak Park tradition, with Alan T. Fierst champion of them all. In his 38th year in 2014, he is only the ninth superintendent in club history.

Four general managers, most recently Hubert Kahlich, spent at least a decade in charge. Kahlich championed quality of service from the dining room to the front door.

Men's locker room manager Tom Geraghty started at the club as the caddie master in 1984, then moved to the locker room when Bill Survilla retired. And Survilla, whom only a few members knew had been held as a Prisoner of War in World War II when his plane was shot down over Romania, had himself started as the caddie master in 1968.

Geraghty and Survilla were preceded in the locker room by Harry Rosenberg, who began to hand out towels at Oak Park in 1916 and was still doing so in 1945. But he hadn't played golf since before he began his career at Skokie Country Club 1909! That's dedication.

Familiar faces bring comfort to a member. They help make a club feel like home.

"I've always thought about Oak Park as a family," former president Dick Beeman said. "It's more than an institution."

That feeling is not Beeman's alone. The sense of fellowship within the club goes back to Gus Babson's rounding up the founding members. It has sustained the club through the years. Times have, by and large, been good.

What has evolved over the years is the demographic of the membership. While never formally restricted to residents of Oak Park and River Forest, most of the membership has always been from those two communities, along with a few from River Grove and Elmwood Park, towns largely farms when the club itself was carved out of farmland.

It was mostly white Anglo-Saxon Protestant, a true WASP club. There were a few Catholic members in the early days, but when a Catholic priest led the formation of Butterfield Country Club in 1919, most Catholics seeking a club flocked there. That was the case for decades.

members got the program rolling by hiring Juan Espejo as Maryville's golf professional, involving the youth in a game well removed from the streets.

There was the time John was playing golf with some Maryville kids who had just begun to play. He said, "I had a hole in one. We walked to the green and not a word was said. They didn't even know enough about the game to be excited about a hole-in-one!"

They quickly learned, thanks to his vision and generosity. Maryville's golf facility is named the John Gleason Golf Center in his honor.

When John's health deteriorated, he played more golf at Oak Park. It was closer to home than Butler or Chicago Golf Club, his other haunts.

"This place was a godsend the last while," said Jack Gleason, his son. "He played golf every day, right up until the day before he went into the nursing home. The caddies would watch his golf ball."

In the club's 90th anniversary publication, John Gleason was noted as a prominent Oak Park member. Both father and son wondered about that, but it's true, not for what he did at the club, but for what he did for the game. It was a big deal.

The humor of John Houser

There's always somebody at a club who knows how to pull a prank. Among the best pranksters at Oak Park was John Houser.

The head of surgery at West Suburban Hospital, Houser often brought a big trap to the club. You could see fur through the holes.

"He had a sign on it, 'Beware of mongoose,'" Gene Silveri recalled. "If you got near the trap, it would spring. There would be this head that came up and looked like a skunk, this stuffed animal. The first guy to touch it would set it off."

Chuck Doherty said Houser "was able to claim his victims very carefully. He had a friend named Bob Schroeder, about his own size, 5-6. John kept telling Schroeder he was shrinking. Bob kept all his golf trousers in his locker. One winter, John Houser had all of Bob's golf trousers lengthened. So when Schroeder came back the next spring, the trousers were down on the floor and Schroeder looked like he was four feet tall. That was pretty much John's style."

"You discriminated back then and nobody said anything," Don Heppes Jr. recalled in 2011. "Everybody understood it. We're very diverse today. We don't discriminate at all."

The WASP era at Oak Park began to fade away in the 1960s. People of all races, religions and persuasions are happy members of the club today.

Gene Silveri, who joined in 1975, believes he was one of the first Catholic members, and that there were also few Jewish members.

"These were important decisions made by somebody who had the foresight to think ahead," Silveri said. "It showed they were moving. And I think they really hit a point where the Catholic population in River Forest was changing, increasing. The same thing with Oak Park. So their base for membership was suddenly turning Catholic, and they realized that this was going to change."

Balancing change for improvement and change for change's sake has always been carefully measured, one reason club membership is still sought-after.

"I don't think the core culture has changed, and I think that's one of the most important things we have to guard against as time goes on," former president Chuck Doherty said in 2003. "We reflect the culture of our communities, not just Oak Park and River Forest but also the communities that depend on us, River Grove and Elmwood Park. As long as we don't get ahead of our communities, the club's going to be fine. But the club has to reflect the culture of the people who make up its membership, and those are the communities of Oak Park, River Forest, and of course to a lesser extent, Elmwood Park and River Grove."

"So the most important thing for the club to do is never get ahead of the members. As long as the administration, the board of directors have a very good feel for what's going on in Oak Park and River Forest, the club will be just fine. As soon as an administration gets ahead of the members, doing something that's out of line with the community, that's when you have trouble."

Membership is more personal these days for another reason. Quite some time ago, the tax break a corporation could get for financing an employee's club membership was eliminated. The financial burden is on the individual now, and that's one more reason a club has to deliver value, both in quality of service and diversity of options.

Whereas golf is still the prominent activity at Oak Park, it's hardly the only one. The building of the pool and tennis complex in 2003 helped boost membership, and led to a



The 1964 waitstaff poses as part of the club's 50th anniversary celebration.

change in the culture of the club. Former president Steve Lamon remembers being told during his membership interview that Oak Park was a club you joined to get away from your family. That's not been the case for years now.

"I'd say the changing of the by-laws in 1990, where we made them gender, race and creed-neutral have made a positive and dramatic impact on the club," Lamon said. "The facilities and philosophy have all changed to make this a very family-oriented club. A place where you can bring your family and make sure they're having as much fun as you are in all the activities you're following.

The changed by-laws not only changed who we were but what we stood for."

The addition of a long-range planning committee, instituted under the leadership of Dick Beeman, deepened the foundation of stability.

"He got the ball rolling back in 1990, and got the membership used to start thinking about this club, looking out and planning ahead for its needs," Lamon said. "That capital plan really changed this club from 'We're really happy being a men's golf club,' to 'We are gonna put a really competitive product in the marketplace and provide facilities and services for the entire family.' "

Among the changes was a new method of nominating board members. Previously, each board member would select a member to be on the nominating committee, and those

Hello, Oak Parkers ...

... he was Paul Harvey, and he was a member from February 19, 1963, until his passing on February 28, 2009.

At 46 years, his tenure is among the longest in club history. His son Paul Harvey Aurandt remains a member.

Known as the voice of America for his long-running news and commentary broadcasts on ABC Radio, Harvey once gave Steve Dunning advice on giving a speech.

Said Dunning, "He said, 'There's two ways of going about it. You can just say what comes to you, or have notes that go up your left arm and down your right. If you're a good person and your head's clear and you haven't had a couple martinis, just wing it. Think about what you're going to say, but don't get yourself nervous about it. Have a glass of water, breathe normally. Maybe the first couple times, it won't work as well as you'd like it to, but stick with it.'"



13 members would select the incoming board. Jack Gleason suggested to Kent Snyder, who long controlled the nominating process, having the nominating committee consist of the five immediate past presidents, the four club officers, and four at-large members. Snyder bet Gleason \$5 that he couldn't get the by-laws changed for the new process. He lost the bet, and Oak Park's governance began anew.

Along with a refurbishment of the clubhouse, the pool and tennis complex was the first major installation after the long-range capital plan was put in place. The golf course renovation followed.

"This has become more of a family club," Heppes said. "You can get the family plusses here that you couldn't get before. The new facilities helped a lot. When we redid the pool and the tennis, it really enhanced our social membership. We've got almost 90 or 100 social members, and they're an integral part of the club. They eat and drink and swim. There's a number too that will, over time, transfer over to regular members."

"The swimming pool was old and tired. The new pool was a real plus for the club.

"When I was president, you paid extra for shooting, for the pool. We changed that. We said, 'This is a country club. All those are part of your membership fees.' You paid in shooting for the shells."

Prospective members are, of course, introduced to the club by current members, which entails more than signing their name to a prospective member's form. In Lamon's case, he was given a grand tour and solid advice by Jim Baker, his primary sponsor.

"One of my fondest memories is Jim Baker saying after I was elected to the club, 'The first round of golf is with me.' He said, 'I'm going to take you out, make sure you understand all the rules, traditions and customs.' So we went out and played a round of golf. I had a wonderful time until we finished, out on the bag area.

"Jim came over and said, 'Steve, I want you to know those golf clubs are the worst I've ever seen. I don't ever want those to show up at this club again. Take them home and junk them, break them, burn them, whatever you have to do just to make sure they never reappear. Go into the pro shop and buy yourself a new set of clubs.'

"Of course, it was a little deflating, but in retrospect, not only did Jim want to make sure that I reflected the club well to my guest when I came out, that I looked professional and responsible, but he was also giving me a hint that as a new member, going in and

spending a little money in the pro shop was a smart way to introduce myself and get things off on the right foot.”

The modernization of club governance began when Doherty was president. Beeman was the vice-president and Dick Brennan was also in the board, tasked with the unenviable job of bringing the by-laws into the modern era. He would follow Beeman as president.

“The club needed change,” Silveri said. “And when it did need change, there were a few presidents who honestly changed the club.”

The largest recent project wasn’t the club’s idea, but should benefit the club in the long run. Installation of part of Elmwood Park’s \$17 million water mitigation operation closed two and three holes of the course at times in the summer of 2013.

If everything goes according to the careful planning of the engineers, the installation of flood relief pipe to carry storm water under the fourth and fifth fairways to a 14-acre retention pond at the corner of the property to the southwest of the sixth tee should reduce flooded basements and streets in the suburb. A connection with Auchtermuchty Creek was designed to move water more swiftly and lessen the chance for flooding as well, keeping the golf course in better shape. (The storm water in the retention pond goes through another pipe to the Des Plaines River, running directly in front of the club entrance.) While a copse of trees was sacrificed, the available land for the pond meant the course was unaltered.

With a diverse membership, Oak Park Country Club should abide. The precise form events take, only a seer could guess at. Gleason, sans crystal ball, gave it a try.

“I guess it looks much the same,” Gleason said. “You’re always going to have River Forest be River Forest. I think Oak Park’s going to be Oak Park, a more liberal open-minded community. You’re always going to have the downtown, maybe even re-gentrification explodes that a little bit in terms of the number of people that want to be in a club. I’m not sure it’s that much different.

“I see people there similar to us who want to be a member. The question is, do people see a need for this? Interest in golf is going downhill. Do they see the value in the money? Does the expense become a point where it’s too expensive, not worth the cost?”

That’s the question only answerable years from now. But the hunch is, there will still be golf, and swimming, and tennis, and skeet and cross country in the winter, all enjoyed by happy members on the luxurious grounds of the Oak Park Country Club.

Club presidents

1914-1915	Alonzo Burt
1916-1917	Charles Ward Seabury
1918	Sherman C. Spitzer
1919	Ernest P. Waud
1920	Gustavus Babson
1921	Ernest L. Hartig
1922-1924	Arthur S. Hook
1925	George Gunderson
1926	Arthur S. Hook
1927	Walter S. Carr
1928	Clyde E. Shorey
1929	William Schukraft
1930	T.O. Jennings
1931	Rollin I. Read
1932	LeRoy C. Towle
1933	Cecil Marten
1934	William B. Henri
1935	John K. Walker
1936-1937	Helmer A. Melum
1938-1939	Ray R. Simpson
1940-1941	Earl J. Brady
1942	Miles C. Gunderson
1943	Homer J. Livingston
1944	Walter G. Leininger
1945	Winfield S. Kendrick
1946	Helmer A. Melum
1947	G. Herbert Shorney
1948	Harold J. Nutting
1949	Fred A. Allen
1950	Roger S. Lloyd
1951	Helmer A. Melum
1952-1953	Webster D. Corlett
1954-1955	John D. Cannon
1956	Irvin E. Houck
1957	R. Sayre Bradshaw
1958-1959	Luther I. Replogle
1960	Sampson Rogers Jr.
1961-1962	Charles E. Simmons
1963	Gordon J. Rahr
1964-1965	J. Alfred Moran
1966-1967	Carl L. Oberwortman
1968-1969	Buxton L. Johnson
1970-1973	William H. Green
1974	Theodore R. Hudson
1975-1976	H. Kent Snyder Jr.
1977-1978	Albert J. Short
1979-1980	Myles Spaulding
1981-1983	Raymond B. Anderson
1984-1985	William W. Farnsworth
1986-1987	William R. Langley
1988-1989	Charles V. Doherty
1990-1991	Richard A. Beeman
1992-1993	Richard J. Brennan
1994-1995	Alan K. Snyder
1996-1997	Don W. Heppes Jr.
1998-1999	Matthew J. Miller
2000-2001	John J. Gleason Jr.
2002-2003	Steven M. Lamon
2004-2005	Gary E. Holdren
2006-2007	Michael R. Walsdorf
2008-2009	Douglas K. Walker
2010-2011	Robert Euler
2012-2013	Robert Coleman
2014	Andrew Corsini

Leaders and champions

Gentlemens champions

1915	William H. Spear
1916	Cordova L. Peniston
1917	William H. Spear
1918	Ernest L. Hartig
1919	Cordova L. Peniston
1920	Cordova L. Peniston
1921	Stuart J. Templeton
1922	Cordova L. Peniston
1923	Ernest L. Hartig
1924	Ralph D. Stevenson
1925	Cordova L. Peniston
1926	Leon D. Torreo
1927	Ralph D. Stevenson
1928	Thomas L. Gatke
1929	Irving H. Clendenen
1930	Irving H. Clendenen
1931	Irving H. Clendenen
1932	Ralph D. Stevenson
1933	Charles McGuire
1934	Ray R. Simpson
1935	Ray Croslin
1936	Don W. Heppes
1937	Charles E. Simmons
1938	Charles McGuire
1939	Don W. Heppes
1940	Don W. Heppes
1941	Don W. Heppes
1942	Don W. Heppes
1943	Don W. Heppes
1944	Don W. Heppes
1945	Don W. Heppes
1946	Don W. Heppes
1947	Don W. Heppes
1948	Roger S. Lloyd
1949	Roger S. Lloyd
1950	Earle J. Collins
1951	Don W. Heppes
1952	Don W. Heppes
1953	Don W. Heppes
1954	John H. Andersen
1955	Emmett W. Burdsall
1956	Earle J. Collins
1957	John H. Andersen
1958	Don W. Heppes
1959	Don W. Heppes
1960	Emmett W. Burdsall
1961	John H. Andersen
1962	John H. Andersen
1963	John V. Mattson Jr.
1964	Robert W. Anderson
1965	John A. Bailey
1966	John H. Andersen
1967	John H. Andersen
1968	Raymond B. Anderson
1969	Raymond B. Anderson
1970	Robert W. Kane
1971	Robert W. Kane
1972	Raymond B. Anderson
1973	J. Alan Wheatland
1974	John V. Mattson Jr.
1975	J. Alan Wheatland
1976	John Gall
1977	John J. Gleason
1978	John J. Gleason
1979	Thomas W. Hoagland
1980	Francis X. Mentone

across the century

since 1915

Ladies champions since 1915

1981	John J. Gleason	1915	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1948	Carrie Davis	1981	Peggy Snyder
1982	John J. Gleason Jr.	1916	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1949	Carrie Davis	1982	Mary Burdsall
1983	Thomas C. Trankina	1917	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1950	Carrie Davis	1983	Pat Goodwillie
1984	Andrew Gabelman	1918	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1951	Carrie Davis	1984	Pat Goodwillie
1985	Francis X. Mentone	1919	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1952	Isabelle Heppes	1985	Laura Gleason
1986	Andrew Gabelman	1920	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1953	Isabelle Heppes	1986	Ardith Wilkins
1987	Corky Thueson	1921	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1954	Edith Beard	1987	Ardith Wilkins
1988	Francis X. Mentone	1922	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1955	Loween Berklund	1988	Ellen Whisler
1989	Corky Thueson	1923	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1956	Edith Beard	1989	Ardith Wilkins
1990	Andrew Gabelman	1924	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1957	Isabelle Heppes	1990	Ardith Wilkins
1991	Francis X. Mentone	1925	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1958	Isabelle Heppes	1991	Ardith Wilkins
1992	Andrew Gabelman	1926	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1959	Mary Burdsall	1992	Becky Smith
1993	Andrew Gabelman	1927	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1960	Isabelle Heppes	1993	Becky Smith
1994	John J. Gleason	1928	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1961	Mary Burdsall	1994	Stephanie Flynn
1995	Corky Thueson	1929	Mrs. Frank Kushel	1962	Mary Burdsall	1995	Ellen Whisler
1996	Andrew Gabelman	1930	Mrs. Stanley Jaicks	1963	Mary Burdsall	1996	Becky Smith
1997	Corky Thueson	1931	Mrs. Stanley Jaicks	1964	Echo Gordon	1997	Becky Smith
1998	Andrew Gabelman	1932	Carrie Davis	1965	Marie Wade	1998	Ellen Whisler
1999	Andrew Gabelman	1933	Carrie Davis	1966	Mary Burdsall	1999	Ellen Whisler
2000	Andrew Gabelman	1934	Carrie Davis	1967	Jamee Barrett	2000	Ellen Whisler
2001	Andrew Gabelman	1935	Carrie Davis	1968	Lillian Oberwortmann	2001	Becky Smith
2002	Andrew Gabelman	1936	Carrie Davis	1969	Mary Burdsall	2002	Becky Smith
2003	Andrew Gabelman	1937	Isabelle Heppes	1970	Jayne Economos	2003	Ellen Whisler
2004	Andrew Gabelman	1938	Isabelle Heppes	1971	Barbara Rice	2004	Becky Smith
2005	Andrew Gabelman	1939	Carrie Davis	1972	Mary Burdsall	2005	Becky Smith
2006	Andrew Gabelman	1940	Carrie Davis	1973	Mary Burdsall	2006	Becky Smith
2007	Andrew Gabelman	1941	Priscilla Pratt	1974	Barbara Rice	2007	Becky Smith
2008	Andrew Gabelman	1942	Carrie Davis	1975	Pat Goodwillie	2008	Becky Smith
2009	Mark Roche	1943	Carrie Davis	1976	Cindy Barber	2009	Becky Smith
2010	Justin Smith	1944	Carrie Davis	1977	Gail Fitzgerald	2010	Nancy Hanson
2011	Gerard Downey	1945	Carrie Davis	1978	Mary Burdsall	2011	Becky Smith
2012	Mark Roche	1946	Carrie Davis	1979	Mary Burdsall	2012	Therese Rigas
2013	Justin Smith	1947	Carrie Davis	1980	Mary Burdsall	2013	Nancy Hanson

A note from the author

Some books are difficult to write. The topic is confusing, or the parties are reluctant, or both.

Discovering and telling the story of Oak Park Country Club was a joy, filled with friendly people and surprising twists.

From the moment Jack Flynn contacted me about seven years ago, the project was intriguing.

I already had more than a passing interest in the club because of the Radix Cup, the annual friendly clash of professionals and amateurs from around Illinois. Always a highlight of the local season, the Radix Cup turned out to be a small part of the Oak Park story.

Powerful personalities were the preferred path to getting to the heart of what makes Oak Park tick. Gus Babson, the businessman and Westward Ho member who got impatient with progress at that club and started it all. Donald Ross, who designed the course. Horton Smith, who brought the club national renown by winning the first Masters Tournament. Errie Ball, the living legend. Harry Radix himself. Ray Anderson and H.K. Snyder Jr., the two and only.

All of them earned their moment in the sun in the preceding pages.

The difficulty in a book of any scope is covering everything. The duty is to select the most interesting stories, the best illustrations, and weave it into a comprehensive whole. Invariably, somebody or something gets left out. Aside from the photographs taken of the course, about 800 photos and pieces of ephemera were

sifted through. The best made the cut. Others, perhaps more interesting to some than others, did not. A newly-compiled complete player-by-player statistical history of the Radix Cup had to be left out, but the club, the CDGA and the Illinois PGA now have copies.

The goal was to tell the most complete story possible of Oak Park Country Club from its founding to the time the pressman pushed the button. Ideally, the goal has been achieved with a minimum of error.

The help I received from the club community was extremely valuable. It started with Jack Flynn, Heritage Committee chairman Jim Hopkinson, and Fran Roche, whose vision for preserving the history of the club really started it all years earlier. Every Heritage Committee member, including Dick Beeman, Steve Lamon, Becky Smith, Scott Early, Steve Wittenberg and Michael Trucco, made important contributions.

So did those who endured an interview. Errie Ball, then 100, took the time to sit for 40 minutes in the spring of 2011 in the locker room of Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart, Florida. It was the second time I'd had the good fortune to be in his presence, having played with Errie at Royal Fox two decades earlier. He was a marvel then, and then again.

Some two dozen interviews followed, most in person. One, with Don Heppes Jr., is especially memorable. We sat in the men's lounge on a cold day, he with an incurable disease and I knowing his days were numbered, as he recounted warm

memories of a club he loved while deer ran across snowy fairways.

And the last, with David Leadbetter, came after several months of missed connections, but his vivid recollection of two years as an assistant while living at the club was worth waiting for.

Club staffers past and present were extremely helpful. Superintendent Al Fierst provided the insight that can only be gained from a long presence on the grounds, and countless illustrations. I didn't have room for all of the latter, but am hopeful the former made its way into the manuscript.

Upstairs, Gail Riding and Tammy Riding, the mother-daughter accounting team, located rare documents and pointed me in the right direction when I was lost in a sea of paper. In the locker room, Tom Geraghty provided guidance without betraying confidences. Professional Frank Bruno and pro emeritus Steve Dunning were both informative and giving of their time.

A special salute to copy editor Jessica McNeil, a saint whose dreary task was to read my words carefully. She survived!

Vintage illustrations came from sources near and far, including an aerial photo archive and the U.S. Figure Skating group, which tracked down Harry Radix' descendants for a wonderful picture of Harry. Many others were in the club's files.

Enjoy the story of Oak Park Country Club, and the next one hundred years!

Tim Cronin
March 2014

Also by TIM CRONIN:

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- A Century of Golf (1998)
- The Spirit of Medinah (2001)
- Reflections on Ridgemoor (2005)
- Beverly's First Century (2009)
- Westmoreland Country Club (2011)
- Pine Tree at 50 (2012)

Designed by Tim Cronin

The main body typeface is Minion Pro Regular, with full-page sidebars in Times and chapter headlines in Academy Engraved LET.

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Published by Oak Park Country Club, River Grove, Ill.

Direct sales inquiries to Joesph Travaglio, General Manager, Oak Park Country Club, 2001 N. Thatcher Road, River Grove, IL 60171

ISBN 13: 978-0-9709808-6-1

ISBN 10: 0-9709808-6-8

FIRST EDITION

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America by Worzalla, Stevens Point, Wis.

PHOTO CREDITS

- Mary Lou Anderson: 83, 86 (2)
- Tim Cronin: i, ii-iii, iv-v, vi-vii, x, xiv (2), xv (3), 30, 46, 63, 74 (2), 76, 77, 78, 85, 99, 106, 112 (2), 114, 128-129, 130-131, 132-133, 134-135, 136-137, 138-139, 140-141, 142-143, 144-145, 146-147, 148-149, 150-151, 152-153, 154-155, 156-157, 158-159, 160-161, 162-163, 164, 176, front jacket, front endpaper, back endpaper
- Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer archives: 11, 12, 22, 23, 26, 32, 34, 38, 40, 42, 45, 61 (2), 64, 96 (1), 108, 170
- Digital Globe via TerraServer: 126, plus aerial inserts on pages 129-163 inclusive
- Steve Dunning: 10, 56
- Alan T. Fierst: viii, 58, 80, 94, 105
- Stephanie Flynn: 115, 116, 117 (2)
- Green Jacket Auctions: 41
- Jacobson Golf Design: 118
- NETR / Historic Aerials: 121 (2), 123 (2), 125 (2)
- Oak Park Country Club archives: xiii, xiv (1), xvi, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 26, 31, 36, 37, 50, 51, 52, 55, 60, 62, 67, 73, 90, 92 (4), 93 (4), 96 (2), 98 (3), 100 (4), 101, 111, 120, 122, 169, back jacket
- Nick Novelli / Illinois PGA: 65
- PGA of America: 48 (2)
- The Laura Parker Family: 70
- Jim Pizzo: 102-103 (5)
- Bill Snyder: 89, 95 (2)
- Skeet Shooting Review: 113
- Tillinghast Archives: 27, 28
- United States Figure Skating: 75
- Western Golf Association / Gary Holaway: 68
- Western Golf Association archives: 69
- Women's Western Golf Association archives: 109 (2)



“My aim is to bring out of the player the best golf that is in him.” – Donald Ross