

SLICE OF LIFE



By Terry Moore

As a few of my ear-weary golf cronies will attest, I love this quote from Walter Hagen: “I never wanted to be a millionaire; I just wanted to live like one.” Indeed through my various golf endeavors, I’ve been fortunate to travel around the country and overseas to play golf and to live at times like a millionaire. This is especially gratifying when one is, in publisher Art McCafferty’s patented phrase, “merely a thousandaire.” With that as an introduction, permit this wayfaring thousandaire your indulgence as he recalls some golf journeys from the past year.

Tucson, Arizona:

What a break to have a good friend like Jack Berry now owning a winter home here. (“There’s only one thing better than owning a home in Tucson, that’s knowing someone....”) I’ve never been to Tucson before this winter but let me tell you it’s a beautiful, sunny, and most attractive area.

Besides golf, there’s plenty to do in terms of outdoor activities and interests. Jack introduced me to one of his favorite haunts, the Saguaro National Park (east district) located in the southeast part of Tucson. Coming out of wintry Michigan, a desert rookie hiker like me found the park particularly breathtaking. The park encompasses an aging saguaro (the renowned giant cactus) forest at the foot of the Rincon Mountains and offers an extraordinary variety of desert environments and panoramas. And in a bit of serendipity, I happened to strike up a written conversation with a fellow hiker boasting a Cypress Point logo on his pullover. With his voice impaired, this gentleman communicated with me by notepad. The two of us thus engaged in an historic first: two hikers on a desert trail exchanging notes about playing Cypress Point GC. (This is why I’m proud to be an American!)

Since I’ve now mentioned golf, let me report that Tucson is teeming with public, private and resort golf offerings. Local aficionados steered us toward two fine courses on this trip. One day we played Stone Canyon, a private development course designed by Jay Morrish. From a photographic standpoint, Stone Canyon (www.stonecanyon.com) is a stunning layout as it weaves around and through some remarkably rocky and cacti-strewn terrain. Immaculately manicured and painstakingly constructed, it possesses a dazzling collection of holes.

On a more modest scale but equally enjoyable is the venerable and classic-minded Tucson Country Club. Designed by the father-son duo of William F & William P Bell in 1947, Tucson CC is a walker’s delight to play as the greens and next tees are close to one another and the terrain’s generally flat. Known for its conditioning and its large, quick greens, the layout has a variety of strong and sporting holes, many of which are tree-lined. In a classy homage to one of its revered members, the championship tees here are named the Updegraff Golds in honor of Dr. Ed Updegraff, three-time Walker Cup player, many-time Arizona Amateur winner, and the ‘81 USGA Senior Amateur champion.

Orlando, Florida:

I’ve been playing golf in Orlando every January since the PGA Merchandise Show made the move there in the ‘80s. This year our golf group sampled both the new and the old in terms of courses. The new sampling was at the Reunion Resort & Club of Orlando (www.reunionresort.com) which is located only a few exits past and southwest of Walt Disney World. For accommodations, there are smartly designed one- and three-bedroom Resort Villas each with kitchen and big living areas. For golf, you have two very solid and reputable layouts—the Tom Watson Independence Course and the Arnold Palmer Legacy Course. The Watson course has undulating

terrain and large, bold bunkering—especially in the fairways. The Palmer course is the more forgiving of the two but it offers quite the test as well. The overall course conditions and the quality of greens are top-notch. One item for the Reunion suggestion box: scrap the confusing “Independence” and “Legacy” titles for on-course signage (the courses overlap) and instead simply use “Watson” and “Palmer.”

Our appreciation of the old and the venerable was enhanced by our visit to the Mountain Lake golf course in Lake Wales. Not widely known except by those mavens who genuflect at the altar of designer Seth Raynor, Mountain

Camargo (OH) and the remodeled Chicago GC (IL).

In 2003, a renovation project by the noted Brian Silva was completed, deftly restoring many of the original features and signature Raynor holes. As such, the wonderful playing experience at Mountain Lake is compounded by a primer in classic golf course design. There’s the par-three Biarritz fifth hole with its namesake chasm in the middle of the green; the par-four seventh hole named “Road” in tribute to St. Andrews’ 17th hole; the par-three 11th hole named “Redan” for its imposing “kickback” contours in the green complex; and the par-three 17th hole named “Eden”

of pruning and clearing hundreds of trees in and around the course that were lost and/or damaged by the wicked hurricanes that raked through the area. But have no fear, Mountain Lake survived and in fact may have been even improved by Mother Nature’s forced tree-trimming project. Rest assured, Mountain Lake will continue to illuminate the legacy of its most admired architect.

Ireland:

Arise from your slumber, this tale is nearly over. But before it ends, a few comments about some golf on the Emerald Isle, the host country of the 2006 Ryder Cup Matches. Last April, I played some stirring links courses in Ireland’s remote

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Lake is a (very) private club surrounded by a gated housing community that was founded in 1915 and landscaped by the world famous Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. The course was designed in 1916 by Raynor who’s acclaimed for his work with C.B. MacDonald (Yale, National Golf Links, Piping Rock) and also for his own masterful handiwork at such traditional stalwarts as Shoreacres (IL),

inspired by the 11th hole at St. Andrews.

The superintendent of Mountain Lake is GCSSA member Scott Scamehorn (arriving this year from the well-regarded and nearby Southern Dunes) who has the course in excellent shape and with most slippery putting surfaces. Scamehorn also carries on the yeoman work, begun last fall,

northwest region not usually trafficked by Americans and the big golf travel companies.

Considered by some to be Ireland’s ultimate hidden gems, The Links of Ballyliffin—on County Donegal’s Inishowen Peninsula—include The Old Links, which was completed in 1968 by the legendary Irish designer Eddie Hackett and two British

designers; and Glashedy Links designed by Pat Ruddy and Tom Craddock and opened in 1995. The Olds Links is somewhat of a museum piece but it still delivers an invigorating golf experience with its magnificent views of the Atlantic and Glashedy Rock, an Irish Ailsa Craig, that sits two miles off shore.

Ruddy and Craddock meanwhile designed an exceptional test with Glashedy Links. The course winds its way effortlessly through rugged sand dunes and natural valleys, all the while imparting spectacular vistas. The bunkering (many of which are revetted or turf-stacked) is diabolical at times but ingeniously designed and placed. I could ramble on but simply put, Glashedy Links (<http://www.ballyliffingolfclub.com>) is a "must play" links course on anyone's itinerary.

Ruddy's reputation as Ireland's "modern day Eddie Hackett" will only grow as more players discover his links course in County Donegal located at the four-star Rosapenna Hotel and Golf Links (www.rosapenna.ie). Overlooking an Old Tom Morris course (1891) and the gorgeous Sheephaven Bay, Ruddy's Sandy Hills course is nestled within some gigantic and towering dunes. Although the fairways are somewhat constricted and thus penal due to the natural and careful routing through this magnificent landscape, Sandy Hills affords a most

spirited and imaginative round of golf. (It's also quite physically taxing for walkers.) The views alone are priceless. Yet when the turf fully matures and a few tweaks are made, Sandy Hills will someday stand with the best links courses in the land. Kudos to Rosapenna Hotel owner Frank Casey for envisioning this project and hiring Ruddy who's a trusted steward and practitioner of authentic links design.

The quirkiest links course I've ever encountered was a little known and sadly neglected Eddie Hackett course called St. Patrick's in the nearby village of Carrigart and owned by Carrigart Hotel

owner Dermot Walsh (an eccentric and charming character). And get this: if you stay at his hotel, you play St. Pat's free! The only catch is the course is sorely lacking in regular upkeep, maintenance and equipment. Greens are mossy and abysmally slow, fairways are shabby and undefined, and many bunkers don't even have sand. Putting blinders on to these major shortcomings, one still feels lucky to have played here, awed by the majestic sights and moved once again by Hackett's genius buried and now overgrown here like some Celtic ruin. Oddly enough, playing St. Patrick's will make you feel like a millionaire. *MG*

