Golf has inspired inventors who

‘Pop’ Erswell, a father of invention, pioneer in clubs and carts

By Vern Putney

The bottom (water) line of golf

ball retrieval is big bucks.

An estimated 50 million errant

shots fired around the United States

sink into mud, but not to a watery

g rave.

Sophisticated machines, along

with trained divers, rescue most of

these misfired balls — to be sold,

resold and played again, and again,

and again.

In fact, a recycled ball may have

up to 16 lives before fading away on

the driving range.

And what about the course rev-
nue of the past 40 years in golf

carts, for those who like to walk and
don’t like the rental price?

What and where were the humble

beginnings of these moneymakers?
The answers may be wrapped up

in one man — Charles S. “Pop”

Erswell, of Brunswick, Maine.

Erswell was known to have car-

ried in his oversized bag as early as

1919 a wooden stick with an evapo-

rated milk can nailed onto it. That

crude but effective device was his

retriever should a shot stray into a

pond.

Erswell was more widely known

for inventing the golf cart. In the

eyear-to-mid-1900s, 20 years before

the 14-club rule went into effect,

Erswell often jammed more than

20 clubs into his bag. Caddies gave

him a wide berth.

Ex-boxer Erswell counter-
punched. While the winter of 1916

held Maine in its icy grip, Pop

stripped his son’s bicycle, had an

axle forged for the wheels, cut some

half-inch water pipe for a frame and

came up with the first caddie cart.

Erswell thought he might patent

the contraption, but never got

around to it.

When World War I hit and cad-
dies vanished, some smart opera-
tor pushed the carts into mass

production, sold them in gross lots

for about $20 apiece and cleaned

up.

Golf meant more than money to Beecher, Erswell

Lyman Beecher and Charles S.

Erswell had in common a long, full

life and a failure to patent golf car

golf cart inventions that would

have made them millionaires.

Beecher, who in 1935 reportedly

invented a vehicle considered the

forerunner of today’s sleek player

and club carriers, died in

Clearwater, Fla., at age 102.

Erswell, said to have devised in

1916 the club carrier which trans-

ferred the bag from the player’s

shoulder to wheels for easier trans-

port, died in 1968 at age 104.

Beecher’s son, George, said his

father hit upon the idea because his

legs were giving out and he wanted
to prolong his golf days.

His first effort at his home

Biltmore Forest Country Club in

Asheville, N.C., resembled a rick-

shaw and required two caddies to

pull it.

Biltmore is very hilly, and cad-
dies didn’t care for the uphill haul.

They finally balked at such “de-

meaning” (and demanding) duty.

The electrical engineer next tried

a gas-powered cart. This didn’t work

out because, even with a muffler, it

was too noisy.

Finally, Beecher devised a

homemade, three-wheeled car

powered by storage batteries.

George once told the Florida

Times-Union, Jacksonville, Fla.: “He

never patented the cart. He always

said he would rather play golf than

get involved in the rigmarole of

marketing the cart.”

The car served Beecher well until

one day in 1960, when he was in his

mid-80s.

He was on the 9th hole, coming

in to wait out a shower, and some-

how ran the car into a sand trap.
The cart tipped over and Beecher

broke his arm. His doctor advised

him to quit golf, and he did. But he

always was interested in the sport.

He often said there was nothing

he’d rather do than play golf.

When he moved to Florida some

years later, Beecher brought along

his cart. Somehow, it disappeared

and, with it, a valuable bit of golf history.

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Larry Lloyd died in 1985, a young 46, but the inventive genius of the former golf course superintendent at Rancho Canada Golf Club in Carmel, Calif., lives on in the revolutionary Turf Groomer.

While he was doing development work all over at manufacturers around the world, it was often times the superintendent in the field who got the brainstorm that created major innovations. In this case it was Lloyd's brainstorm which the giant Jacobsen Division of Textron Inc. in Racine, Wis., turned into reality when it introduced the turf-grooming reel in 1986.

Benefits of using Turf Groomer have been remarkable, say superintendents and company officials alike.

Kevin Ross, superintendent at Falmouth (Maine) Country Club, said that after a September meeting of a dozen superintendents from around the country, "It seems almost everybody said they were using 6 or 8 guys in their state were. "Now it's even on Jacobsen's fairway units."

"The turf conditioner is designed to virtually eliminate grazing in greens and to increase green speed as much as 25 percent without lowering the height of cut."

"Some superintendents are using them every day very lightly. We make sure each of our greens is groomed once a week," Ross said. "With the Groomer you can maintain good ball speed with a higher cut."

Maintaining higher cutting heights can improve turf health, help lower summer soil temperatures and lessen weed problems. Regular use is said to smooth out green irregularities caused by ball marks, old cup placements, green stable and sand from traps.

Other techniques such as verticating, top dressing and drying out the green can be reduced or eliminated.

"Lloyd's mechanical talent was evident early. The Napa Valley native took his first golf course job at age 18 on the famous Silverado Golf Club in Napa. In 1962, at age 22, he became superintendent of Pajaro Valley Golf Club in Watsonville. Lloyd switched to Nick Lombardo's Del Monte Country Club as superintendent in 1965. When Lombardo acquired the Fig Garden Golf Course in Fresno, Lloyd added superintendent responsibilities there."

"Pajaro Valley Golf Club was added to the Lombardo chain as a lease property. Lloyd oversaw operations there. He installed his Dad, Paul Sr., as course super, and rode herd on his work until the senior Lloyd became comfortable with the job."

"Next project was a new course in Carmel Valley, now known as Rancho Canada. While course superintendent there, he became club vice president and board of directors member, posts he held at the time of his passing."

"Lloyd, then 32, as the contractor oversaw the entire operation. Building was started in February 1980 and the 36-hole layout, designed by golf course architect Robert Dean Putnam of Fresno, opened for play in April 1970."

"The West course is regarded as the third-toughest course on the Peninsula, measuring 6,808 yards with a par rating of 72.3."

"To build the greens and save money, a local sand found in an old sand mine in the middle of the course was used exclusively, without amendment or drainage. The cover was Seaside bentgrass."

"Of the 300,000 square feet of greens surface, two greens were 22,000-square-foot monsters."

"You have to be unique," understated Lloyd.

"From this project may have sprung Lloyd's intense interest in greens and efforts at improvement. A skilled mechanic, he maintained his Lomborghini and Corvette sports cars in the splendidly stocked garage of his home in Pacific Grove."

"Constant tinkering and experimenting, he devised the mower that Lombardo declared would revolutionize care and maintenance of putting surfaces. Lloyd perhaps would not have made such a broad statement, but the product of his fruitful mind has done just that."

"Lloyd's breakthrough features a precise machine front roller of closely spaced grooves with special beveled edges that momentarily lift horizontally growing grasses. Powered knives rotate through the slots in the roller to immediately slice the horizontal grass blades, stems and surface runners before they spring back down. Jacobsen Greens King mower a very short roller base (distance from front to rear roller)."

"The greens conditioner has been incorporated into the mower head with only a 14-percent increase in rollerbase. This close-coupled reel assembly follows critical contours of grooves for an excellent, uniform finish."

"From a golfer's point of view, you want uniformity between greens," said Bill Kinzer, Jacobsen product development manager.

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Yard-of-Green ad

Larry and Barbara Lloyd before the death of the inventive superintendent.

By Vern Putney

正确该低酸钾土壤不均衡在一次简单应用。Country Club的8-4-24的高钾酸盐比例帮助改善冬季抗寒性，疾病抵抗性和干旱耐受性在您的草坪。100%硫酸钾和1.6单位W.I.N.,这种同质性肥料提供一个完整的喂食和是可用分别在草坪和球道尺寸。从来源的优质草坪产品——您本地Lebanon分销商。

"The Better Choice For Better Turf"

"The Better Choice For Better Turf"

纠正低酸钾土壤不均衡在一次简单应用。Country Club的8-4-24的高钾酸盐比例帮助改善冬季抗寒性，疾病抵抗性和干旱耐受性在您的草坪。100%硫酸钾和1.6单位W.I.N.,这种同质性肥料提供一个完整的喂食和是可用分别在草坪和球道尺寸。从来源的优质草坪产品——您本地Lebanon分销商。
Inventions help superintendents' jobs and improve golf course operations

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One by one, the implacable Rules Committee caught up with Erswell's clubs. Finally, he was forced to adopt the ordinary woods and irons. Still, he rang in a bronze head reversible club on which the weight could be changed from bottom to top, a ball joint putter adjustable to any position, a lofting putter and a brass Schenectady gadget that was introduced in the spring of 1903 and declared illegal that fall.

The furor raged anew the next day, when Erswell lined up a five-footer, then chose for the shot a putter that looked like an oversized billiard cue. Bridging his left hand exactly as though he were trying for the eight-ball in a side pocket, Erswell sank the putt. His opponent swooned.

Erswell had gone too far. The committee granted that the regulations did not clearly define the shape of a putter's blade, and admitted that the croquet and billiard strokes were accomplished in one "continuous stroke motion," as demanded by the rules. "However," said the perspiring chairman as he wrestled with one of the greatest crises in the history of golf, "we are bound by certain traditions and customs and these. Mr. Erswell, you have violated.

Therefore, you will desist from using these outlandish clubs and bizarre strokes in matches here." Erswell recanted gleefully that Pinehurst was rocked to its staid foundations when the wildcat Erswell club and the unorthodox strokes it sanctioned was heard. However, he pricked the rules makers in rapid succession with an accentuated goose-neck job, a concaved blade and a club whose face was undercut to impart overspin on the ball. One by one, the implacable Rules Committee caught up with Erswell's clubs. Finally, he was forced to adopt the ordinary woods and irons. Still, he rang in a bronze head reversible club on which the weight could be changed from bottom to top, a ball joint putter adjustable to any position, a lofting putter and a brass Schenectady gadget that was introduced in the spring of 1903 and declared illegal that fall.

Foresaw that good steel shafts would replace the hickory handles, and was the first to adopt them in Maine. Erswell's ground down the early stiff metal shafts at certain places to obtain more whip. Some of his test clubs became standard with the manufacturers.

ERSWELL'S BEGINNINGS

Erswell's introduction to golf came about 1897. He worked as a train dispatcher and telegrapher in Ohio and Wyoming, and played baseball during the summer. While playing ball in Cheyenne, he saw a six-hole course not far from the ballfield, apparently laid out on a buffalo range. The ground was cupped and rough. "I used to see men walking around and swinging sticks. Every once in a while there would be a puff of dust and they would start walking again. We found out the men were hitting at a little ball. We ballplayers thought those guys were crazy. Most were Scotsmen and Englishmen."

Gov. George W. Baxter of Wyoming one day said: "Charlie, I should think you would try golf. You ought to be good at it." Erswell's first attempt at the "gutta percha"
i handicked golfer may have led to cart

Dr. J.W. Jervey was part patient, part guinea pig and all golfer in a 1914 tournament match at Sans Souci Country Club in Greenville, S.C., which may have given birth to the now-streamlined golf cart.

"Nowadays it would be called "The Great Caper.""

The June 1914 issue of "The American Golfer" included a picture of Jervey in a cart similar to that used to transport baggage at railroad stations.

Wheeled in the push cart, he was able to play for the Caper's Cup against fellow scratch player John Millar. Immediately after the qualifying round, Jervey, who had qualified in the first flight, developed a serious lameness. John W. Arrington, another scratch player, suggested Jervey be the champion to play the match in place of his opponent.

Jervey liked the idea. George W. Brunson joined Arrington in providing the push cart "muscle."

While Jervey may have made history, he lost the match, 4 and 3.

Lloyd's groomer means equal greens

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"You want approximately the same surface and speed on all 18 greens. And you don't want to have to fight grain. Our experience is that regular use of a grooming reel will help superintendents meet these goals."

"It gets the grain out," said Carl Edmonson, superintendent at Arrowhead Country Club in Montgomery, Ala. "A verticutter just won't get it like the Groomer will."

Jack Barton, superintendent at Uniontown Country Club near Pittsburgh, Pa., impressed with putting surface consistency. "With the groomer, I can get any speed out of the green I desire without doublecutting, and I can make the ball break at the same spot every time."

Some superintendents have gone from below a one-eighth inch cut to 3/16th of an inch with no appreciable loss of speed. This gives them the desired uniformity and smoothness and more plant, more leaf surface and deeper roots for those plants to survive.

Lloyd's widow, Barbara, twice was Rancho Canada women's champion. She still scores in the low 90's. They was a warm love story. They met when Larry was 9, she 8. They were married when Barbara was "Sweet 16." Children are Rickie, Julie and Lauri.

The nickname stuck.