

Julian Curtiss Passes

Retired Spalding Official, Foremost Pioneer
and Promoter of American Golf, Dies.

★ JULIAN WHEELER CURTISS died February 17 at the Greenwich (Conn.) hospital, aged 85. Up to a few months ago he had been in amazingly vigorous condition for his years.

With the passing of Julian Curtiss you can close the first volume of American golf history. He, far more than any other man, made golf an American game. Chances are that, had it not been for genial Uncle Julian, his genius and his robust, supremely fine character, golf in this country might have now been just about as cricket is.

He was a big man, in industry, banking, government, social and sports affairs, but with all he had to do he made it one of his foremost responsibilities to see that the young game of golf provided fun for Americans and jobs for a choice lot of pro importations. And when you talk about what a fine bunch of men those veteran pros are (or were) you pay tribute to the judgment of Julian Curtiss. He set the style of the sort of a fellow he'd O.K. for a job, and in golf's earlier days the Curtiss O.K. meant a fellow was hired as soon as he got off the boat.

Julian Curtiss was a member of two Yale university crews before he graduated in 1879. From 1918 to 1940 he refereed the foremost crew races in the east. From 1902 to 1911 he was graduate coach of the Yale crew, turning out five championship outfits. He designed the first basketball in association with Dr. James Naismith, inventor of the game. In almost every popular sport played in the United States Julian Curtiss figured as a very important contributor to its progress.

He was a member of the Greenwich Board of Education for 24 years. They're going to name a school, to be built after the war, for him. The kids of that school, when they copy Julian Curtiss, are going to enjoy life and make life enjoyable.

He was president of the Greenwich YMCA for eight years, president of the Yale club of New York for two years, an arbitrator for the New York Central railroad and its Shop Craft employees, for nine years president of the Greenwich CC, a director of many national and local organizations, and in many other activities took a leading part in doing a great job for his country, his community and his fellow men.

Julian Curtiss was born in Fairfield, Conn., and was graduated from Hopkins Grammar school at New Haven, and the Brooklyn (N. Y.) Polytechnic school, before he entered Yale. He joined the



JULIAN WHEELER CURTISS

Spalding organization in 1880. Five years later he became its secretary. In 1920 he was elected president; in 1933 he became chairman of the board. He retired from active duty in 1938 but came into the office after that fairly often to keep in touch with things, and because, despite his mileage, he found that he had too much pep to sit on the bench.

Julian Curtiss became the most vigorous and effective apostle of American golf because he was a man who liked to see everybody have a good time and didn't want to miss any of it himself.

He went to London in the spring of 1892 to buy leather for footballs to be made in this country. He got in with a few golf enthusiasts who were congenial souls, and Uncle Julian, being one himself, ordered enough golf clubs and balls to alarm A. G. Spalding when the shipment finally arrived. By that time Curtiss had forgotten ordering the equipment but remembered that he'd met some grand characters who liked golf. If they liked it, so young Curtiss thought, other merry persons on this side of the Atlantic also might find the game a welcome addition to the American way of living.

Julian Curtiss, his brother Edwin B., and Frank Freeman laid out a five-hole course on the neighboring lawns in Green-

(Continued on Page 39)

JULIAN WHEELER CURTISS

(Continued from Page 15)

wich, Conn. From this demonstration layout and the few struggling clubs then in existence came a demand that quickly exhausted the golf stock Mr. Spalding thought Curtiss had over-bought. In 1894 Curtiss got the company to make its own golf clubs, and in 1898 the molding of gutta-percha balls was begun at the company's Chicopee Falls, Mass., factory.

Curtiss brought Harry Vardon over in 1900 to promote the sale of the Vardon Flyer. Vardon then had won three of his six British Open championships. The Vardon gutty ball didn't rate with the new wound ball Coburn Haskell had invented, so in 1903 Spalding began making their Wizard, using the Haskell patent.

Shortly after 1903, at Curtiss' urging, Spalding's bought out the Staughton Rubber Co. and with it the balata cover. Then in 1908 Curtiss got the revolutionary Spalding dimple marking, buying the basic idea from an Englishman.

Further impetus was given golf by Curtis when he added the Spalding Golf Guide to the Spalding Athletic library in 1893 and provided inquisitive citizens with an instruction manual of the game. Whenever some inquiry came from the hinterland showing an interest in golf Curtiss promptly saw to it that the inquirers were told to lay out a course, and if they wanted to spend travel expenses and a small fee he'd see to it that they got the services of some recently imported Scotsman who would design them a course and write home for Sandy or Jock to

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hurry over, there was a job as clubmaker, pro, greenkeeper, etc., in the making.

Curtiss also was active in getting intercollegiate golf started at Yale. John Reid, Jr., son of one of the Apple Tree Gang, and grand and still active veteran Bob Pryde, were among Yale's golf pioneers.

The Vardon tour in 1900 which Curtiss arranged, began exhibition and tournament golf in this country. Harry opened with a match Feb. 12, 1900, at Laurence Harbor, N. J., then played several matches in Florida. He played his way back north in matches at such courses as then existed, then played in the north, east and central and western states and Canada, completing his tour at Denver, Dec. 8. Learning of the business Vardon was doing J. H. Taylor came over. Taylor went home to win the 1900 British Open, but returned to compete with Vardon in the U. S. Open at the Chicago GC, the championship being won by Vardon at 313. Taylor finished second.

Julian Curtiss' enthusiasm pushed golf through its hard going in early days. One of his early triumphs as a missionary of the game in this country was that of getting A. G. Spalding to install a 9-hole course on his estate at Seabright a few years after Mr. Spalding had been shocked by Curtiss purchase of a seemingly excessive supply of golf equipment.

By everybody in golf who knew him, players both pro and amateur, men in every sporting goods business and prominent in many sports, and by the men and women who worked for him and with him Julian Curtiss was beloved and is mourned. He was a peer of all gentlemen sportsmen.

He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Mary Case Curtiss, and two daughters, Mrs. Jean B. Gibbons and Mrs. Mary Louise Pease.

LETTER FROM HOME

(Continued from Page 14)

able me to hire help and try to keep the same standards of service. The Club Cleaning list has increased 40 per cent, which has helped to offset the lack of sales of clubs, bags, and accessories.

"Regarding Tournaments: The season started fairly normal with Rusty McIlwaine and Luke Urban winning the opening Member-Guest — 88-17-71. Directly after the draw was made for the Spring Handicap, the pleasure driving ban was enforced, thus accounting for the completion of this event only a week ago. There were no major events promoted again until the release of the ban. Then the schedule was really active. (Here was inserted a summary of the season's events results.)

"Next Wednesday night will climax the

season when the gang will all pitch in and make a real home-made clam-boil. Johnny Holden will supervise the cooking which includes home-made apple pies.

"A few highlights of the season were: On opening day, April 19, P. R. Ward scored a hole in one at No. 8. The No. 1 Sucker Amateur (your Pro) had a lucky deuce at the 3rd on the same opening day. Aug. 15, John Watling, new member, scored an eagle at No. 6. R. Pluta scored an eagle 3 at the 531 yard No. 2; he was home in two. R. Pluta, J. Watling, J. F. Whelly, D. F. Howarth, all broke 80 for their first time. Dr. D. F. "Great" Gallery also broke it wide open with a 75. Aug. 22nd, H. Schofield established a new nine-hole record of 31, two shots better than previous record of 33. His back nine was 38 for a 69.

"In the Women's major events: (Here was inserted a summary of the events).

"During September, when the gas ban was lifted, F. W. Squire, who now owns a boatyard, invited 11 of us to join him on a boat trip to Warwick. Had a marvelous time, though Warwick Country Club was practically closed up and the course has slipped, due to conditions. Played 18 holes; enjoyed the roughest trip yet; couldn't even play poker on the boat (too rough); played poker on the pier when we got back; finished up bowling at 1 a. m. Finis—Higgins is in the dog house.

"The Club Honor Roll Plaque for the members in the Service now numbers 27 and their names are as follows: (List was inserted).

"This about concludes the resume. I can't help but mention the backbone of the club before signing off. 'Old Man' Stafford is still steering the club over and around every brick wall that comes in his path and his interest and untiring efforts are largely responsible for our survival. He is well supported by fellows like W. H. Moran, A. L. Berryman, A. E. Mobouck, and all of his committees.

"In closing, I am sure that the gang is all with me in wishing a speedy end to this war so that we can all be together again, and in the meantime, you can be sure that we will be doing all that we can to keep everything as you remembered it, so that when that grand reunion happens, you will be able to duplicate all of those pleasant memories that you have had of your club.

"Good luck, and best wishes for a successful and early return.

Sincerely yours,

MARTY HIGGINS.

"P. S.: The wife and Marty, Jr., join me in the above wishes. Marty is now 1½ years old, and if you don't hurry up and get this war over with, well, you've got a challenge."