

Robert White, Pro Pioneer, Dies in Myrtle Beach, S. C.

Was First PGA President

Robert White, 85, who died at his home in Myrtle Beach, S. C., in mid-July, was first pres. of the PGA, having served from 1917 through 1919. Bob, as he was familiarly known to thousands of persons connected with golf, came to the U. S. from Scotland in 1894 and the following year, took a job as professional at Myopia CC, Hamilton, Mass., which at that time had a newly completed 9-hole course. There were about 12 or 15 other native Scots serving at various clubs in this country when Bob took the Myopia job.

He left this position to go to the Cincinnati CC where he enlarged the 9-hole course to 18. Thereafter, he went to Louisville where he laid out the first 9 of Louisville CC, supervised its construction and stayed on as pro. While at Myopia, Bob had doubled as an architect, taking time out on Sunday afternoons to go to neighboring cities where he supervised the planning of courses. His fee for laying out a course usually was \$25 plus expenses. He designed the first 9 of Salem (Mass.) CC for an unexplained, substandard fee of \$10.39 and several holes at this club remain almost exactly as he laid them out.

In 1902, Bob came to Ravisloe CC, near Chicago, where he was to remain for 12 years and it was here that the seeds of the professional golfers' organization were planted. In 1907, Bob was having lunch in downtown Chicago with a handful of pros in the area and a decision was made to organize a pro group. Meetings were held regularly thereafter and within a short time the organization was holding monthly tournaments between April and Sept.

Studies at Wisconsin

Never a fellow to sit around, Bob decided to add to his knowledge as a golf instructor and course designer by attending the University of Wisconsin's "Farmers' School" where he could learn about grass. He pursued this knowledge from 1902 until 1913, possibly qualifying as U. S. golf's first turf student and certainly as its first pro-supt. Ravisloe, at

any rate, was kept in remarkably beautiful shape.

Interested in Maintenance

In 1914, C. C. Worthington, one of the men who pioneered the mechanization of course maintenance, lured Bob to Shawnee-on-Delaware, Pa. to serve as pro-supt. The following year, Bob went to Wykagyl, where he stayed in a similar capacity until his retirement in 1932. However, at Wykagyl, he became interested in the maintenance aspect of the game, hiring assistants to run the pro shop so he could devote more time to supervising the upkeep of 11 other clubs in Westchester county.

More important to the thousands of men who, today, work as professionals is that while Bob White was at Wykagyl he was in on the founding of the national PGA. This, too, was the result of a lunch, now historic, in which Rodman Wanamaker, Herbert Strong and White got the organization started. Bob, as mentioned before, was its first pres., and Strong, then pro at Inwood and later a noted architect, was the first secy. Dues were \$10 a year. The PGA's early offices were located at 34th and 5th ave. in New York. Percy Pulver, New York sports writer and publicist, was a frequent visitor here and eventually launched a magazine for the organization.

Full Time Architect and Builder

After resigning from Wykagyl, Bob White devoted all his time to designing, maintaining and building courses. In 1927, when he went to Myrtle Beach to lay out a course, he made his first investment in some land there. After this, he continued to buy properties and real estate in and around Myrtle Beach and at his death was considered one of the wealthier residents of that resort community.

Besides pioneering as a pro, supt. and architect, Bob indirectly had something to do with the establishment of MacGregor Golf Co. Like all early pros, he was a clubmaker. This work kept him so busy that he started to look around for a company that could fashion clubheads for him. Finally, he convinced the owners of the Dayton (O.) Last Works that they could handle this detail for him and other professionals. This led to the establishment of Crawford, MacGregor and Canby, which specialized in clubmaking, and eventually the MacGregor company.

Mr. White is survived by a son, Robert D., and two daughters, Mrs. Margaret Myers and Mrs. Donald Wallace.