

One man's way of expressing himself

by Ron Morris, Managing Editor

"He came up here about 12 years ago and bought this valley. He likes to golf and has always dreamed about building a golf course. Now, he's not an architect or anything else. He didn't know the first thing about it. But he just had this tremendous strong desire to come up here and do this."

Dick Bailey, now with Jacklin Seed Company, introduced me to Elkhorn Valley Golf Course, built, owned, managed and maintained by Don Cutler. Setting high in the Cascades near Mehama, Oregon, Elkhorn Valley is an experience in scenic golfing. It is also a golfer's golf course.

Being a golfer, rather than an architect, Cutler designed his course with a golf club and a bucket of balls. He hit the balls and built the holes. (That's not the recommended procedure unless you have 12 years and lots of support.)

Cutler and his friend, Austin Locke, did all of the construction work. Locke did the grading with a Caterpillar and Cutler hauled soil in an old Uke named the "Wee Bonnie Heather". Locke's mechanical ability keeps the course going and he will be in the seat again when construction begins on the back nine, next year.

Natural and man-made hazards

make it rough to play a round without losing a ball. The hazard rules on the scorecard read:

CANYON — On Nos. 6 & 8, Meadow on left of No. 9 considered lost ball. Penalty stroke and distance.

LAKES — Nos. 3 & 5 — water-hazard — keep water between you and the hole. One stroke penalty.

LATERAL HAZARDS — Nos. 2, 4 & 8 — Drop within two club lengths of point of entry. One stroke penalty.

FENCE — On holes No. 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 — Lay away two club lengths, no closer to the hole. No penalty.

An 8-foot high fence had to be put up around the entire course. Shortly after it was first seeded, in 1975, a herd of elk came down to play and did the "elk stomp" through the entire course. Much work had to be done to return the smoothness of the greens, fairways and tees.

The fairways were seeded to a mixture of 1/3 ryegrass (Manhattan), 1/3 Kentucky bluegrass (1/3 Galaxy 1/3 Fylking, 1/3 Merion), and 1/3 fescue (Jamestown and Fortress). Bailey designed the mixtures.

The greens are seeded with Penncross bentgrass and the tees are primarily ryegrass. The results are an

example of what good grass seed can do. The course is a picture of dense, healthy turf. Number four green was the backdrop for the widely exposed Penncross advertisement with the bird flying across a Penncross green.

Cutler is extremely pleased with the ryegrass on the tees. "You can take a slice out and it just comes right back. It's fantastic!"

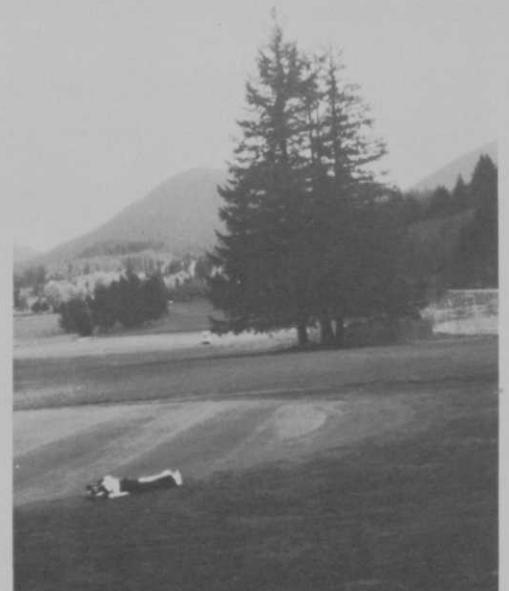
While the course is only nine holes right now, Cutler has provided three tees for each hole. Each requires a



The "Real Mr. Cutler" as his T-shirt states, and golfing partner Dick Frank talk with Dick Bailey about a seed mixture for the back nine.



Cutler doesn't mow roughs. "If a golfer hits in there, he's in trouble," he says. The 8-foot fence keeps the elk out and probably cuts down on vandalism.



This is number four where the Penncross ad was shot. Cutler moved most of these trees in himself, with a tree spade.



This is a high ground view of number one and number nine. The island in the upper bend of the Little North Fork will be the site of number 15.



This Uke hauled all the soil that was moved during course construction. It is named after Don's wife, whose encouragement helped him to realize his dream of building a golf course.

The canyon separating the tee and green on number six is home for many golf balls. The golfer on the tee has just sent it another resident.

Cutler has built his house in the middle of the course. Everywhere you look, the mountains provide a beautiful backdrop. Part of the main irrigation pond is in the foreground. This is the one Don will enlarge.



different approach shot. He has avoided labeling the tees, allowing a golfer to play whichever he thinks he can. They do increase in difficulty.

The Cutler family is the maintenance crew. Son Bruce mows greens, daughter Liz mows tees, mom Bonnie runs the pro shop, and Don mows fairways.

Because of the climate, the course can receive 100 inches of rain a year, mowing becomes a problem. Bruce will double-cut the greens whenever he can. He mows with a Triplex with brushes. He spikes the greens once a month and verti-cuts every two weeks. Still, thatch is becoming a problem. The course is in its third full year and approximately an inch has accumulated. Cutler has purchased a Ryan topdresser and will begin topdressing with sand this year.

No drainage was installed during construction. However, there is a need and Cutler will install lines under four, five, seven and possibly number one. He plans on putting lines under each green on the back nine, during construction.

Most of the rain comes during the winter. The course is irrigated with a Rainbird automatic system during approximately three to four months of the summer. Cutler built a 3- to 4-acre holding pond approximately 10 feet deep, but it does not provide enough water. He has got water rights to the Little North Fork which flows into the Santiam River and will have plenty of water this year.

The Little North Fork runs directly

This is the site of the back nine. While Cutler had to move trees in for the front nine, here he has to take them out.



behind the front nine and will be instrumental in designing the back nine. Cutler plans one hole on an island that the river flows around.

Native *Poa trivialis* is becoming a problem, showing up in the fairways and contrasting with the dark green mixture. Bailey suggested to Cutler that he take care of that and what little *Poa annua* there is with Roundup.

Bruce follows a Scotts program on the greens. He fertilizes lightly once a month, alternating between straight nitrogen and a 27-10-5 analysis. He also uses Scotts fungicides for disease. Snow mold is a problem, although the area receives little snow. The course was frozen solid for three months this year, a rare occurrence in that part of the country. Don had just talked to a fellow living in the area since 1910 who said it was the worst winter as far as freezing, that he had seen.

The course is closed from the first of November through mid-March. However, Cutler plans to sell lots this winter to finance construction of a new clubhouse, and the course will stay open through the winter when the new residents move in.

Don still has his work cut out for him. He has one last project he wants to finish on the front nine before he begins on the back. He is going to put an L-shaped island in one of the ponds and enlarge it. When the course is finished, what is now number nine will be number one, and number eight will be nine. The new clubhouse will set on a knoll overlooking the back nine.

As Dick Bailey puts it: "It's amazing. Most people get tons of equipment, get somebody to design it, and hire a construction firm. This guy just goes out and builds it himself."

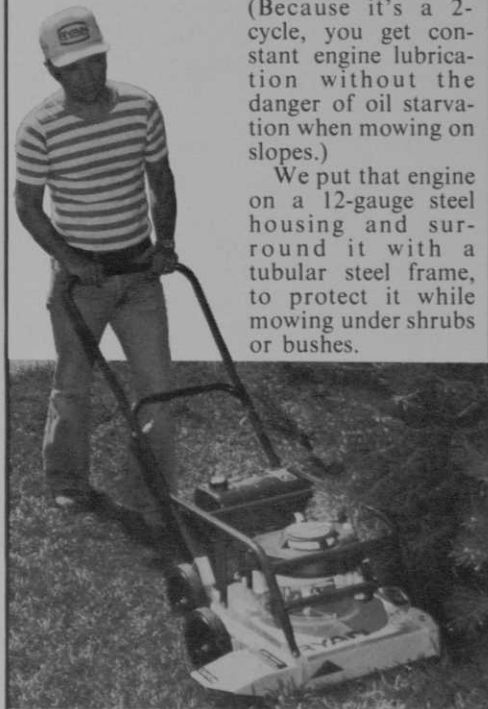
Cutler comments "This is my way of expressing myself."

You may retire before our mower does.

That's the way we build the Ryan Commercial Mower: to last.

We use a rugged, 2-cycle engine with electronic ignition and a quick-response governor that keeps the power coming even in tall or thick grass. (Because it's a 2-cycle, you get constant engine lubrication without the danger of oil starvation when mowing on slopes.)

We put that engine on a 12-gauge steel housing and surround it with a tubular steel frame, to protect it while mowing under shrubs or bushes.



We give it Ryan's modular parts replacement system. So if a breakdown does occur, you can have the Commercial Mower back on your course quickly.

But we also make it easy to use. With a 1.25-gallon fuel tank for longer running, five adjustable cutting heights, a two-speed throttle and fold-down handle for storage or transportation.



Together, these features make the Commercial Mower the right tool for professional turf maintenance. Ask your Ryan dealer today about the Ryan Commercial Mower. The one machine that may outlast even the most dependable worker on your course: you.

Commercial Mower.

Easy to use, built to last.



RYAN
TURF-CARE
EQUIPMENT

OMC Lincoln, a Division of
Outboard Marine Corporation
6724 Cushman
P.O. Box 82409
Lincoln, NB 68501

79-CUR-1

Circle 112 on free information card