

FEATURE ARTICLE I

Tim Anderson, CGCS, Naperville Country Club



Charles Bartlett – A Historical Tribute

The year is 1924. It is a leap year. The “Golden Age of Golf” is at its height. Many of the game’s greatest architects are plying their trade throughout the United States. Among them: Ross, Mackenzie, Tillinghast, and Raynor. In sports, the Washington Senators defeat the New York Giants (4-3) in the World Series. The Kansas City Monarchs defeat Hilldale in the first official Negro League World Series. The Cleveland Bulldogs win the National Football League Title. The Montreal Canadiens win the Stanley Cup. Paris, France, hosts the 1924 Summer Olympics, and the first ever Winter Olympic Games take place in Chamonix, France.

The world is a rapidly changing place. The first cross country flight from Long Island to San Francisco takes place, lasting 21 hours and 48 minutes. Television is in its infancy. The first public demonstration of TV is performed when Charles Jenkins transmits moving silhouette images from Washington, D. C., to the Anacostia Naval Base. The images are transferred via telephone wires. The term “television” is coined by Constantin Perskyi at the First International Electricity Congress held in Paris. Astrologer Edwin Hubble announces the existence of other galaxies outside of the Milky Way. A fledging company called IBM is founded. New York City hosts the first Thanksgiving Day Parade. Bootleggers in the U.S. seek superior fire power as they adopt the Thompson sub-machine gun as their weapon of choice.

On the political scene, Calvin Coolidge is elected the 30th President of the United States, after filling out the balance of the Presidential term vacated by Warren Harding, who died while in office. Vladimir Lenin dies and is buried in Moscow’s Red Square. Three days later the city of St. Petersburg is renamed Leningrad (the name St. Petersburg is returned to the city in 1991). The



Charles Bartlett

death of Lenin marks the end of Leninism and the beginning of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. Stalin goes on to rule the Soviet Union from 1922 until 1953. J. Edgar Hoover is appointed as the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. And a 35-year-old Adolf Hitler begins to write *Mein Kampf* while imprisoned in a Bavarian jail.

In the world of golf, neither the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (originally founded as the National Association of Greenkeepers of America, NAGA) nor the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents (MAGCS) exists. Both associations come into existence over the next two years. The USGA rules that steel shafted clubs are legal. Bobby Jones wins his first U.S. Amateur title. Walter Hagen wins the first of

four consecutive PGA Championship titles. Cyril Walker is victorious at the U.S. Open.

Many significant events occurred in the year 1924, so it is easy to see how something as trivial as a 19-year-old teenager being hired as a staff member for the *Chicago Tribune* could be so easily overlooked.

(continued on page 9)

Charles Bartlett

Charles Bartlett was born on April 27, 1905. He lived with his parents on Chicago's south side and graduated from St. Ignatius High School. He joined the staff of the *Chicago Tribune* on August 18, 1924, shortly after his graduation. Charles' life-long association with sports began when he was a youngster selling hot dogs at White Sox games. He had an interest in boxing, and, for a brief period of time, was the editor of a boxing publication called the *Chicago Gong*. Bartlett also worked as a spotter for WGN radio covering football events, The Kentucky Derby, and The Indy 500.

When he joined the *Tribune*, Bartlett started out in the public service office. In 1926 he became editor of the Tribune Company Magazine titled *The Trib*. From 1927 to 1928 Bartlett compiled the first Chicago Tribune *Sports Almanac*. In 1928 he was promoted to the position of editorial reporter and became a copy reader for the sports department. It wasn't until 1931 that Charles Bartlett landed his first regular assignment as golf editor of the *Chicago Tribune*. His regular column, titled "The Locker Room," appeared in the Sunday edition of the *Tribune* and was long identified as one of the best read columns in the paper. In 1937 (at the age of 36) Bartlett married his wife Catherine. They had two children, Michael and Peter. Bartlett held the position of golf editor for the *Chicago Tribune* for 36 years. He died of a heart attack on November 6, 1967, at the age of 62.

His Legacy

At first blush this might not appear to be the story of an individual who had a lasting impact on the history of golf in the United States, but as we dig deeper, the connection between Charles Bartlett and the game that he loved so much becomes very clear. Bartlett was a co-founder of the Chicago Tribune Golf School. The inaugural event was held on May 22, 1933. The first event of its kind, 27 local Chicago golf courses banded together to provide free golf instruction to men, women, and children of all ages. Fifteen thousand participants attended the first school. The Tribune Golf School evolved into an annual event that, at that time, was the largest program in the country promoting instruction in the game of golf. The program was soon copied in major cities around the United States. The junior golf programs of today owe their inspiration to the blueprint provided by the Tribune program.

On August 25, 1946, Charles Bartlett was at the Portland Golf Club reporting on the PGA Championship. Ben Hogan won the event that year. At the conclusion of the tournament, Charles Bartlett met up with Russ Newland, editor for the Associated Press, and George Bertz, sports editor for the *Oregon Journal*. The three men gathered at an empty ice cream stand located on the course grounds and formed the Golf Writers Association of America (GWAA). A plaque commemorating

this event is still displayed next to the 18th green at the Portland Golf Club. Bartlett was appointed Secretary of the newly formed GWAA, a position that he held for 21 years, until the time of his death.

Bartlett covered 32 consecutive Masters from 1935 till 1967. His legacy is so entwined with the Masters Tournament and the Golf Writers Association of America that the press room at Augusta National bears his name. In 1961 Bartlett won the Brunswick-MacGregor Golf Writers Competition for his story on Jerry Barber's victory over Don January in the National Professional Championship. The same year he was awarded third place in the Associated Press Writers Competition for a story he did on Walter Hagen. Bartlett's reputation for incorporating accuracy and detail in his writing was unparalleled.

On February 27, 1968, The Golf Writers Association of America paid its highest tribute to Bartlett when they posthumously awarded him the William D. Richardson Trophy. Over 800 sports figures of the day were on hand when Michael Bartlett accepted the award on behalf of his father. The Richardson Trophy was instituted by the Golf Writers Association in 1947. The annual award is given in memory of Bill Richardson, golf editor of the *New York Times*. It is presented to individuals for outstanding contributions to the game of golf. As the 21st recipient of the award, Bartlett joined the likes of Chick Evans and Bobby Jones.

In 1970 the GWAA sought to further solidify Bartlett's legacy and so established the Charles Bartlett Award. This annual award is given by the Golf Writers Association to an active player in recognition of his outstanding humanitarian effort

and charitable work. The first Charles Bartlett Award presented by the GWAA was given to Billy Casper. Since 1970 additional Bartlett Award Winners have included: Tiger Woods, Greg Norman, Lee Trevino, Chi Chi Rodriguez, and Arnold Palmer to name a few.

Based on the strength of his contributions to the game of golf, Charles Bartlett was inducted into the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame in 1989.

Proponent of the Golf Course Superintendent

During an era before television, at a time when the internet, websites, blogs, pod-casts, and cell phones did not exist, the print media served not only as a primary means of communication, but also of education. From the beginning Charles Bartlett was an advocate of the golf course superintendent. Today our industry is faced with the challenge of growing the game of golf. The GCSAA monitors the role of the golf course superintendent as it relates to the enjoyment of the game of golf, the superintendents' role in contributing to the economic vitality of the facility, and the superintendents' role as an authority on issues

(continued on page 10)



For all that Bartlett did for golf, he never placed energy or effort in growing his own game.

related to course maintenance. Bartlett understood these principals 75 years ago. Tens of thousands of golfers were introduced to the game through the Tribune Golf School program. Bartlett routinely attended monthly MAGCS meetings to visit with superintendents and to gain insight into our profession. He frequently used his column as a platform that gave Chicago area superintendents a means to communicate with the golfing public. Bartlett went out of his way to recognize golf course superintendents as a group of individuals integral to the success of the golf course and to the enjoyment of the game.

In an article dated August 4, 1931, (just a couple of months after being promoted to the position of golf editor) Bartlett reported on an emergency meeting held by local green keepers to compare notes on a recent epidemic that had caused extensive damage to putting surfaces throughout the Chicago area. The problem was traced back to a heavy rain storm on June 28, followed by 10 days of extreme heat. The effect of the damage was apparent almost overnight. The greens hit hardest were the "mixed" Poa annua type greens. The "solid" bentgrass type greens fared better. The discussion also focused on the cost associated with controlling the epidemic and the financial strain that it would place on operating budgets. During the meeting one superintendent was quoted as making the following recommendation, "I would like to suggest that the subject of golf course maintenance needs a scientific study close at hand, a study of condition under our own central western climate and soil conditions. What better equipped organization is there for undertaking this work than the agriculture experimental station of the University of Illinois?"

In an article dated April 28, 1932, Bartlett reported on the Midwest Turf Garden located on the private course at the estate of Albert D. Lasker. The turf plots (reported to have been located just west of the first tee) were under the direction of the USGA Green Section. Planted in 1929, they provided research information on cutting height, irrigation requirements, fertility practices, reaction to exposure from sun and wind, treatments for Brown Patch, Dollar Spot, and Pythium. New for 1932 was an experiment that incorporated peat and sand mixed together for a "looser" green construction foundation. Later, in September of that same year, Bartlett wrote a follow-up article on the Midwest Turf Plots. During a fall golf and education field day that was held at the Lasker course, the USGA made an unexpected announcement that it would be closing the Lasker turf plots as well as the turf plots located at Arlington, in Washington D.C. Budget constraints were cited as the reason for the decision. At the time these turf plots were the principal source for information related to turfgrass research in the United States. Bartlett reported that those in attendance vowed to keep the Midwest Turf Garden solvent even if it meant providing subsidies from local clubs and association to achieve the goal.

In the spring of 1949 Bartlett published a letter that he had sent to his long time friend, and founder of the Augusta National Golf Club, Bobby Jones. In the letter Bartlett blasted the Masters for their ever increasing fees. He recalled the "early days" when the press sleeping quarters were on the porch outside the clubhouse. He classified the then current hotel rates of \$8.00 per day (including meals) as exorbitant.

In January of 1959 Bartlett reported on the 30th National Turfgrass Conference and Show hosted by the GCSAA. The event boasted over 1000 participants and was held at the Sherman Hotel in downtown Chicago. Seminar topics included:

- The Club Manager and the Superintendent
- The Golf Professionals Appreciation of the Superintendent
- Professional Training, by Professor Burton Musser
- Basic Principals of Golf Course Architecture, by David Gill
- Research Updates
- Living with Golf Carts
- Progressive Superintendents and Their Practices (a movie with sound by O. J. Noer)
- Improved Efficiency Reduces Costs
- Speeding Up Play
- The Pro-Superintendent; The Job Is Open
- Planning Your Service Building
- Secrets of Successful Superintendents, by Chester Mendenhall



Dan Dinelli, CGCS receives the Bartlett Award in 2008 to recognizing his work and his passion for the profession as those honored before him.

The September 28, 1966, issue of "The Locker Room" congratulated Peter Voykin, who Bartlett described as "one of four Canadian-born brothers who tends Chicago District golf courses," and Emil Mashie, green keeper at Onwentsia Club, for retaining their association championship. Voykin won the MAGCS championship flight with a 76 while Mashie won the senior flight with a 78. The event was held at Flossmoor Country Club. On December 11, 1966, Bartlett reported on the annual election of officers for the MAGCS Board of Directors. The election was held at Midlothian Country Club. Dudley Smith (superintendent at Silver Lakes Golf Course) was elected MAGCS President.

On March 22, 1967, Bartlett sat in on a MAGCS meeting held at River Forest Country Club. He reported on the snow mold outbreak that was hitting Chicago area courses. To blame was a combination of warm temperatures followed by a heavy accumulation of snow. On January 24th, the temperature rose to a balmy 65 degrees. The warm temperatures thawed the soil. On January 26th, a winter storm began to dump snow on the Chicago area. By the time that the storm ended on January 27th, area courses had been buried by 24 inches of snow cover. This was followed by an additional 13 inches on January 30th, and a final 13 inches on February 2nd. All told, an incredible 50 inches of snow recorded over a one week period. In his article Bartlett detailed how the superintendents would restore their courses in time for the approaching golf season.

The MAGCS Charles Bartlett Award

Throughout his career Charles Bartlett served as an ambassador for the game of golf. He spent 36 years chronicling the major golf events of his time. He was a confidant to the great players of his era, and earned a wide spread reputation for his devotion to the game. Upon his death, then MAGCS President, Dudley Smith, established the MAGCS Charles Bartlett Award. This award is completely separate from the Bartlett Award given out by the Golf Writers Association of America. The GWAA Bartlett Award did not come into existence until 1970. The MAGCS Charles Bartlett Award was first presented in 1967 (the year of Bartlett's death). The award is presented to an individual who, through his or her devotion to the game of golf, exemplifies the spirit of Charles Bartlett – a true ambassador of the game. The Charles Bartlett Award is unique in that it is not given out annually, and the recipient is not selected by the MAGCS Board of Directors. Instead, past award recipients decide when a deserving candidate is to be acknowledged. During its 41 year history the award has only been presented 15 times. The recipients are:

CHARLES BARTLETT AWARD RECIPIENT	YEAR
Paul Voykin	1967
Oscar Miles	1968
Norman Kramer	1970
Ray Gerber	1971
Robert Williams	1975
Julius Albaugh	1983
Ken Zanzig	1986
Oscar Miles	1987
Mike Bavier	1990
Pete Leuzinger	1994
Tim Kelly	1996
Fred Opperman	1999
Mike Bavier	2000
Carl Hoppman	2003
Dan Dinelli	2008

This distinguished list includes: innovators, visionaries, authors, poets, mentors, activists, environmentalists, instructors,

public speakers, GCSAA Past Presidents, CAGCS Past Presidents, MAGCS Past Presidents, past recipients of the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award, past recipients of the GCSAA Leo Feser Award, and inductees into the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame.

Waterloo

Perhaps not as well known about Bartlett, was that despite his great love for golf, he was still affectionately classified as a "duffer" by his fellow writers. He carried a 46 handicap and often shot in the 140s at the Golf Writers Annual Tournament. The annual tournament has been held at The Dunes Golf and Beach Club in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, since 1954. Hole #13, the esteemed "Waterloo," so named because of the large broad body of water that stretches down the entire right side of the golf hole, is a 590 yard, par 5. Not trusting his ability to drive the ball, it is reported that Bartlett never challenged the water at Waterloo, always opting instead to chip around the perimeter of the pond. Bartlett's fellow writers knew that this hole was his nemesis, so it was only fitting that on April 9, 1968, more than 60 golf writers gathered at Waterloo for a moment of silence and the dedication of a plaque that reads, "Dedicated to the memory of Charles Bartlett, *Chicago Tribune*, Golf Writers Association of America, who once scored a 22 on this hole and never hit a ball into the water." The plaque is still in place today. It is located by the white tee on the 13th hole at the Dunes Golf and Beach Club.

-OC

Sources:

- [Illinois PGA Golf Hall of Fame web site](#)
- [The Golden Age of Gold Design by Geoff Shackelford](#)
- [Golf Time Line web site](#)
- [Wikipedia web site](#)
- [Mike Bavier CGCS](#)
- [The Dunes Golf and Beach Club, Steve Hamilton CGCS](#)
- [The Portland Golf Club, Forrest Goodling, Golf Course Superintendent](#)
- [The Chicago Tribune Archive Service, \(a number of articles written by Charles Bartlett and others\)](#)

COMPOST

15 Yard Loads
30 Yard Loads
Screened 1/2 inch
Screened 1/4 inch

DIVOT MIX

30/70 Sand/Compost



For more information and pricing, call Caroline
847-441-6606

Green Cycle Incorporated
400 Central Avenue, Suite 115
Northfield, Illinois 60093
847-441-6606
www.greencycle.net