




One of Harold "Skull" Goldstein's nearly 100 P-47 missions over France and Germany in World War II ended a few yards short of the runway... with about 130 bullet holes. He said he didn't like parachutes.

My great friend and golf buddy Harold Goldstein died March 20, and I thought you guys and gals might enjoy hearing about his life and his great passion for "the game." I met him at Key Biscayne Golf Course in 1990. He was 68 years old. His daughter Susi brought him along because she wanted him to meet me. Although he was 23 years older, we had no generation gap. He reminded me of my grandfather. He was a wisp of a man with an infectious grin and a Boston Blackie mustache which gave warning to his wit and sense of humor.

He was like a Jewish Jiminy Cricket hopping around and making funny noises by rubbing his hind legs together. Just kidding, but I swear there were crickets chirping when he walked. He learned the game from a South African



The Skull vs The Red Baron
As I See It
By JIM WALKER

friend at Doral. His friend made him hit range balls and chip and putt for months before he went on the course the first time. Then, he was hooked. He played golf five mornings a week and read books seven afternoons.

He made his living selling seafood as his father had before him. But it wasn't one snapper at a time; he imported and exported trailer loads of fish, shrimp, clams, oysters, and lobster all across the U.S. and Central and South America. When he retired, he was so respected in the business, he became an inspector for Lloyd's of London, determining if a shipment was truly spoiled as the person receiving the product said, or if they were trying to get a better price by threatening to refuse the order.

He owned several fish markets on the Miami river in the 50s and 60s that hosted daily afternoon crap games. Those in attendance included the chief of police and many local politicians. Poker games at his house had no time limit: the game was over when the last

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AFTERWORDS

bottle was empty. He hated liars and thieves. He said if you always tell the truth, you have no lies to remember. He was also a remarkable artist for someone who had no formal training.

I have always admired people who could fly airplanes. My cousin flew Huey gunship helicopters in Vietnam. Another friend flew C-5 cargo planes there as well. But Harold flew a P-47 fighter plane over France and Germany in 1943, 44, and 45. These were awesome machines which could reach 500 mph in a dive during a strafing run.

He flew almost 100 missions, sometimes two in the same day. His call sign, given to him back in flight school, was "Skull." You see, even at age 22 he didn't have much hair, and his forehead went half way back on his head to a spot about even with his ears. He had five confirmed kills in dogfight combat against the Red Barons of the Third Reich.

There is a picture in the den of his aircraft sitting in a pasture just short

of the airfield with half of one wing missing and about 130 50-caliber machine-gun bullet holes in the fuselage. (Change my shorts, dude). Imagine getting shot up like that and still almost making it back to your base. He said he thought of bailing out, but he hated parachutes and the ground below was not occupied by Allied troops. Necessity is the mother of invention.

Back to his golf. He never mastered the driver so he teed off with a 3 iron, which he could still sting a buck seventy-five when I met him. He told me that back in the day, he used a 2 iron and could hit it 200-plus. I believe him because his only hole-in-one came at the fourth hole on the Blue Course at Doral. It is a monster par-3 where the tour players regularly make bogey or worse.

He was a prince of a man who would do anything for you if he liked you, but he wore the worst clothes you have ever seen on the golf course. Plaid pants

with striped shirts. Neon orange, lime green, and purple socks which I am sure glowed in the dark. Topped off by the nastiest sweat-stained caps, and he always had a half dozen gloves in his bag all of which had holes in them.

Let's not forget the shoes either. Goodwill wouldn't sell them. He got mad at Susi and me when we caught a great sale on shoes and bought him two pair. He said "at my age, you don't buy two of anything." We gave him caps, balls, and gloves all the time but they seldom seemed to make their way onto the course. I used to kid him that he must have one helluva safe deposit box where he stored all the stuff we gave him. Lets not forget his incessant ball-hawking either, with a retriever about the length of today's drivers he'd prowl the hazard shorelines.

He began playing regularly with our friends shortly after we met, and his skill as a negotiator quickly became apparent when we haggled over strokes



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on the first tee. With each passing birthday, he got another stroke, until all that was left were the par threes. We drew a line in the bunker sand and said, "No more strokes!" He whined as he continued to take our money and every time he hit a great shot, he would give us his famous "tour strut." He broke our hearts and wallets countless times with his chipper, which he called his

"Whoopie Doo."

He joined us on one of our famous trips to Grenlefe and we laughed so much we thought our sides would split. Now I swear this is a true story:

His roommate, Georgie, was an Italian friend from Boston. Weeks before the trip, Georgie was teasing him that if he was going to bunk with him, he was going to have to get some lace panties.

The afternoon we arrived and everyone was carrying their stuff into their rooms, Georgie came out of his unit and fell on the ground laughing hysterically. In his hand was a pair of yellow lace panties left behind by the previous guest which he found on the closet floor when he was putting his clothes away. He knew Harold could not have planted them because he had not yet gone into the room. Georgie then accused me of having our friend, who was the pro at Grenlefe, put them there, but sadly I never thought of it. Fate put them there to give us all a huge laugh.

One of the courses we always play on our trip is Southern Dunes, which has no trees to speak of. It was late in the round, and was heating up pretty good when, at the next tee, there was a little shade. Harold with his best effort at a Boston accent said to Georgie: "paak the caat in the G. D. shade." Georgie said "Why you talking to me like that?" Harold replied, "I wanted to make sure you could understand me."

In the mid 90s his daughter Susi and I began our romance and in November of 2000, we got married. At our wedding, he wore a Bill Murray golf cap made out of synthetic turf with a flagstick and golf ball attached to it. He was the star of the



Harold "Skull" Goldstein in the cockpit of his P-47 during World War II.

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show. After the wedding, I was not his son-in-law, but his oldest son. I said, he finally got a son who can play golf. Sorry, Jack, (my brother-in-law). Jack suffers from LOFT (Lack of @#\$\$%ing Talent) Disease when he plays.

Skull's daughter doesn't suffer from LOFT on the golf course. She and her dad used to skin the winter snowbirds visiting Doral on a regular basis. Hey Harold "wanna play a little game?"

"Yea, OK, but my daughter gets to hit from the red tees."

"OK, sure, she's a girl."

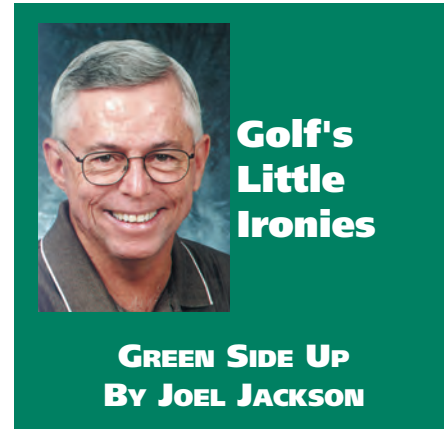
So Susi gets up on the first tee and takes it deep, right down the old whazoo. A little smile curls in the left corner of Harold's lip. One snowbird says to the other, "Holy crap, did you see where she hit that ball?" They knew then it was going to be a long, expensive day.

Signing off now with, "Skull, this is Miami tower, over." God, my dear friend, I miss you so much. Are the greens in heaven really as fast as they say?"

There Were Gators in the Pond at Oakmont, But One Duck Could Fly

In my best Robin Williams impersonation, "Gooooood morning golf nation! Who looks like a duck, walks like a duck and sounds like a duck? U. S. Open Champion Angel Cabrera, that's who."

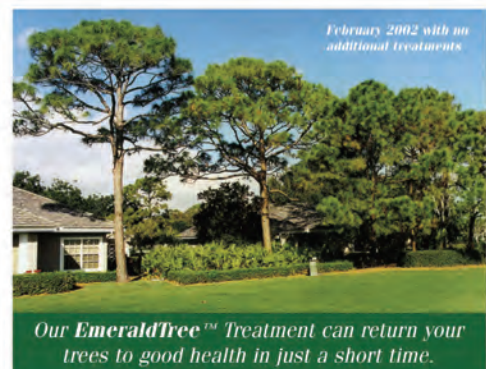
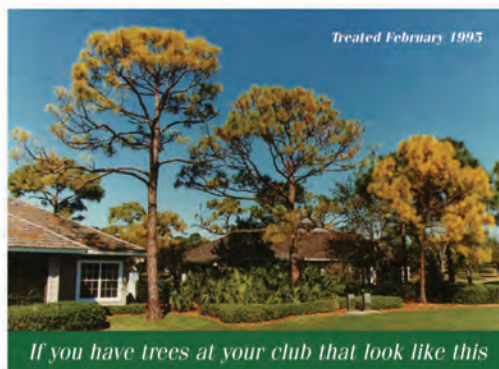
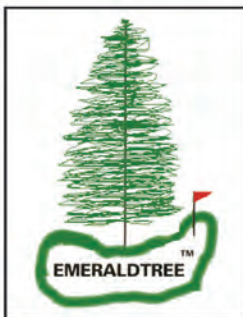
The USGA and NBC missed a big opportunity to play the caddie card and link the loveable teddy bear, I mean rubber ducky, Cabrera to the legendary Francis Ouimet, another caddie who once upon a time slew the goliaths of the game and became a U. S. Open Champion. All Bob Costas could talk about was the Argentine connection to the "big stupid" moment of Roberto DeVincenzo when he muffed the Masters victory within his grasp. Costas



only mentioned it two or three times on the air, and it was also in this morning's paper as well.

As they fold the tents on the "dangerous" golf course (Phil Mickelson's diagnosis), the Oakmonster members can get back to their sadomasochistic game of gotcha golf. Which leads me to the puzzling tidbit of information I gleaned from the Golf Channel interview with course

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