



Monroe Miller is a retired golf course superintendent.

He spent 36 years as superintendent at Blackhawk Country Club in Madison, Wis. Miller can be reached at groots@charter.net.

A GOLF TRIP SANS GOLF CLUBS

Two good friends of mine – Rod Johnson and the late Wayne Otto – were famous in these parts for their golf trips. They played golf all over the country, taking full advantage of golf privileges extended to them by their colleagues in golf. Everywhere they went, their clubs were in the trunk.

I have taken many golf trips myself; the difference is that I never take clubs with me. I have a dearth of ability, and the enjoyment of playing isn't there for me like it is for millions of others. The beautiful thing about golf is there are so many aspects to the game that can be enjoyed without playing. There's the rich history. There are the great players, past and present. We have the fields of play – no two alike. The opportunities to immerse yourself in the game are almost endless.

I was in Raleigh, N.C., this winter to welcome our granddaughter Ella into the world. While there I drove the short trip to Wake Forest, N.C., the former home of Wake Forest University (then called Wake Forest College). The campus moved to Winston-Salem in the mid 1950s, but Arnold Palmer was a student on the old campus starting in 1947. Mr. Palmer is well remembered there yet today, as I found out on my trip.

The Wake Forest College Birthplace Museum has a sports collection that bears Palmer's name. He came back to Wake in 2003 for its dedication. The pro shop staff at the Paschal Golf Club told me how he stopped there, too, in 2003, to reminisce about games he played on the course in the 1940s and early 1950s. We had lunch at Shorty's as Palmer did many times when he was a student and again in 2003. He wrote a thank-you note to them and they displayed it proudly.

The half-day spent in Wake Forest was the culmination of my nearly lifelong interest in Mr. Palmer.

We left Raleigh and headed for Providence, R.I., to attend the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference, and

stopped in Far Hills, N.J., at Golf House – the USGA headquarters and museum – to see the museum addition, not coincidentally named the Arnold Palmer Center for Golf History.

It's been described as the world's premier collection of golf memorabilia. To me, that's an understatement. The collection is so well presented that you're drawn in and focused the entire way through. We maxed out the experience on a cold Saturday, nearly by ourselves. The self-guided tour begins in the Arnold Palmer Room, a room filled with items and information about his career.

A Palmer portrait greets you as you enter the room. Artist Jim Chase created it, using quotes from Arnold's career to form the lines and shades that make up the portrait. It took him 14 years to complete, working at the rate of eight words per hour. He also had to research the quotes to verify them. What a piece of artwork he created. Palmer himself was overwhelmed by Chase's interest in him and the work itself.

You move from room to room, each dedicated to a period of golf that's easily identifiable. The "Golden Age" is followed by the "Depression and World War II," followed, in turn, by a room of displays and collections called the "Come-back Age." The "Age of Superpowers" becomes very familiar to people my age; it was dominated by many players alive yet today. The "Global Game" focuses on Tiger Woods and players we currently watch. We finished our visit with walkthroughs of the Ben Hogan Room and the Bob Jones Room.

We left Far Hills impressed with the great gift the USGA has given golf, and we headed north.

I usually have a chance to visit one of golf's great treasures each year – Geoffrey Cornish.

Mr. Cornish lives in an area of Amherst, Mass., called Fiddlers Green. We arrived there on a cool Sunday and, in

true New England fashion, Geoffrey was cutting wood in his backyard, a bit of the four cords he burns each winter. He invited us into his cozy home and we visited in comfort and warmth, surrounded by lots of books.

Best known for the hundreds of golf courses he's designed, Geoffrey also has been a premier author of books related to the endlessly interesting subject of golf courses, their design and maintenance. We had a grand time talking about golf – not players or tournaments, but rather superintendents and architects and academics and authors. There isn't anyone I know who's more interesting to visit with or easier to talk to. It was a highlight of our trip without clubs.

I attended the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference, a truly outstanding regional meeting that has grown under the leadership of Gary Sykes, a former golf course superintendent in Rhode Island. We headed home with one more stop in mind.

We returned on Interstate 80, a route that takes you through Youngstown, Ohio. Youngstown was the home of the first GCSAA (NAGA back then) president and one of its founders – Col. John Morley. He is also the namesake of the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award.

I called Margo Szabo, one of the excellent staff members at GCSAA, to see if she knew where Col. Morley was pillowed. She didn't, but an hour later she called with detailed directions to the Tod Homestead Cemetery on the eastern edge of Youngstown.

John Morley rests with his wife and two other Morleys in the Acacia section of the cemetery, an area reserved for Masons. His headstone indicates he was a 32nd degree Mason. I was proud to pay quiet tribute to the man who did so much to get our profession rolling.

With that we headed home, well satisfied with another golf trip that didn't see us hit even a range ball. **GCI**