

Glissman Solves Farm Relief Problem With Fee Course

VALLEY VIEW Golf Links, developed into one of the sportiest "pay as you play" courses in the central west by a farmer and his family without the aid of wealthy members or any organization to draw on, is a splendid answer to the frequent assertion that golf is a rich man's game and that golf courses are built solely by or for the rich.

This course was at one time a part of the Rock Brook Stock farm, located about six miles west of Omaha and owned by H. C. Glissman and son. The farm was high, rolling and commanded a beautiful view of the Big Papillion valley, located to the north and west of it.

It was in the year 1919 that golf first entered the lives of the Glissman family. They were visited at the farm by some Omaha business men and some out-of-town golf course architects who were interested in looking over the farm and some of the adjoining property. These men constituted a committee who were seeking a new layout for the Omaha Country Club, whose golf course had become so valuable they were obliged to seek a new location.

Here is Mr. Glissman's own story of his introduction to golf:

"I met the committee at a roadway, half mile east of my property, and led them through fields and woods, creeks and hollows. As we approached my own land which was very rough and rolling, with several large ravines and gulleys, I tried to keep the committee together and steer them away from these rough places but try as I might, they headed directly into and over every bit of the roughest part of my property, and I was certain that this piece of rough farm land would not appeal to them.

"Suddenly, when they reached a clearing in the center of my farm, one of the architects turned to the committee and said, 'Gentlemen, in the last 20 minutes we have seen about \$15,000 worth of natural hazards. This is the finest piece of golf land we have seen so far and I would advise you to get this piece of property and also the 80 acres adjoining on the east, as well as the 160 acres on the west.'

"So I gave them an option on my farm

at \$6.00 per acre for a year, but the committee was unable to get possession of the adjoining property, so my option ran out and golf seemed a thing of the past.

Gain Experience Building Courses.

"In 1922, father sold his 200 acres to the Happy Hollow Golf and Country Club of Omaha. We moved to Valley View, our 70-acre farm. We had two growing boys at the time, so the 70-acre farm did not provide enough work for us all. Having a good deal of equipment, horses, etc., we put our teams to work building the new Happy Hollow course. This work lasted for about a year and a half and then we continued to do teaming work for various real estate companies and landscaping. The following spring, after the Omaha Country Club had finally selected a location north of Omaha, we helped build their course finishing our work in July, 1926.

"During these years of golf course building, my boys and myself had learned the difference between a tee, a fairway, a green and a bunker. We had gotten hold of a few of the standard golf magazines and read up on golf and its possibilities. It was at this time that some of the first pay-as-you-play courses were being built. Some real figures were quoted as to the earning possibilities of such a course.

"One day I decided there was no reason why we should starve to death on a 70-acre piece of land too small to make profits as a farm. I went home at noon and announced to my family that I was considering the building of a public golf course.


"No one took me seriously, but a few weeks later I took a train to Kansas City to confer with James Dalgleish, a golf course architect, with regard to building an 18-hole golf course on our land. I visited several other cities and found that all the pay courses were well patronized. I had the feeling that if I could take in \$10,000 to \$18,000 a year on a golf course, as these other people were doing, I could in some manner save out a little of the profits for myself.

Greens Built in Two Months.

"The first week in September, 1926, Mr. Dalgleish visited the farm and after look-



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ing it over made the same remarks as the other architects had eight years before. He said it contained valuable natural hazards and he thought he could get in 18 holes for us.

"After three days of crawling through fences, gooseberry bushes, trees and corn, we set the stakes for the location of tees and greens. We found I had a yardage of approximately 6,000 yards. After the stakes were set, Mr. Dalgleish left and prepared the blue print for us, and on September 10, 1926, we began clearing the ground for the first green. This green was built in a pasture; the next in a stubble field; the next in a corn field, etc., until all the greens were graded to approximate measurements. We did this work with three teams and three men, besides myself, in about two months.

"From then on until spring two men, one boy and myself chopped wood and did the necessary clearing for fairways through some very woody ground. We chopped over 200 cords of wood and took out over four acres of stumps that winter and spring. In the spring, we replanted a number of small trees over the course in small groups to act as dividing lines for the fairways. Each of our fairways is outlined by trees from tee to green. This not only adds much beauty to the course but speeds up play, which is very essential on a course that takes care of 200 to 300 players a day.

Architect's Aid Best Investment.

"The best money spent on the course was that paid to our architect. It saved us thousands in the building of the course; he took advantage of every hazard. While every green faces the player, only three greens required any extensive building up to make them so. Furthermore, the greens are so constructed that all collars can be trimmed by the power fairway mowers, eliminating a lot of hand labor which is a big item of expense on most golf courses.

"We maintain Valley View with three men: One man spends most of his time taking care of the fairways and two men take care of the greens and the rough.

Has Low Cost Water System.

"We have a complete watering system extending over the entire course, the total cost of which was less than \$1,500. It consists of a lake or reservoir made by putting a dam across one of the various gulleys. Into this we pump water from a 4-inch 75-foot well with a \$200 electric pump. We force the water to the greens, some of



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which are located 70 feet above the lake, with a two stage centrifugal pump operated by a $7\frac{1}{2}$ horse motor. This motor was bought second-hand but was in very good condition, costing \$125. The pump which was new cost \$125; the pipe, bought second-hand, cost us \$15 per ton or about \$300. It is laid about 6 inches under ground and is so laid that by taking out iron plugs from the three lowest places the entire system drains itself. We can water as many greens as we care to at once with this outfit, having ample pressure at every green to operate any of the standard sprinklers. This was all put in without any survey, using only a level and square, and is as complete and efficient as any watering plant I have seen that cost even ten times as much as this plant did.

"During July and August of this year was the driest we had ever experienced. We watered every day from 3 to 12 hours and yet our monthly bill for electricity was less than \$30. I can't see any reason why a golf course needs to spend the thousands of dollars you usually see listed as expense for watering system when you can get an outfit as complete and foolproof as ours.

"In the spring of 1927, we seeded the fairways to redbot, bluegrass and a little Italian rye grass, and the greens to bluegrass and redbot. On July 1st, 1927, ten months after we commenced building our first green, we opened the course for play and saw the first foursome tee off. The entire layout was somewhat primitive and unfinished yet interesting enough so that we were able to take in from \$10 to \$60 per day, the green fees being 50c.

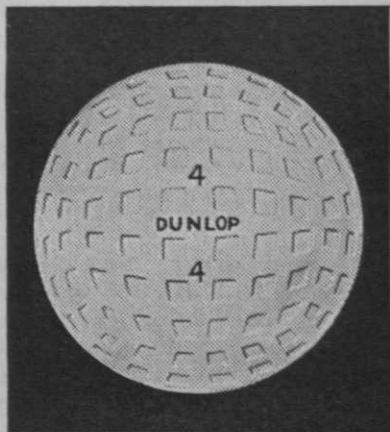
Course Boosts Land Value.

"Back when we first decided to build a course, I happened to mention the fact to one of our largest real estate men. He looked at me and with a rather derisive smile said: 'You are going to make a golf course out of your farm? What do you think it will cost you to build a golf course?' I replied, 'I estimate it will cost me about \$10,000 besides my own labor' (I now find my estimate was plenty high). He said, 'You can't buy the grass seed for less than \$20,000.' I was determined to build in spite of the fact that he advised me to sell the farm for about \$25,000 and buy cheaper land.

"Two years later this same realtor wanted to list our golf course with him at \$75,000 as he was sure he could sell it at that. Since then we have had offers of \$85,000

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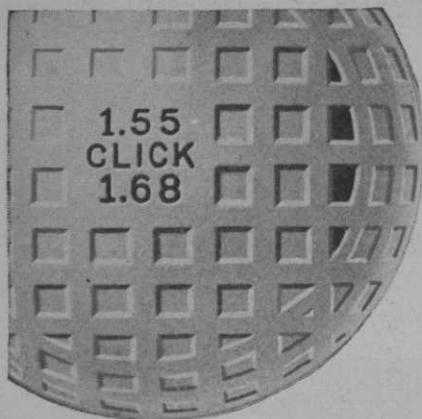


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for the 70 acres, but it is paying us 10 per cent on \$100,000 yearly. It gives me and my family something to do and keeps us in contact with the finest men I have ever met. I believe that coming in contact with the players of our course is one of the most prized assets of this golf business.

"Mr. Realtor missed his guess on the cost of grass seed, by \$19,000, yet we have excellent fairways. We played winter golf for two seasons but find our fairways now are good enough to enable us to play them as they lie; all in three year's time."

Take Over Second Layout.

Last year the lease on the Dundee Golf Course of Omaha was taken over by the Glissman family who now operate both Valley View and Dundee courses. Their average attendance is something over 1,000 players a week. Green fees at Dundee are 50c during the week; 75c on Saturdays; and \$1.00 on Sundays and holidays. To say the Glissmans are successful in their new venture is putting it mildly; they have increased the attendance at the Dundee course 50 per cent over former years, and the attendance at Valley View is about to capacity over the week-end.

The secret of their success lies in the fact that the courses are managed so as to make everybody feel at home. As I sit and watch the Glissmans at the cashier desk or on the starting tee, where a "thank-you" is never forgotten and where everyone is made to feel that the management has a personal interest in each individual, I cease to wonder at the immense popularity these courses have attained in Omaha. Bankers, lawyers, and others are forsaking the larger country clubs and buying their golf on the pay-as-you-play plan.

The success of Valley View has been heralded to almost every corner of the U. S., and scarcely a week passes that someone does not write or call to get information as to how to go about converting a farm into a paying golf course. I was shown letters from Oregon, Massachusetts, Illinois, Iowa and Maryland, all anxious to find out the secret of Valley View's success.

With the above as a true story of the evolution of a farm into a golf course, it seems that if the same degree of integrity were used by other committees in charge of golf activities, any community could afford to build a modern golf course and enjoy a real country club atmosphere.