

# Mackenzie, Master Architect, Passes; Leaves His Mark in Golf

By HERB GRAFFIS

**D**R. ALISTER MACKENZIE, architect of famous golf courses, died at his home at Pastiempo, Santa Cruz, Calif., January 6.

Angina pectoris took Mac. About three years ago he became worried about a persistent heart-burn and consulted a doctor in London who told him his heart was sound. A week prior to his death he suffered a painful attack and went to bed under doctor's orders. He had been confined to his bed only three days when the end came. His stepson, Anthony Haddon, Mrs. Haddon and their youngsters visited with Mac and Mrs. Mackenzie each day during his last illness. The Mackenzies and Haddons played bridge together each evening while Mac was propped up in bed.

The Saturday morning of his death Tony Haddon went into Santa Cruz to care for a few matters at Mac's request. Mrs. Mackenzie brought up his lunch. These two devoted pals chatted and while Mrs. Mackenzie was putting the sick-room in order, Mac gasped and fell back on his pillow. It was all over.

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You're taking a long chance when you say a man was the "greatest" artist in any line, but there are plenty who would hang "greatest" on Alister Mackenzie as a golf architect and hold up their end of any ensuing argument.

In the United States, in England, Scotland, the Continent, South America and Australia Mackenzie's creative work will stay as long as golf is the golf it is today and has been for a hundred years past.

There probably will be some alterations made but not one in a hundred of them will stand the test of time as well as Mac's original creation.

Mackenzie came to this country first about 10 years ago. He had a high reputation on the other side; a reputation based on results. He was consulting architect to the Royal and Ancient and the creator of several of the outstanding British courses. During the Great War he had been one of the outstanding camou-

flage experts and into golf architecture he carried his superb genius for making color masses do tricks to his bidding.

## A Versatile Genius

His Cypress Point, Pasatiempo, Bayshore and Augusta National jobs—to name only four examples of his work in this country—gave examples of his art and versatility that contribute greatly to the enjoyment of golf. While Mac was on the Bayshore and Augusta National problems, I had the privilege of frequent contact with him and shall always remember how often he used that word "pleasurable" as the test of golf architecture. These two jobs were entirely dissimilar in their background. Bayshore was built on the Meyer brothers' idea of turning a flat and uninteresting truck garden into the highest type fee course. Augusta National was built on Bob Jones' idea of providing the ultra in private golf courses. Mackenzie being given both jobs tips you off to his rating as an artist.

Golf course architects, like other artists, are not adverse to criticising questionable points in another artist's work, but I never have heard any of them who did not volunteer the judgment that Mackenzie was the great master. This, in a profession as keenly competitive as golf architecture, is real praise.

One phrase that Mac told me, I've thought was a gem of description of good architecture: "Make it look hard and play easy if the player uses his brains." Mac was strongly against penalizing the duffer. It was his idea that the duffer was handicapped enough by lack of distance and control. He also was a pioneer in advocating and employing labor-saving methods in construction and maintenance. He held that the cheaper a good course could be built and kept up, the more courses there would be and the more men ultimately employed in golf.

For a couple of months prior to Mackenzie's death we had been figuring on an architectural department he was to conduct in GOLFDOM and on several articles deal-

ing with course maintenance he had agreed to write.\* He had finished the manuscript of a book on golf architecture and maintenance and submitted it to Scribners.

This brilliant Scot, author of classic golf courses, died hard up, with more than \$15,000 owed him, which seems a tough finish considering the amount of money spent for American golf courses during the time he was active. Mac certainly deserved a better break for the way in which he served the game.

### Mackenzie's Course Principles

Now, as the finale of Mackenzie's work in American golf, we'll take some quotes from letters he wrote several weeks prior to his death.

"He (referring to a commentator on the Augusta National course) states that previous to the Augusta National, my golf courses have always had a wealth of side bunkers, which is untrue. The only one that has is Cypress Point and these are all natural sand dunes made by another fellow, not myself. Over 20 years ago I wrote an article headed "Too many bunkers" and nearly 30 years ago I made Alwoody and Moortown, which many people consider are the best of British inland courses, without a single side bunker except those constructed to prevent players getting into worse trouble. Bayside, as you know, has only 19 bunkers in all, fewer than even the Augusta National. Pasatiempo has not a single side bunker. For 30 years I have been advocating that there should be no purely penal bunkers and that the only reason for bunkers is to give players more interest and more fun."

"All my golf courses have increased in popularity notwithstanding the depression. The reason is that they are different. They have the following characteristics:

"Finality—In the last 25 years no green I have been responsible for has been altered and improved by anyone else. As Bob Jones says in his introduction to my new book: 'All his courses are pleasurable. In every instance he has placed interest and enjoyment ahead of difficulty.'

"All bunkers are eliminated that do not add materially to the pleasure of my courses. As my courses have only a quarter the usual number of sand traps, the cost of maintenance is correspondingly reduced.

\*The first of this series reached GOLFDOM's office only a few days before Dr. Mackenzie's death, probably the last article he wrote. It will appear in an early issue.

"Natural features of the terrain are used to the fullest extent.

"There is no rough, therefore no lost balls, no weed seeds blowing on the course.

"Construction work is of such character that all tees, hollows, banks and everything except a few yards around the hole are closely mowable with the power five-unit fairway machine.

"Greens are not overwatered or overfertilized, so that fine dwarf grasses involving very little labor in cutting are obtained.

"Above all, I realize that more golf courses are ruined by spending money on them than by refraining to do so."

Mackenzie's first book on golf architecture is out of print now. It is interesting to read it and note how many of the policies he advocated in that book and which were received with sharp criticism on publication have been adopted as cardinal principles. Mac also has some highly interesting and provocative ideas about maintenance. Some of them were debatable but he would argue them out with all comers, never admitting defeat, and always willing to continue the debate over the locker-room Scotch in the effort to convert mankind.

Last summer he was working on a book on camouflage, "with (he said) the object of proving that the peace of the world would be assured if all nations were taught to camouflage their defenses."

Mackenzie was a great fellow and a great architect. He did a lot for golf. May his big soul rest in that pleasurable land beyond.

### Kansas City Area Greenkeepers Form Association

**T**HE HEART of America Greenkeepers' Assn. has been formed by greenkeepers in Kansas City and contiguous territory. There are at present about 25 members of the association. Monthly meetings are being held during the winter in the Ambassador hotel. Meetings at courses will be held monthly during the summer. Greenkeepers at St. Joseph, Lawrence, Topeka and other points within 100 miles radius of Kansas City are invited to join.

President of the new organization is Wm. E. Peters, supt., Mission Hills G&CC; Harold Henry, 802 E. 48th, Kansas City, Mo., is secy.; George Robb, Hillcrest GC, is vice-pres.; and Mike Farlow, Old Mission GC, is treas.