



A. E.
Penfold

A. E. Penfold, Pioneer Ball Manufacturer, Victim of Sea Attack

ALBERT E. PENFOLD, noted rubber and golf ball scientist and manufacturer, returning to England from the United States this February aboard the freighter *Siamese Prince*, died when the ship was sunk by a Nazi plane attack in the Irish sea.

News of Mr. Penfold's loss was withheld in the hope that he had been picked up by an outbound ship or was a prisoner of war. It is now known that none of the *Siamese Prince's* passengers, officers or crew survived.

In announcing the loss of its chief, the Penfold organization says:

"Mr. Penfold was a frequent visitor to the United States where he had wide business interests. Each year since 1932 he came to further the interests of the Penfold golf ball which from the start he insisted be sold only through professionals. Growth of the Penfold American ball business made it necessary in 1936 to install a factory in Brooklyn.

"Throughout his career, dating from the days of the solid gutta percha balls, Penfold was identified with rubber and the manufacture of golf balls. He was one of the first to interest himself in the rubber-cored ball and to develop sound methods of making and winding the rubber tape and thread, and the materials and methods whereby the cover material could be blended properly and sealed to the core by application of heat.

"Early recognition of Penfold's ability came when the solid guttie ball was standard. The gutta then used for balls was often dirty gray, full of foreign particles and none too easy to find on the imperfect fairways of that day. Then, when a leading authority made the statement in his presence that white gutta percha would make a fortune for the inventor, Penfold spent an intensive period in the laboratory. A pure white gutta percha was his initial contribution to golf.

"A noteworthy improvement in modern

golf ball manufacture he devised is a winding technique which permits extreme tension of the rubber thread and unerring accuracy. The trick in winding is to prevent too many loops of the rubber thread crossing at exactly the same point. The machine Penfold designed is based on a simple scientific adaptation of the laws of chance.

"He figured that if the core of the ball were shuffled instead of confined in a narrow groove, the core would turn itself automatically and the rubber thread would be taken up where and as needed.

"The Royal and Ancient had a ball made which they believed would set a limit to the distance potentialities of all golf balls. Penfold and other ball manufacturers were called in and shown the specifications of the new ball which was supposed to be the perfect 'restrictor.' During the inspection Penfold startled the assembly making the quiet statement that he could build a ball to those very specifications that would out-drive any ball then made.

"The first test of the Penfold production was held on a Sunday prior to a British Open Championship on a course near St. Andrews. When the selected driver hit the first Penfold designed ball it carried far beyond the furthestmost markers. Other Penfold balls gave identical results. Examination followed the demonstration, and the Penfold test ball was found to conform to the letter of the restricting specification.

"Mr. Penfold became identified with the development of golf balls in the service of the Silvertown company, and during that time the Silvertown make rose to world fame. When he left Silvertown he joined the Dunlop company and after a number of years at Ft. Dunlop, he set up business for himself at Birmingham in 1930. For a period after founding his own factory, he was also expert adviser to the North British Rubber company in their ball section.

"In the past year, Mr. Penfold was preoccupied with his part in the British war effort.

"The Penfold factories, both British and American, together with their branches and agents throughout the world, will continue without change in organization. The directors of Golf Ball Developments, Ltd., of England, together with the officers of the American office, R. van Buskirk and H. N. Davies, will continue to follow the same selling policy, manufacture to the same high standards and carry out generally the policies of 'A. E.'"