

# Meet Tournament Golf's New 'Angel'— Peter M. Wellman

By LAWRENCE M. STOLLE

In less than two years P. M. Wellman has become one of game's biggest promoters—and boosters



Peter M. Wellman

**T**OURNAMENT golf has a new promoter—a one-man tornado who bubbles over with showmanship! His career is as colorful as an Easter egg; he's as democratic as free speech; as peppy as a colt; is a "sucker" for charities with a heart as big as the Atlantic.

Who?—Peter M. Wellman, theater owner, southpaw golfer who might shoot a 75 for nine holes and enjoy it; and owner, sponsor and what not of the \$5,000 Mahoning Open, the second edition of which will be staged June 26-27-28 at the Mahoning Country Club, Girard, Ohio.

Two years ago there wasn't a "big name" professional in the country who knew him. Now try and find one who doesn't swear by "Pete" or has listened to the tales of the fabulous feats of Wellman in those locker-room hot-air sessions.

## He Likes the Writers

The sports writers dubbed him "angel" when he personally posted the \$5,000 for his initial venture. He thinks the Fourth Estate is composed of the best guys that ever wore shoe leather. And he bends over backwards trying to prove it. When the rains came—in torrents—throughout his 1941 tournament, Pete had so endeared himself to the typewriter pounders in the press tent that they looked as though their own world had fallen in. They were sorry for Pete; sorry to see a "one-in-a million" guy take a financial licking. But they were amazed, too, at the sportsman who, with a familiar shrug of his shoulders, laughed it off with "Well the downpour might do the crops some good."

Wellman is a 40-year-old bundle of restless energy who looks as though he just hit 30. He brought "big time" golf back to the Youngstown district where it hasn't been since 1925, the year the Western Open was staged at Youngstown Country Club. Golf tournaments are a new sideline

for him. The theater is his game. He owns two theaters—side by side—in Girard, Ohio. He also owns an entire business block plus property in other cities. He's building a big theater in Youngstown, Ohio. But he's out to cut a wide swath in golf.

He thrives on work. Maybe when the prizes are awarded June 28, he'll have a screwdriver sticking out of his pocket. He probably just repaired part of the press tent. Or that sheaf of papers tucked under his arm contains new ideas for double \$1,500 bank nights. He ups the "kitty" at the bank night whenever in the mood. And the turnstiles click merrily.

"He's a master showman, a boost to any game or business he tries" Fred Corcoran, PGA tournament director declared last year. "He kills you with kindness, amazes you with his ability to spot angles. And while surrounding towns were flooded, it didn't rain hard enough in the spot designated to get his rain insurance, cutting the crowd to 4,000 on the final day but Pete never sang the blues," he added.

## Came to America at 14

He's always been resourceful. In Horatio Alger fashion the family property in Lendina, Greece—near Sparta—was mortgaged so 14-year-old Pete could come to America. It was the midst of World War I. The steamer—St. Guglielmo was jammed. It traveled under blackout rules. Seasickness was prevalent. So Pete bought fruit from the purser and made a cabin-to-cabin canvass. His profits were exceptional. So he bribed the cook to give him first class meals, although he was traveling third class. And prior to this arrangement he hadn't been getting enough to

eat. But he never missed a trick. He parked at the head of the table, got his "rations", and then sped to the foot and got another helping.

Because his American guardianship wasn't clear at first; because Pete was only 14, immigration authorities at first decided to ship him back to Greece. Then he put on his version of Dale Carnegie tactics. The black-haired boy with a tear-stained face pleaded eloquently—"Greek" to all but the interpreter—that he finally won them over. He was placed in the care of an uncle in Greensburg, Pa.

### Likes The Theater

Because the theater was his first love he got a job in a restaurant and worked for nothing in the movie houses to "learn the ropes". He saved money until in a fashion typical of his countrymen, he got a restaurant. Then he struck up a friendship with Michael Manos, who had a chain of theaters. Soon he had one of his own. Then another. He started show spots in several Pennsylvania towns. Then he settled at Girard, Ohio. Financiers said a five-and-ten store wouldn't click. But he tried it—and it's doing a \$100,000 per year business. He modernized his small-town theaters, against advice of other business men. They're gold mines. The Midas touch worked like a charm.

He didn't have time for golf. Then he bought the Mahoning Country Club—with its beautiful clubhouse and 110 acres of rolling, verdant fairways. He wanted it for a country estate.

Golf—what is that?—he would have asked a few years ago. He probably thought a "birdie" was part of an entrance exam for the Audubon Society. But Girard citizens wanted a golf course. So Pete figured it should have a big premiere. He decided to stage a \$5,000 tournament—but the PGA schedule appeared full; no room for new events.

But Pete was determined to have a tournament. He sped to St. Petersburg, Fla. There his earnestness, his persuasive manner got him another booster—Fred Corcoran. The Ohio and Pennsylvania professionals liked him pronto. They rallied to his support. So the tournament was staged. If the weatherman had been kind he would have cleared \$5,000. Clayton Heafner won the tournament with 276; Pete won thousands of friends.

He couldn't do enough for the pros. He made them so comfortable that his

name became synonymous with "a right guy". The golfers didn't forget.

When a Craig Wood-Vic Ghezzi "unofficial world's championship" match was suggested, Wood insisted on giving Pete first chance. He snapped it up, posting a \$2,500 purse. Hadn't Pete been the first to guarantee Wood \$500 because he figured a National Open champion deserved it? Hadn't he set Wood up in a swanky hotel suite because golfing royalty should love such surroundings? Wood beat Ghezzi in a red-hot match. But the crowd was a sparse 1,500. Pete dropped more than a "grand". But he's back for more. And remembering his friends in war-torn Greece, where his father is a colonel in the now conquered Greek army, he's offering 50 per cent of the 1942 Mahoning Open profits to the Red Cross. And that from a guy who took it on the chin twice! He's determined to make tournament golf in Girard a success. And you know he'll do it!

He has five children and they're all wrapped up in the war effort. The Wellman family conducted a campaign of its own for Greek relief. And when the war ends, he aims to send a shipload of food to his home town.

If you ever have a proposition for Pete, come on Friday. That's his lucky day. On Friday he arrived in the United States; married Bessie George of Greensburg, Pa.; started his first theater, bought his theater in Farrell; purchased the two Girard show places; and the Mahoning Country Club. He starts his tournaments on Friday.

### Limited Membership Plan Attracts Defense Workers

THE Country Club of Greenfield, Mass., has established a new class of membership, mainly for workers in defense industries. Those admitted to the new limited memberships must start play before 10:30 a. m. or after 5:30 p. m. week days. On Sundays and holidays, by payment of a \$1 green fee, holders of limited memberships may start play at any time. The new plan costs \$15 for initiation and \$15 for dues and can be paid in \$7.50 installments in April, May, June and July.

The Greenfield Club was founded in 1896. It has an excellent 18-hole course. Mac Sennett is its pro. He says the limited membership plan is proving to be highly attractive to those who have felt the need of golf as a health and pep insurance on war production effort.