

LETTER FROM HOME

Marty Higgins Writes Service Men Members What They Want to Know About Their Own Club

★ AMONG MANY EXAMPLES of golf clubs' efforts to keep in touch with members who are absent in the armed services the best exhibit we've seen is the letter Marty Higgins, pro-greenkeeper at the Fall River (Mass.) CC sent to the club's 27 members in uniform.

It's a tip-off to what other pros and clubs should do in telling their servicemen comrades what's been going on at the club, and keeping these fellows cheered by a lively reminder that things are being kept going so their return will see the old golf homestead ready for them.

With pro and course duties taking Marty pretty well around the clock last season he didn't have time to write the club's servicemen many personal letters. Even the hometown papers didn't carry much golf news to the fellows in service because of transportation curtailment of play and the opinion that it was injudicious to discriminate in wartime publicity between those who could get transportation to the club and those who couldn't.

So Marty gave the lads the whole story of the season in an informative and merry letter. This winter Higgins has been working as a plumber's helper at a ship-building plant. The genial veteran wants no cracks being made about such golf as he has been able to play of recent years identifying him as qualified for plumbing work. This spring he goes back to the club as pro-greenkeeper to buck the new problems, the added duties and to keep things going for golf's contribution to war working efficiency and the triumphant return of the Fall River members now in uniform.

It'll probably mean less income for Marty but that doesn't bother him and his wife, when they think of the great replies Marty got from the club's servicemen, hailing his performance in keeping the course in shape so home, when they come back to it, will be like it was when they went away.

Marty Higgins' letter was mimeographed with the salutation filled in by hand, and was sent out at the end of 1943. The letter follows:

Dear "Joe":

"You probably have thought that I have lost both arms because I have not written to you all year and I fully realize how much you appreciate a line. The season is about over, and there is a decided lull in

the program so I am taking this opportunity to give you a resume of what has happened hereabouts since the season got underway.

"To begin with, the season's enthusiasm was not completely normal until the pleasure ban for driving was lifted about ten weeks ago. Up to that time, members were walking from the bus line; walking from the main entrance after riding the Assonet bus. Printed Bus Schedules were distributed to the members. The first day that the ban was enforced, yours truly made an arrangement with Dinny O'Brien (Gage Hill Riding School) to transport members from the bus line (round trip) 25c per head. A group of women members were the first and last passengers. Apparently the horse was not harnessed properly, because when they started down the hill the wagon climbed up on the horse and scared the horse, but not one tenth as much as the women riders in the wagon. Anyway, the wagon made the return trip EMPTY and yours truly drove the women home. Beginning May 3, till the release of the ban, J. H. Mullen, Miss Brown, and Miss Frost religiously panted their route to and from the club on bicycles. Beginning the first week in September, when automobiles again became legitimate, the club really has experienced excellent activity, golf interest, and club spirit.

"Regarding the golf course: We were fortunate enough to carry over from last year enough materials (fertilizer, etc.) so that the standard of maintenance did not slip. Fairways and greens, at the moment, are in excellent shape since the temperatures have been cooler. The summer season (July and August) was very dry; statistics show ten inches less rain than any normal year. The resulting drought scars in the greens have all been replaced, necessitating the use of 1,000 sq. ft. of Kernwood Velvet Bent from the Nursery. 'Old Reliable' Manuel, Jim Ferguson, and Paul Holden made up the personnel on the Golf Course. Paul Holden worked after Morton Junior High School hours and all through the school vacation. Last March, Manuel and I gave all greens, tees, and No. 1 and No. 9 fairways, two applications of arsenate of lead (used about 800 lbs.) to poison Japanese beetle grubs. The infestation was largely in No. 1 and No. 9 fairways. In

some areas you could roll the turf back just like you would roll up a rug. All I can say now, I hope you guys have as much success licking the Japs as we did licking the Jap beetle. Not one grub lived to the beetle stage. The total expense for the Arsenate of Lead was \$300.00. I can't help but call to your attention a real example of club spirit.

"After the Final Tournament of the season (Dinner Team Match), the gang (only about 50 people) came through and contributed, and contributed until the \$300.00 expense was completely covered. I never saw such club spirit and they sincerely gave with real pleasure.

"Regarding your pro: Last winter he went to work as an automobile mechanic's helper at J. H. Davis Chevrolet Co. The main reason for choosing this alternative was to save the club the expense of minor repairs to the truck and tractor. Result: the club did not spend a dime for repairs except for small parts such as points and plugs. The truck and tractor were completely overhauled by yours truly and another mechanic (note how quickly I've graduated to a full-fledged mechanic) and believe it or not, both truck and tractor are still running. After the season got underway, he went to work (May 1 to Aug. 15) in the Gun Clip Dep't at Firestone. The hours were from 6 a. m. to 12 noon (and he didn't get any bugle call at 5 a. m. either); all he got was the bird. From noon till dark, he was at your club and all day on Sunday. Just as he was about to fold up because of the grind, he got laid off and did he weep. It was pathetic. He was so downhearted when he was told to leave. They told him that there was nothing wrong with his work, merely that they had to cut down expenses. So he accepted the compliment that his work was satisfactory but he has since learned that they are producing more clips since he left. So what does that make him. Oh well, he would rather listen to W. S. Canning's 554434535-55-****!***@! three putt greens !@! etc. That's where he belongs. Now that there is only a couple of weeks left before the finis of the golf year, he has been listening to all offers for a job for the winter. He is a little disappointed because he was only offered five different opportunities to date; he has been asked to go back to Firestone; an offer of a plumber's or carpenter's helper at Herreshoff's on P. T. boats; an insurance selling job; an automobile mechanic on Navy trucks; and last, but not least, a casket maker's job, namely, making caskets. He says, if youse guys don't get this war over pretty quick, he'll probably take a crack at all five jobs and by that time he'll be changing his mind oftener than a woman. And if he gets

many more offers, he'll be taking so long to make up his mind he'll probably finish up in one of the boxes that he'll be making.

"Regarding the pro's golf game: He is still Fall River's No. 1 Sucker Amateur. Most of the matches he plays, he gets beat. He always says it is because he ran out of holes. He still gets the most pleasure switching from Swing No. 77B to 93Z, etc., when one of the 7,000 swings don't whack that ball straight. However, he and all the other pros at the club seem to be more grateful for all our golf privileges, mostly because they fully realize how privileged they are and the fact that you guys aren't here to share it is their only displeasure.

"Regarding the Caddies: There Ain't. All we've got is bag-toters and they are so small that most of the members are playing with skeleton sets in Sunday bags, to ease the burden on the kids. All season, we have only had about 15 caddies and they have been the most loyal kids. They have been on deck every day, caddied as much as 45 holes, and in most cases carrying double. They have had their Caddies' Holiday, 8 a. m. to 11 p. m. continuous entertainment and on November 25, each one will receive a bonus for his school, your pro calls for them every day —2 p. m. Durfee High, 2:30 Junior High, 2:45 Wiley School, 3:30 St. Joseph, 3:45 St. Mathieu and when he gets all through collecting, he has 15 caddies.

"Regarding Mrs. Cote and the Club House Activities: Until the gas ban was relieved, things were fairly quiet. But since then, Mrs. Cote probably has had her best year. Luncheons, dinners, wedding breakfasts, dinner dances, have been thick and fast. The reason for the unusual patronage was largely due to people running out of points for rationed foods, necessitating their having to eat out more than ever before. She probably would have fared even better except for her difficulty in getting help.

"Regarding the Golf Shop: Arthur Hanafin, who goes to Durfee High, has managed the shop and the caddies after school and during school vacation to the best of his ability. Sales in the shop are off about 75 per cent, mostly due to the gas ban and the inability to get equipment to sell. Another year, other than golf balls, no sales are anticipated because present stocks are quite depleted. Next year will see rebuilt, rebuilt, rebuilds—in the line of golf balls. However, the change in the calibre of golf balls will not be so great as to offset the pleasure that this game has to offer. Members have been most cooperative; they have sent their clubs into the shop for care because they realize it will afford revenue to en-

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hurry over, there was a job as clubmaker, pro, greenkeeper, etc., in the making.

Curtiss also was active in getting intercollegiate golf started at Yale. John Reid, Jr., son of one of the Apple Tree Gang, and grand and still active veteran Bob Pryde, were among Yale's golf pioneers.

The Vardon tour in 1900 which Curtiss arranged, began exhibition and tournament golf in this country. Harry opened with a match Feb. 12, 1900, at Laurence Harbor, N. J., then played several matches in Florida. He played his way back north in matches at such courses as then existed, then played in the north, east and central and western states and Canada, completing his tour at Denver, Dec. 8. Learning of the business Vardon was doing J. H. Taylor came over. Taylor went home to win the 1900 British Open, but returned to compete with Vardon in the U. S. Open at the Chicago GC, the championship being won by Vardon at 313. Taylor finished second.

Julian Curtiss' enthusiasm pushed golf through its hard going in early days. One of his early triumphs as a missionary of the game in this country was that of getting A. G. Spalding to install a 9-hole course on his estate at Seabright a few years after Mr. Spalding had been shocked by Curtiss purchase of a seemingly excessive supply of golf equipment.

By everybody in golf who knew him, players both pro and amateur, men in every sporting goods business and prominent in many sports, and by the men and women who worked for him and with him Julian Curtiss was beloved and is mourned. He was a peer of all gentlemen sportsmen.

He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Mary Case Curtiss, and two daughters, Mrs. Jean B. Gibbons and Mrs. Mary Louise Pease.

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able me to hire help and try to keep the same standards of service. The Club Cleaning list has increased 40 per cent, which has helped to offset the lack of sales of clubs, bags, and accessories.

"Regarding Tournaments: The season started fairly normal with Rusty McIlwaine and Luke Urban winning the opening Member-Guest — 88-17-71. Directly after the draw was made for the Spring Handicap, the pleasure driving ban was enforced, thus accounting for the completion of this event only a week ago. There were no major events promoted again until the release of the ban. Then the schedule was really active. (Here was inserted a summary of the season's events results.)

"Next Wednesday night will climax the

season when the gang will all pitch in and make a real home-made clam-boil. Johnny Holden will supervise the cooking which includes home-made apple pies.

"A few highlights of the season were: On opening day, April 19, P. R. Ward scored a hole in one at No. 8. The No. 1 Sucker Amateur (your Pro) had a lucky deuce at the 3rd on the same opening day. Aug. 15, John Watling, new member, scored an eagle at No. 6. R. Pluta scored an eagle 3 at the 531 yard No. 2; he was home in two. R. Pluta, J. Watling, J. F. Whelly, D. F. Howarth, all broke 80 for their first time. Dr. D. F. "Great" Gallery also broke it wide open with a 75. Aug. 22nd, H. Schofield established a new nine-hole record of 31, two shots better than previous record of 33. His back nine was 38 for a 69.

"In the Women's major events: (Here was inserted a summary of the events).

"During September, when the gas ban was lifted, F. W. Squire, who now owns a boatyard, invited 11 of us to join him on a boat trip to Warwick. Had a marvelous time, though Warwick Country Club was practically closed up and the course has slipped, due to conditions. Played 18 holes; enjoyed the roughest trip yet; couldn't even play poker on the boat (too rough); played poker on the pier when we got back; finished up bowling at 1 a. m. Finis—Higgins is in the dog house.

"The Club Honor Roll Plaque for the members in the Service now numbers 27 and their names are as follows: (List was inserted).

"This about concludes the resume. I can't help but mention the backbone of the club before signing off. 'Old Man' Stafford is still steering the club over and around every brick wall that comes in his path and his interest and untiring efforts are largely responsible for our survival. He is well supported by fellows like W. H. Moran, A. L. Berryman, A. E. Mobouck, and all of his committees.

"In closing, I am sure that the gang is all with me in wishing a speedy end to this war so that we can all be together again, and in the meantime, you can be sure that we will be doing all that we can to keep everything as you remembered it, so that when that grand reunion happens, you will be able to duplicate all of those pleasant memories that you have had of your club.

"Good luck, and best wishes for a successful and early return.

Sincerely yours,

MARTY HIGGINS.

"P. S.: The wife and Marty, Jr., join me in the above wishes. Marty is now 1½ years old, and if you don't hurry up and get this war over with, well, you've got a challenge."