

PGA celebrates its golden anniversary

The pioneer pros paved the way for golf's fantastic growth.

By HERB GRAFFIS



In marking the 50th anniversary of the PGA the lessons of experience provide the book for the refresher course. The past shows, and can predict, that what's good for the professional is good for the clubs, the golfers and the game in general.

At the PGA Seniors last winter there was discussion about the professionals'

tournament that really started the present PGA. Veterans could only recall that it preceded the PGA's first championship tournament at Siwanoy CC, Bronxville, N.Y., in October 1916, and that it was won by Charley Mayo with Fred McLeod as runner-up. (The Siwanoy tourney was won by the late "Long Jim" Barnes.)

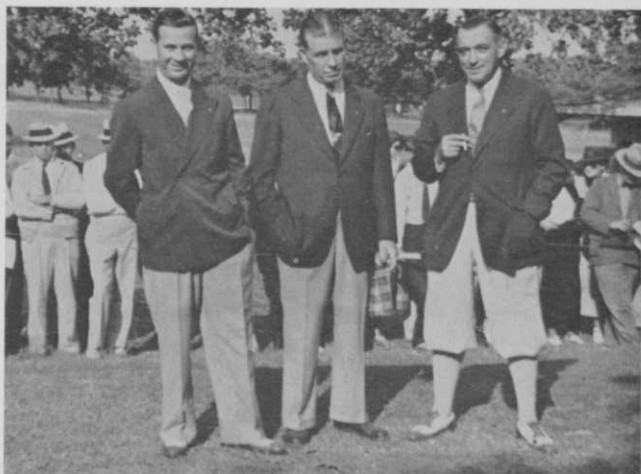
What isn't generally known is that

U. S. team which won first Ryder Cup match in 1927 helped spread fame of PGA. Shown here, back row, left to right: Johnny Golden, Joe Turnesa, Johnny Farrell and Al Watrous. In Foreground: Leo Diegel, William Mehlhorn, Walter Hagen, Al Espinoza and Gene Sarazen.



Three immortals of the PGA are shown during the "knickerbocker period."

From left: George Jacobus, Jack Mackie and Tom Boyd.



the first professional golfer organizations were as much for the benefit of the clubs existing and being formed as they were for the early PGA members. There were not enough of the pioneer pros to operate the clubs being built and those pros who were available weren't very well qualified for the new jobs.

Schooling of Scots immigrants often began at a New York saloon where earlier Scottish imports who hadn't been hired for jobs in the interior, and early Spalding golf salesmen, met the new arrivals, bought them a few drinks, showed them the free lunch counter, arranged for the first shipment of merchandise from Spalding and gave them credit, then took them to trains for travel to their new jobs.

MacGregor got into the business about 70 years ago, and Wanamakers and Jack Jolly as importers also came in as schoolmasters, so by the time the lad from Carnoustie or other points overseas got to his job as the new pro of the Milk Center Country Club he knew enough to play the chore by ear.

In reviewing pro history, the chronicle of PGA presidents—even in thin outline—is bound to show you how much pros (and all golf) owe to the men who have headed the organization.

Bob White, the PGA's first president, was professional at Ravisloe CC, in the Chicago district, and greenkeeper, too. Bob was the first man in golf business to go to agricultural school to learn about

growing grass.

One afternoon Jimmy D'Angelo took me over to White's house at Myrtle Beach. White had a beautiful home and a substantial interest in a golf course there as well as other real estate investments. Before he retired from golf and blindness began to close in on him Bob was a golf architect. He designed some fine courses, among them Wykagyl, and in some instances took adjoining real estate in payment. He was a canny Scot who was way ahead of his time on the golf-real estate deal.

Jack Mackie, was president of the PGA in 1920, and a wonderfully smart diplomat, canny man wi' the shillin' and a tee-totaller he was. After Jack did his hitch as president he was PGA treasurer in 1923, then treasurer again from 1928 to 1939 when the organization was comparatively fat fiscally. *Then the PGA financial statements were freely circulated.* The canny Scots who comprised a majority of the association's roster never would have been able to understand the later policy of not making the PGA financial position known.

This policy of thrift prevailed when Bob Harlow, the head of the PGA's tournament operations, had a group of Japanese professionals over for a tour of the U. S. Harlow had promised the visitors first class travel but actually the transportation at PGA expense was by a second-hand Packard towing a trailer. To rate our Bob's driving kindly, it

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certainly was exciting. No wonder the Japanese were disappointing putters!

Mackie was succeeded as PGA president by George Sargent, a scholarly Englishman who had been assistant to Harry Vardon, and who had won the 1909 National Open championship, following Fred McLeod's reign, and the 1912 Canadian Open. Sargent was PGA chief from 1921 through 1926. He was one of the early presidents of the PGA Seniors. Sargent is the only PGA president to have a son become head of the association. (Harold, one of three Sargent sons who became professionals, was PGA president in 1958, '59 and '60.)

George Sargent was the first PGA official to get the association going into a playing techniques research program that made high-speed motion pictures of the swings of Jones, Hagen, Vardon and Joyce Wethered. During his presidency, Sargent also headed the golf instruction motion picture project financed by *Life* magazine, original sponsor of National Golf Day.

Alex Pirie was PGA president in 1927, '28, '29 and '30. He was a kindly, calm and thoughtful Scot who put out plenty of fires that blazed within the PGA and did a great deal for pros as the first pro top man to be public relations conscious. He began the work of acquainting the golfing public with the professional golfers' aims and performances, collectively and individually, in service. (See his article reprinted in April GOLFDOM.)

Many who talk about the PGA hiring a "czar," do not know that during the Pirie administrations the PGA hired Albert R. Gates, a successful corporation lawyer of Chicago, a former president of the Western Golf Assn. and of a leading Chicago district club. He had retired from active law practice and took the PGA job when internal squabbles and prospects of law suits reminded the PGA it might be getting into big business status.

During the Pirie-Gates time PGA national offices were moved from small, cluttered rooms in an old New York office building to modern quarters in



Thomas W. Crane has used his legal training during his many years of service with PGA.

Chicago. Mrs Irene Blakeman, who was practically the office staff of the PGA then, came to Chicago and got the office operations of the outfit modernized.

Charles W. Hall, a good businessman pro at the Country Club of Birmingham, Ala., served as PGA president in 1931 and 1932. Charley was a bank director and he was a good exhibit to cite when growing pains of pro business accounted for credit ratings that could stand plenty of improvement.

The tournament and political activities of the PGA accelerated from 1933 through 1939 while George R. Jacobus was president. The price of progress had to be paid as golf in general was growing faster than the PGA's growth as an organization.

During the Jacobus period there was the explosion that blew Bob Harlow out of his job as head of the tournament operations and Fred Corcoran in as Bob's successor. The fracas began when Jacobus told Harlow that he couldn't go to Britain with a U. S. Ryder Cup team. It wasn't a nicely handled job in recognizing what Harlow had done for very low pay and a picayune expense account in building tournament golf, so a lot of pros and newspapermen took up sides. That affair was the first PGA public fight with the tournament aspect taking the golf public's eye away from

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the fundamental fact that it was the *club professionals* who had built up golf and established the market and popularity of the tournament stars.

Jacobus and his official associates did a good job of bringing the PGA through a trying stage of growing pains. Fred Corcoran turned out to be a promotional genius and out-Harlowed Harlow in developing rich international pro golf competition as well as in exercising commercial imagination and energy that showed playing pros the way to the promised land of million-dollar assets and lucrative endorsements.

Jacobus was succeeded by Tom Walsh as PGA head during 1940 and 1941. Tom regarded his presidency as a holy mission and straightened out some problems involving pro credit, manufacturers' relations and golf market competition. He warned the PGA against the peril of getting involved in a chicken-shed sort of politics to the degree that personal

ambition to showboat might not coincide with the best interests of pros collectively.

Walsh, one of the most candid of all professionals, a true sportsman and a sound businessman who is the owner of rich golf properties and a bank director, helplessly became the sponsor of the secret sessions policy of PGA annual meetings which has choked PGA public relations for more than 25 years. Walsh as president has to take the rap for a ruling closing the doors on PGA annual meeting discussions which *used to produce valuable sports page publicity for the PGA*. Some delegates became ashamed or scared of what might be said by PGA sectional representatives at the annual meeting, and newspaper coverage was stopped.

Perhaps this quarter century handicap of public relations ineptitude against which able reporters such as Bob Russell and John Hubbard, representing the PGA, have tried to loosen handcuffs, may be corrected now that Fred Corcoran

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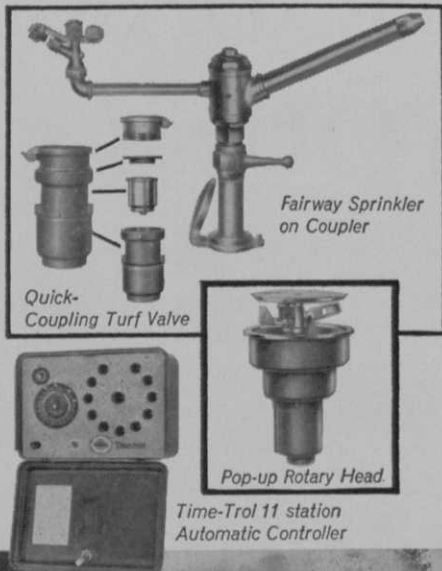
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has been hired to steer the PGA publicity and has the bright Bud Harvey, formerly Bob Harlow's teammate on *Golf World* as his writing man.

However, there are clear signs that the PGA is awakening to the necessity of a expertly conducted publicity campaign to give recognition to the vast majority of its dues-paying members—the service pros. With that development there also is promised substantial expansion of the PGA's sketchy educational program which began to form during the presidencies of Harry Moffitt and Horton Smith.

Golf has the biggest educational program in sports: The Evans caddie scholarships of the Western Golf Association and other association caddie scholarships; the tremendous program of the superintendents with sectional monthly meetings, courses at agricultural colleges and the annual national conference, and the Club Managers Association educational sessions regionally and in hotel schools. These have all been paying off very well for the students, their employers and golf business in general.

The PGA's one-day business education and instruction session during the annual meeting, the winter business schools in three areas and the prep school screening for tournament players, plus pro business conferences at spring meetings of several sections, are far short of the business schooling required for golf personnel doing directly at least \$150,000,-000 volume annually and indirectly figuring in \$50,000,000 of club revenue.

But whatever some versions of pro golf history charge against the Tom Walsh administration for blacking-out the PGA annual meetings as public relations assets, Walsh personally must be given credit for one of the best things that happened to the PGA in bringing it safely through change of life. Tom was the guy who hired Tom Crane, then a young Chicago lawyer recently out of the Marines.

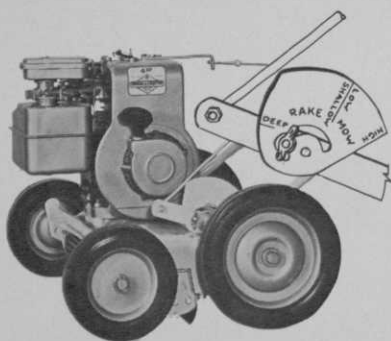
Crane's infinite patience, his carefulness, his ability and his vast kindness kept the PGA and its members out of

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a multitude of expensive jams.

In the deals on the PGA headquarters which took the organization away from the main line of sports publicity news to become a caboose of Florida real estate projects, first in Dunedin, then in Palm Beach Gardens, Crane usually had to protect the organization without being told the full story.

Ed Dudley, PGA president from 1942 to 1948 inclusive, was a wonderful public relations man for the professionals but had only a dim idea of business and organization. His winning personality and his many friends in the business world helped bring the PGA through World War II.

Maynard G. (Scotty) Fessenden, a wealthy Chicago golf enthusiast, who'd been president of the Western Golf Assn., and L. B. Icely, president of Wilson Sporting Goods Co. arranged to underwrite PGA tournaments, and their planning, plus payment of purses in war bonds, kept the tournament circuit operating on a diminished schedule.

Joe Novak, who followed Dudley and was president in 1949, '50 and '51, when the presidential tenure became limited to three years, brought the western part of the country into the PGA picture.

Horton Smith, who was president in 1952, 1953 and 1954, brought the PGA into closer relations with the USGA, the Western GA and other amateur and business organizations of pro employers. He also endeavored to get the tournament players, the tournament sponsors and the club professionals cooperating with mutual profit—a difficult task that has given headaches to presidents who followed Smith; Harry Moffitt, (1955, '56, '57); Harold Sargent (1958, '59 and '60); Lou Strong (1961, '62 and '63); Warren Cantrell, who was president in 1964 and 1965 and refused to run for a third term, and Max Elbin, now in the top office.

Business engineers who have come into the PGA to make studies and recommendations for changes in methods have privately admitted they wouldn't have the PGA president's unpaid job and responsibilities for a bundle of money. •