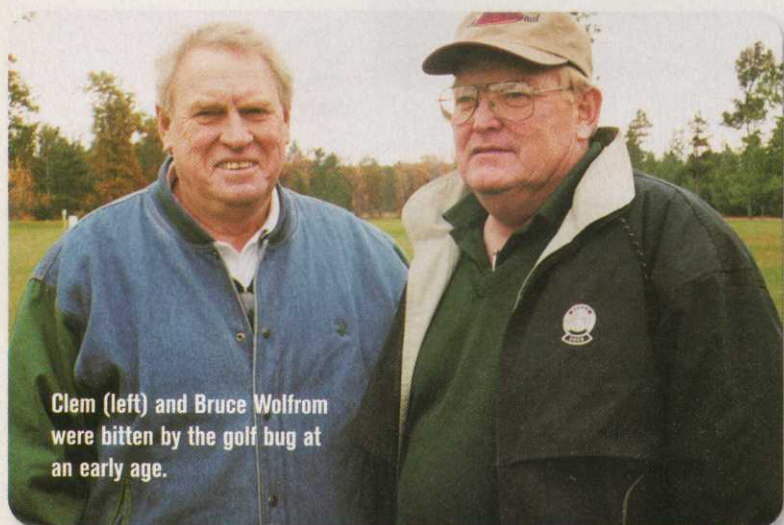


Brotherly Love

Clem and Bruce Wolfrom designed, built, operate and cherish White Pine National GC



Clem (left) and Bruce Wolfrom were bitten by the golf bug at an early age.

eastern part of the state about 30 minutes from Lake Huron. Shortly after, they designed and built White Pine National GC. "We chose the land because it was conducive to the low-cost, environmentally friendly construction we had in mind," Bruce says.

Clem, 67, and Bruce, 53, are the sons of the late Clarence Wolfrom, who worked as a superintendent for 53 years in Michigan until his death in 1984.

"Dad was the dean of grass growing around here," Clem says. "He trained several people who went on to become superintendents."

Clem greeted the world on a cold February morning in 1934 in a room above the clubhouse at the Maple Lane GC in suburban Detroit, where Clarence was superintendent. For nine years, the Wolfroms lived above the empty clubhouse in the winter when the course was closed. In the summer, they moved to make room for the clubhouse staff.

Clem recalls cutting sod by hand after school and earning a dime from his dad for every piece that sold. One of Clem's biggest childhood thrills was helping his father grade tees during a construction project. "This is the only thing I've ever wanted to do," Clem says.

Bruce, the youngest of the four Wolfrom brothers (Gerald and Wayne chose other ca-

It's no wonder that Clem Wolfrom is a superintendent, owner and architect. He was practically born on a golf course.

It's no wonder that Bruce Wolfrom is a superintendent, owner and architect. He Clem's impressionable little brother.

The Michigan-bred Wolfrom brothers grew up on golf, and they adore the game. So it's no surprise they designed, built and operate a golf course together in their home state.

Like many superintendents, the Wolfrom brothers longed to build and own a golf course but knew it was an expensive undertaking. They set out to find a way to build a course within their budget.

In 1991, the brothers discovered 400 acres of handsome, tree-laden and made-for-golf land in Spruce, Mich., a tranquil town located in the

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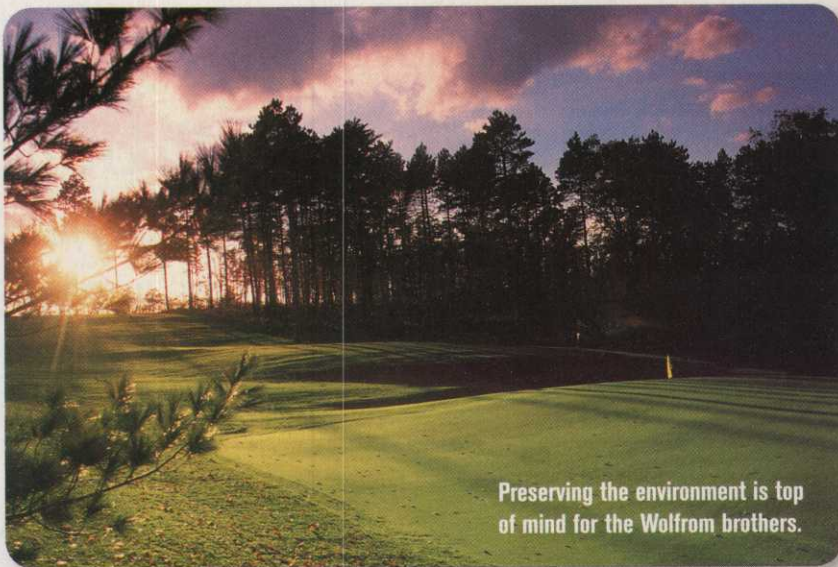
reers), decided to become a superintendent because Clem did. When he was a kid, Bruce was enamored with his oldest brother's job at Dearborn CC.

Bruce remembers other superintendents greatly respecting his father and often seeking his advice. Even though Clarence only had an eighth-grade education, Bruce says his father learned as much as he could about the profession by attending various GCSAA meetings. Clarence also demanded his sons attend college. The four brothers graduated from Michigan State University.

Clem and Bruce wanted to build a golf course together for several years. They picked a good time. Michigan began its golf boom in the early 1990s, primarily in the state's western region. "It was a good time to get in the business, and it was a good investment," says Bruce, who was superintendent at Treetops Sylvan Resort in Gaylord, Mich., before coming to White Pine National.

Bruce is the club's general manager and oversees daily operations. Clem is still the superintendent at Detroit GC, where he has been for 40 years, but he makes frequent visits to White Pine National.

Bruce, who had been involved in various construction projects at other courses such as Barton Hills CC in Ann Arbor, Mich., and Treetops, helped the brothers save money when building the course. For instance, it was Bruce's idea to install



Preserving the environment is top of mind for the Wolfrom brothers.

DAVE RICHARDS

a low-pressure irrigation system with only 50 horsepower. Bruce says the system covers as much property as any championship course in the state — with more heads and slower water.

"An average golf course here spends about \$14,000 to \$18,000 on electricity a year," Bruce says. "We spend about \$5,000."

The brothers also created their own greens mix to save money. They call it the "Wolfrom spec."

Of course, the Wolfroms designed the woody course to be maintenance friendly. There are only 35 bunkers on the course, and they are small and easy to maintain. There's also no water on the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary course.

As owners, the Wolfroms are ad-

ressing issues they know have hindered the golf business and are working to encourage more people to play the game. White Pine National offers a league for women who are beginners.

"The league has been very successful and is growing every year," Bruce says. "It's hard to take the embarrassment out of golf, but owners have to work at it."

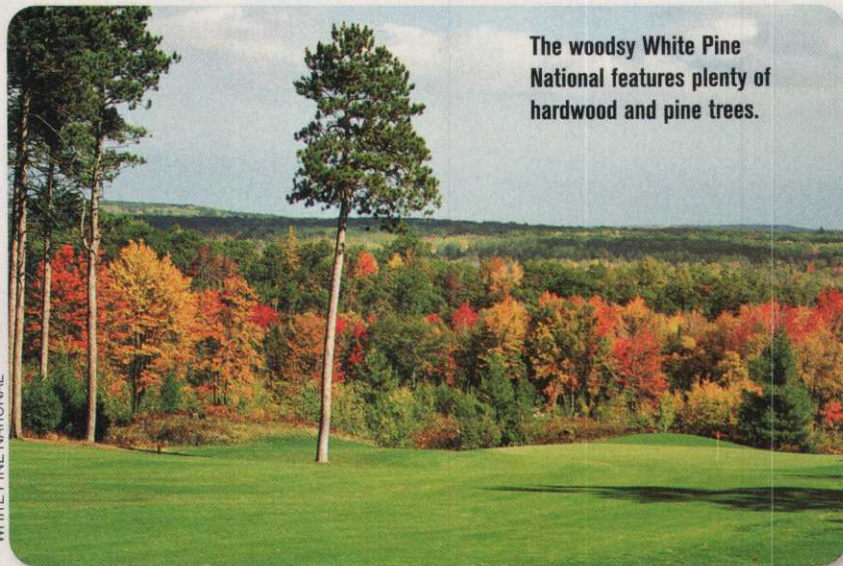
While they treasure owning their own course, Bruce says it has been more difficult than he thought.

"You think as an owner that can you just hire people to get everything done," he says. "But you can't. So you end up filling in here and there to get things done."

Bruce credits superintendent Jim Anderson, an MSU graduate who has been at the course for three years, for taking a load off his mind. "Knowing the course is in great hands frees me up to handle other things," Bruce says.

Clem and Bruce have to be mindful of more things than turfgrass. There's food, for instance. The Wolfroms want to serve excellent food all of the time in their modest clubhouse, but they know how difficult it can be.

But the added responsibility is worth it. On a recent day, the Wolfroms toured their course and gazed at its wondrous hardwood and pine trees. They beamed with pride at their creation. It's no wonder they ended up in this business. ■



The woody White Pine National features plenty of hardwood and pine trees.

WHITE PINE NATIONAL