

# William "Bill" Fischer

By JACK KOLB  
MGCSA Life Member

The Fischer name has been prominent in the border area of Eagan and Mendota Heights, especially since Louis Fischer and his wife Laura Franzmeier Fischer were given the Franzmeier Farm back in 1918. There still is a Fischer Station and Towing Service just down my street on Dodd Road. Knowing that Mendakota Country Club was built on the "Louie Fischer Farm" I decided to look for a link to the family and information pertaining to its creation.

William "Bill" Fischer was found living in retirement in St. Petersburg, Florida. Upon contacting Bill, I found an ebullient willingness to exchange information.

The history of the Fischer Farm and Mendakota Country Club can also be found in this issue of *Hole Notes*. I found Bill Fischer to be too interesting a subject to be kept from *Hole Notes* readers.

Bill Fischer was born in 1920 shortly after his parents had begun their career as farmers. As a young boy he watched his uncle Rudolph and his father Louis experiment with golf after Sunday dinners. A former German soldier and a good friend, Herman Giersh, worked for Somerset Country Club just down Dodd Road. Herman had acquired or found a couple of golf clubs and some balls and all three men shared the clubs. The golf holes were fashioned in the Fischer pasture using tomato cans as cups. So, Bill Fischer saw golf in its infancy.

By the time Bill Fischer was nine years old the infant golf course called Riverview Country Club had 18 holes. Many changes were yet to come as the young boy grew to manhood.



**THE FISCHER FAMILY** takes time out for a photo at their 50th Wedding Anniversary party. Pictured from left to right are, Lucy, son Jim and William "Bill" Fischer.

William was in on all the problems of an emerging industry including suitable equipment, conversion from sand greens to bent grass (1935). Remember this was a time of deep economic depression and severe drought. Wells had to be dug and the installation of an irrigation system followed.

All this training in golf course operations and suddenly we have a 21-year-old man wanted by the U.S. Army to come into their operation and do a career change! Bill, like many at that time, thought it was the thing to do and although the enemy was far from invading his country he went in defense of what he believed were injustices. Bill trained hard and like most country boys adapted well to military equipment. The day came to hit Omaha beach in northwest France. Bill's outfit had gone about six miles and were moving toward San Lo, France when his vehicle was blown up, an incident in which he

earned the Purple Heart medal. That did not stop Bill, after six more days and another nine miles another blast severely damaged his legs. This explosion was serious since his sciatic nerve was severed and his legs and body were full of shrapnel. He was sent back to the beach for quick repairs and thence to England.

In England, they "mined" his body for metal and sent him back to the USA aboard the Queen Elizabeth. He languished in military hospitals for 16 months. It wasn't until recently doctors discovered Bill's femoral artery was tied off during the beach operation. Bill jokingly says "I have found out why I cannot keep my legs and feet warm in Minnesota." Residual shrapnel in Bill's body still trigger security alarms at airports.

Upon returning to civilian life Bill went back to what he knew best, golf course management. His dad's old course now had taken on a new name

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## Bill Fischer—

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— it was now Twin Cities Country Club. Because of war-time injuries, he did not excel in the game of golf but his sister Lorraine Fischer McManus won two Public Golf Association championships. Lorraine won her first championship at Como Golf Course in 1948 and repeated again in 1949 at Meadowbrook Golf Course.

In 1956 Twin Cities Country Club was sold to its membership who then changed the name to Mendakota Country Club.

Bill Fischer and his father Louis, with a spirit of adventure and pioneering, went to Puerto Rico to develop and open a new golf course. Although Americans have been encouraged to start businesses in this country, it is still a foreign land and not like Mendota Heights, Minn. After a year of wrangling with foreign red tape, the Fischers returned to Minnesota and Bill became superintendent of The Lafayette Club.

Bill supervised work at Lafayette from 1958 until 1963. During this tenure Lafayette had a disastrous fire which destroyed the maintenance building and much of its equipment. In trying to salvage the equipment Bill suffered severe smoke inhalation which further contributed to his health problems.

In 1963 Milton Wiley and crew, consisting of dad John Wiley and son John Wiley, had completed work on Hazeltine and invited Bill Fischer aboard as the first superintendent in charge of Hazeltine. At the end of the 1966 season Bill decided St. Petersburg, Fla. would be a great place to open a garden nursery and moved there to pursue this business until retirement in 1978. Bill tried Las Vegas as a retirement community for four years but moved back to St. Petersburg in 1988 until the present.

The Fischers, Bill and Lucy, came back to Minnesota to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this past November. They have two adult children, a daughter Faye and son Jim.

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If interested, call Michael Klatte at (612) 473-7394 or the MGCSA business office at (612) 473-0557 or 1-800-642-7227.



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