



CHARTER

# Mid-Atlantic Newsletter



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Golf Course Superintendent through Education and Merit

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Fellow Members:

Summer's half over and everyone I've talked to is saying I've talked to is saying they're having a good summer. Help is plentiful and cooperative, the weather is holding on and members are happy with course conditions. Gentlemen this cannot be the Mid-Atlantic "Beware" of August.

Our August meeting is being held on Tuesday the 8th at Bob Milligan's Gunpowder Country Club in Laurel, Md. Bob again is hosting our Annual Family Picnic, so come one, come all and we'll have a ball.

Looking ahead, September's meeting is our joint meeting with Philly in Wilmington and our October meeting is at Hunt Valley Golf Club in Hunt Valley, Maryland. So mark your calendars early, we'd like to see you again before the snow flies.

Yours for better turf for better golf—with—can you believe green grass in August.

Bill Emerson

## Outlook Golf: 1978

By Don A. Rossi  
NGF Executive Director

Those who measure trends on sales charts may find it difficult to believe, but golf in the United States is beginning to show a slight but distinct resurgence from doldrums of the early and middle 1970's.

That is the word from the National Golf Foundation, collector and purveyor of facts and figures in golf. A reversal of a downward trend in golf facility development was evident in 1977 and is expected to continue in 1978.

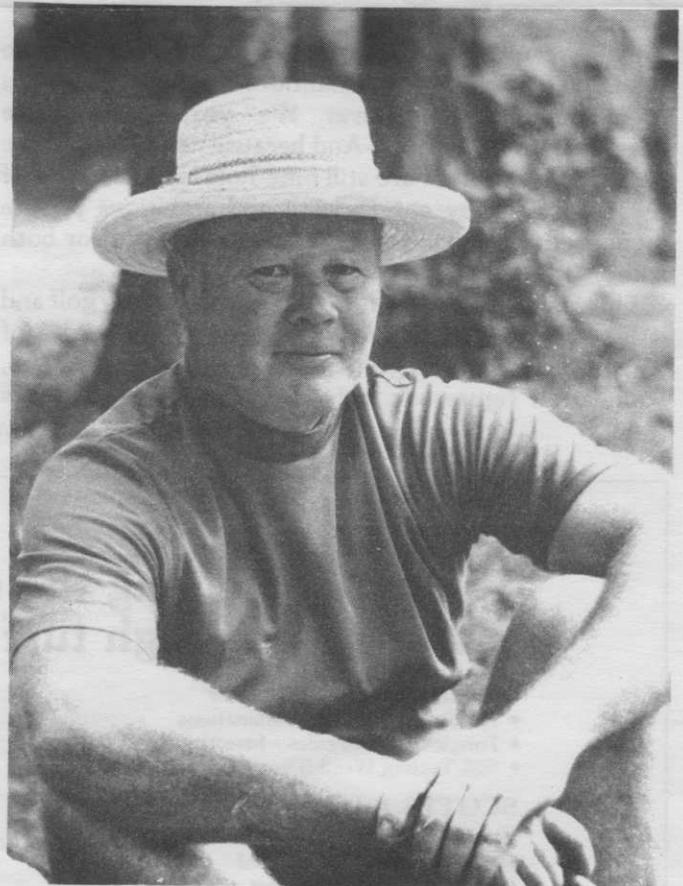
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## August Meeting

The August meeting will be held at the Gunpowder Country Club in Laurel, Maryland. Our host will be Bob Milligan. Bob, as you know, is the owner-operator at Gunpowder. This will be the fourth year in a row that we have had the picnic there, and anyone who has attended the picnic in the past knows the fun we have.

*Program for the Day:* Golf & Swimming - Anytime  
Picnic - 2:00

*Directions to the Club:* I-95 to the Beltsville exit towards Beltsville. Go ¼ mile to Gunpowder Road. Turn left to Club - 3 miles on the left.



BOB MILLIGAN

## Outlook Golf: 1978

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Equally important to the Foundation, whose entire efforts are dedicated to the advancement of golf, more golf is being played on existing facilities in virtually every area of the country.

When the Foundation's Research and Statistics Department counted only 190 openings of new golf facilities and additions to established courses during 1976, a new low for the past two decades was reached. The count of the three previous years in reverse order had been 318,277 and 322, all well down from the heyday of the late 60's when an average of 400 golf courses per year were being added to the American scene, thanks in large part to developers of vast real estate projects.

The outlook at the start of 1977 in the area of new construction was bleak at best. Predictions called for another new low, reflecting the spiraling land costs and prohibitive development expense. Only municipalities and a few major developers were making fresh ventures into golf and they with some trepidations.

As the year wore on, however, there was increasing evidence that golf was coming back in terms of additional facilities. And in the vanguard was a segment of the golf world which had survived the tightened belts of the early 70's, the energy crisis and inflation and was ready to pronounce itself bullish again on golf. Owners and operators of existing golf courses, particularly nine-hole golf courses, took the lead with expansion projects.

As a result, Foundation researchers counted more than 200 new courses and additions combined in 1977, a seven percent gain over the year golf course development hit bottom. And because nearly half of the nation's golf courses are still nine-hole layouts, many of them operated by enterprising and ambitious private owners, the outlook for 1978 is equally good for both add-on and new construction.

That means more places for Americans to play golf and it is probably just as well. While equipment sales of recent years may suggest that golfers are playing less, Foundation figures do not necessarily agree. Golfers

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## Outlook Golf: 1978

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may simple be buying less, reflecting the necessity to spend more for gasoline to get to the golf course, steadily rising green fees and refreshments at the course.

**That golfers are playing more** is attested in figures gleaned in a late 1977 Foundation survey to measure rounds of play at all types of courses across the nation. Replies from over 500 of 1,100 courses surveyed indicated a median increase in play over 1976 of 5%. Of these courses, 66.2% reported increases and just 18.6% indicated play was down. The remaining 15.2% reported no change in play during 1977.

When the survey replies are segregated into the nine geographic divisions used in all NGF research projects, each division also shows an increase in play. The regional increases ranged from a high of 6.5% in the Mountain Division, where 92% of the courses reported increases, to a low of 2% in the New England Division, where only 50% reported more play. The East South Central Division showed the next highest number of courses reporting an increase with 75%.

The New England Division had the highest percentage of courses reporting decreases with 30%. This is directly attributable to the severe weather conditions affecting much of the area during 1977.

Will golf play continue to increase in 1978 despite intensifying competition for Americans' leisure time and recreation dollar from everything from tennis to taffy-

pulling? Probably. The Foundation has discovered that golf courses build golfers as certainly as golfers build golf courses.

**Over the years each new surge** of golf course construction has brought with it new waves of golfers to play them. They will probably come again, but the Foundation is taking no chances. It has launched as its major 1978 project a campaign to deliver 500,000 new golfers to the game. They will join the more than 16 million Americans already playing golf to fill open tees and, hopefully, produce a new surge in sporting goods sales.

The Foundation is going after beginners in the schools and colleges, businesses and industries, civic and service clubs, churches, playgrounds, senior citizen centers and even in the average households.

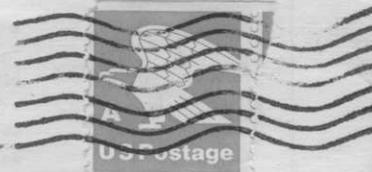
Recent history has demonstrated that women golfers are increasing at a faster rate than men and NGF intends to encourage that trend. Scores of clinics are already scheduled for 1978, enabling Foundation education personnel to teach the teachers who will introduce young players to golf. Golf course operators, golf professionals and others are being mobilized behind recruiting expeditions for older beginning golfers.

Results could be dramatic, but even if they are not, the game's doom-sayers have already been driven to cover by 1977 facility development and participation figures. The outlook for 1978 is for continued small gains in both these areas which, in the long run, are the most accurate measurements of golf's health and welfare.

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