



RIGA NEWS

Newsletter of the Rhode Island Golf Association

BOBBY JONES AND MERION

You all know by now. The USGA is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The golfing eyes of the world will be fixed on Shinnecock Hills Golf Club, on Newport Country Club, on The Country Club. Amidst all the hype and hoopla another anniversary is likely to be overlooked.

It doesn't have that significant ring of a 100th anniversary or even 50th. Try 65th. Nothing special? Well how about the 65th anniversary of Bobby Jones' Grand Slam, the greatest golfing achievement of all time. And it happened at a course with, arguably, more historical significance than any other in America.

The year was 1930. Twenty-eight year old golfing legend Bobby Jones had won the British Amateur at St. Andrews in May. In June he added the British Open at Hoylake. In July he won the U.S. Open at Interlachen GC in Minnesota. Jones came to Merion in September with one thought in his mind. "Win the U.S. Amateur."

The chance to do the unthinkable – completing a single-year sweep of golf's four major events – loomed closer as Jones captured the qualifying medal. Years later Jones' caddy Howard "Rex" Rexford, then 19, remembered how calm Jones was despite the intense pressure. As he methodically put away opponent after opponent in match play Rexford knew he was witnessing something very special. "No match went beyond the 14th hole," recalled Rexford. "I didn't do much, didn't say much. I carried the bag, told Jones the distances."

When Jones closed out Eugene Homas on the 11th green in the 36-hole final, bedlam ensued. It took six uniformed Marines to usher Jones off the golf course to the safety of the clubhouse. He had done the impossible. He had won the Grand Slam. Having made golf history at the age



tish links feel to it, too, with carefully grown beach grasses sprouting within many bunkers. Also harkening back to Scotland are the flagsticks, adorned on top not with flags but with round wicker baskets.

Measuring less than 6,600 yards, Ben Crenshaw has called it the greatest short course in the game. The first tee sits nestled next to the patio on which members will hush their chatter and stop the clinking of plates whenever a player is about to hit. The best players will hit a fairway wood to a generous fairway which will leave them with a short iron approach to a well-bunkered green. A short walk across Ardmore Avenue is then required to get to the next tee.

Pat Ward-Thomas, the famed golf writer, describes the next few holes: "The second is a mighty affair, far beyond the reach in two of ordinary mortals, and after a beautiful short hole to a pulpit green, another huge hole plunges down the slopes, but, there and then, one is done with thoughts of power and toil."

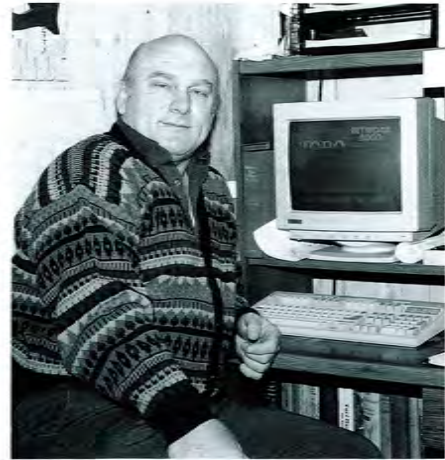
Without describing every hole, suffice it to say that Merion is a subtle course, one which severely challenges despite its lack of length. Every hole has its own identity. The 11th, a seemingly innocent par-4, is surrounded by the Babbling Brook. Jones

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The plaque which sits alongside the 11th tee at Merion.

SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER: DON SILVEN



Don Silven in front of his office computer which operates Warwick's irrigation system.

Don Silven has seen a lot in his 37 years working around golf courses. The Warwick Country Club superintendent first started in the business back in high school when he was a member of the grounds crew at Warwick.

Don was a star athlete in high school, earning All-American honors as a javelin thrower for Cranston High School's track team. He was also an All-New England diver on the swim team and a member of the football team. After starting out at the University of Maryland on a track scholarship, Don decided it wasn't for him. It was then that he began to concentrate on a career in golf course maintenance.

Don worked full-time at Warwick from 1961-1969 earning his turf grass certificate from UMASS at Stockbridge along the way. He then moved to Gilbertsville, PA for two years where he helped construct a 27-hole golf course. He came back to Rhode Island in 1971 and was offered the head superintendent job at Wannamoisett where he stayed until 1984. He's been at Warwick ever since.

Asked what has been the most challenging part of his job over the years, Don is quick to reply. "The amount of play and the demands on the golf course. It has gotten busier and busier. Golfers are on the course til sundown." This all translates into time constraints for his crew; the more players on the golf course, the more difficult it is to get the work done. Don admits that Warwick's new computerized irrigation system has been a big help during the season.

Warwick has long been considered one of the state's finest conditioned courses. With Don Silven at the helm it goes without saying.



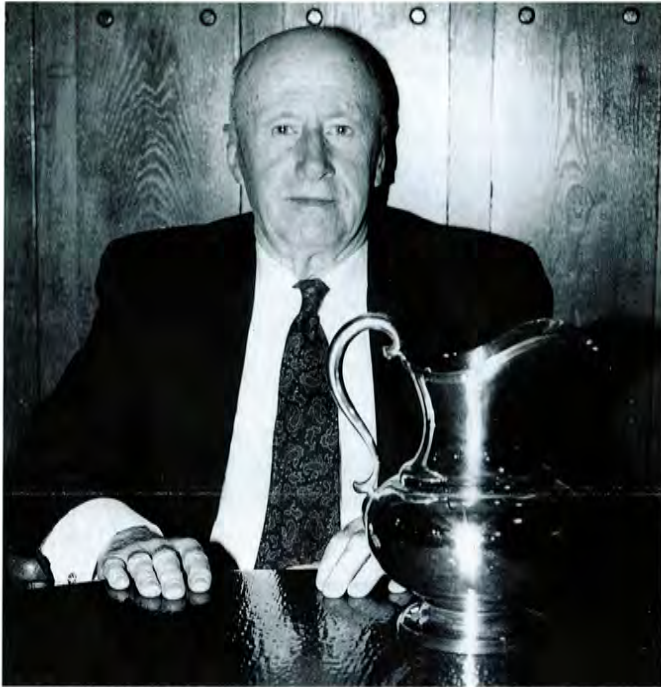
At the RIGA Annual Meeting officers were elected for '95. Pictured left to right: 2nd Vice President Patrick J. Shanahan, Quiddnessett CC; Secretary, Joseph J. Sprague; President, William F. Lunnie, Wannamoisett CC and 1st Vice President, Edmund M. Mauro of Point Judith CC.

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FORMER STATE CHAMP'S GRANDSON REMEMBERS



Bud Knight with trophy his grandfather received for winning 1908 RI State Amateur.

Eighty-seven years ago Albert S. Vennerbeck, playing out of Metacomet Country Club, won the RI State Amateur Championship. Today his grandson remembers the man who got him started playing golf.

George R. Knight, Jr., better known as Bud Knight, was ten years old when his grandfather first took him to the golf course. "He would let me play in his group if he didn't have a fourth," Knight recalls. He also remembers his Grandfather Vennerbeck's reaction when he first shot a round in the 70's. "I was fourteen when I first broke 80," Knight says with a smile, "and my grandfather took me right into the pro shop and bought me a new set of woods."

Vennerbeck had come from Sweden to the United States where he founded Vennerbeck & Clase, a precious metals company. He later introduced his grandson to the business. "I worked with my grandfather for two years after getting out of the Navy," says Knight. "I was very close to him." Knight excelled in the business world, eventually becoming president of Stern Metals by the mid-1960's and then president/chairman in 1974.

Knight is still an avid player. A long-time Wannamoisett member and former club champion at Edgartown Golf Club, he plays regularly in the summer. Just like when he was a kid and rounded out the foursome with his grandfather.

RIGA NEWS READER'S POLL: BEST OF RHODE ISLAND – PAR-3'S AND PAR-5'S

For those who live in states like Florida or Texas the possibility of playing every golf course in the state is slim. For us in Rhode Island the chances of playing all, or at least most, of the courses in the Ocean State are much greater.

With that in mind we're asking for your assistance in conducting a mid-winter survey of the best par-3 and par-5 holes in Rhode Island. There's no ulterior motive here. It's just a chance for some fun and friendly banter.

In the spaces provided below please list what you feel are the four best par-3 holes and two best par-5 holes at the 31 RIGA member courses. These include Crestwood and Ledgemont which are in nearby Massachusetts.

Keep in mind that "best" does not necessarily mean longest and/or most difficult. We're looking for best in terms of design, aesthetics and playability.

Mail or fax your list to the RIGA (FAX: 401-331-3627). We'd like to have your lists no later than late-February so we can tally the results and report back to you in the spring issue.

CHANGES MADE IN STATE AMATEUR EXEMPTIONS AND PLAYER OF THE YEAR POINTS

A couple of noteworthy changes have been made which will affect the state tournament players.

- The lifetime exemption from pre-qualifying for the State Amateur has been modified to a ten-year exemption. Past Champions prior to 1985 will have to pre-qualify for this year's Amateur.

- Points for RIGA Player of the Year will no longer be awarded in the Weekly Invitationals. Also, the top-30 players and ties (formerly 25) who have compiled the highest point totals in 1994 are exempt from State Amateur pre-qualifying.

Name (Optional) _____ Handicap _____

PAR-3'S

PAR-5'S

CLUB	HOLE	CLUB	HOLE
1. _____	_____	1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____	2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____	Mail or Fax your list to RIGA, 10 Orms Street, Suite 326, Providence, RI 02904 FAX: (401) 331-3627.	
4. _____	_____		

ASSOCIATION NEWS & MISCELLANY



Golfers at Lake Champlain, NY, circa 1900. Taken from *Golf The Greatest Game: The USGA Celebrates Golf in America*. Published by Harper Collins, the book is now available in stores and through the USGA.

Maybe it wasn't Palm Springs or Palm Beach but the early-winter weather was certainly mild enough to keep area golfers swinging right through the holidays.

No doubt, Ol' Man Winter will definitely get his licks in but have no fear. If winter golf is your thing, you need not risk frost bite or those shots that feel like broken-bat singles. There's an indoor alternative and it goes by the name of DR. GOLF. Located on School Street in Pawtucket, DR. GOLF is an indoor driving range and practice facility which allows you to see the ball fly about 60 feet before it is stopped by a net. Area pros will also be giving lessons at DR. GOLF over the winter.



Foster Country Club has been admitted to the RIGA as a member club beginning with the 1995 season. An 18-hole semi-private course which first opened in 1961, Foster offers both five and seven-day memberships. The public is also welcome.



There's another new tournament on the docket in '95. The first RIGA Parent-Daughter Tournament will be held in mid-July.



Slope and Course Ratings have been reviewed at all RIGA member clubs. Led by Chairman **Tony Ventetuolo** along with **Bill Cooke**, the RIGA Rating Team has recommended rating adjustments at some clubs. All clubs will be informed of the results in early '95.



A Handicap Meeting was conducted at Metacomet CC this past November by RIGA Handicap Consultant **Jules Cohen**. Forty-one people representing 19 clubs were in attendance. Most agreed it was a worthwhile session for asking questions and voicing concerns about current handicap methods. Another Meeting is tentatively planned for some time in mid-March.



Triggs Memorial GC is hosting a Local Qualifying round for the U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship on June 22, 1995. Those who qualify will compete in Sectional Qualifying the following week at George Wright GC in Hyde Park, MA.

The tournament proper will be held July 17-22 at Stow Acres CC in nearby Stow, MA. Any public golfer interested in competing can call or write the RIGA for an application.



Need a good golf book to read during the winter months? **Jack Mahoney** has recently published *The Golf History of New England*, a complete history from the game's 18th century beginnings in this area to the present. It's a beautifully bound 256-page hard cover with many rare photographs. Rhode Island golfers are well represented, too. From **Glenna Collett Vare** to **Kim Augusta**, from **Johnny Burke** to **Brad Faxon** and **Billy Andrade** – they're all in there. The book is only available through selected golf pro shops only or from the author himself. You can send a check or money order for \$40 to: Jack Mahoney, 15 Evergreen Avenue, Weston, MA, 02193 or call (617) 235-9455.



We all see the ads in the golf magazines proclaiming which clubs are the most popular on tour. Ever wonder what clubs are used by the top performing players on tour? November's GOLF PRO magazine lists the top-10 in the "irons" and "drivers" categories on the PGA tour for '94. Based on a point system not unlike the Sony Rankings, the magazine lists Mizuno, Ping and Wilson as the top three irons and Taylor Made, Callaway and Cobra as the top three drivers.

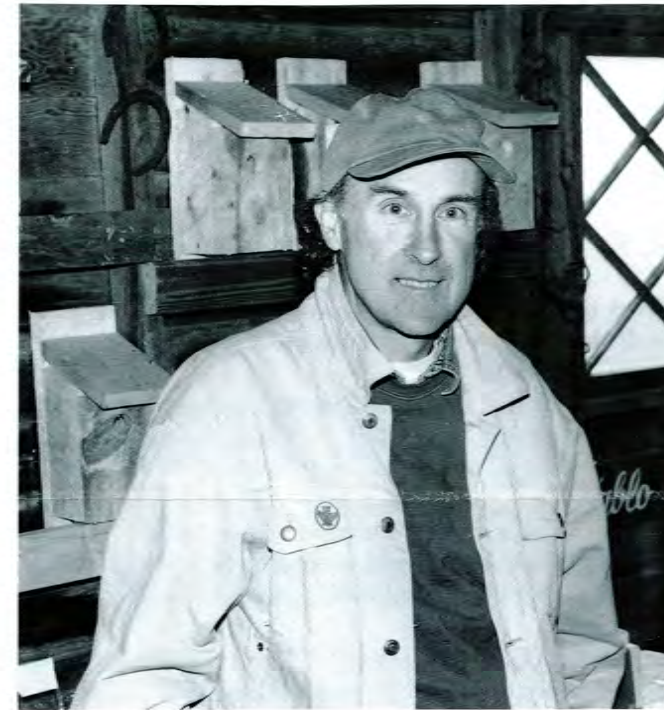


Recognizing that some of the most avid golfers are seniors, the National Senior Sports Association (NSSA) runs amateur golf tournaments for those over the age of 50. The tournaments, held once a month, are more recreational than competitive. NSSA uses group purchasing and off-season scheduling to obtain economical rates. If you're interested in finding out more you can call them at their Fairfield, CT office – (800) 282-6772.



Any players interested in qualifying for this year's U.S. Amateur should apply early. To obtain an application write to: **Larry L. Adamson**, Director of Championship Administration, USGA, P.O. Box 708, Far Hills, NJ 07931.

ALL BIRDIES FOR THIS LOCAL GOLFER



Hank Coleman in his workshop where he builds nesting boxes.

Some would say that Hank Coleman is for the birds. He wouldn't be upset, though. In fact, he'd probably take it as a compliment. In a short period of time the Rehoboth, MA resident has gone from novice bird-watcher to expert bird conservationist. "I received a bird feeder as a Christmas present eight years ago," Coleman relates. "That's what really piqued my interest. I got a couple of subscriptions to bird magazines and that's when I read about bluebirds."

The bluebird population decreased dramatically after house sparrows and starlings were introduced in this country near the turn of the century. The competition coupled with loss of habitat were the main reasons for the bluebird's decline. Placed on the endangered species list in 1978, the bluebird is making a comeback thanks to the efforts of people like Hank Coleman. In 1995 the species will be downgraded to "threatened".

After reading up on the subject, Hank decided to buy some nesting boxes in an attempt to attract birds to his property. "Attracting bluebirds was my goal," Coleman says, "but when I got the boxes we suddenly had tree swallows arriving." The bluebirds did arrive, however. There was one family the first year, two the second year and three families the third year.

Coleman now builds his own nesting boxes in a wood shop behind his house. He has erected approximately 60 boxes in his yard which attract a wide variety of birds each year including bluebirds, swallows, chickadees and wrens. He even has over-sized boxes for wood ducks in the pond behind his house.

An avid golfer and member at Agawam Hunt, Coleman would like to see more bird boxes erected on golf courses. In addition to helping rebuild the species, attracting bluebirds can be very beneficial to a golf course. Unlike the common sparrow which eats only seeds, the bluebird will eat a wide variety of insects, many of which can be harmful to turf grass. Also,

setting up nesting boxes is a way for a club to qualify for the USGA's Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

Coleman has spoken to some interested members at a few local clubs about designing bluebird trails. "This is where golf courses would be ideal," he says enthusiastically. "On a trail the boxes could be monitored." Coleman stresses that monitoring is very important. Because house sparrows are naturally more aggressive they will fight for a nesting area and in many cases even kill bluebirds or tree swallows. "If you find house sparrows in bluebird boxes," Coleman says, "you can simply remove the nesting material from the boxes."

Given land constraints, bluebird trails may not be appropriate for some golf courses. In these instances Coleman suggests utilizing the boxes as 150 yard markers and having members adopt a box.

Once a species has accepted a nesting site it will return annually. There are a few important considerations to insure its ongoing success:

Box Construction – There are specific dimensions which appeal to bluebirds and tree swallows which will discourage house sparrows and starlings. The floor should measure four inches by four inches and the height should measure right around eight inches. Also, the entrance for the birds should be a rounded hole one and a half inches in diameter.

Box Placement – A nesting box should be in an open area at a height of four to five feet preferably facing east. There should be a perch, either man-made or in the form of a tree limb, 25 to 50 feet away from the box.

Box Monitoring – Due to competition from alien species, monitoring boxes during the nesting period is extremely important. Removal of the alien species' nesting material will discourage them from using nesting boxes.

Hank Coleman is a member and contributing writer for the North American Bluebird Society, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Minnesota Bluebird Recovery Program and the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology where he is a Citizen Scientist.

He has successfully attracted bluebirds to south-eastern Massachusetts for several years.

Any superintendent or club member who may be interested in a bird box program may contact Hank Coleman at the following address or phone:

183 Wheeler Street
Rehoboth, MA 02769
(508) 336-7399

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



William F. Lunnie

I want to take this opportunity to say hello and welcome you all to the 1995 RIGA golf season. It promises to be a great year for the RIGA with a full schedule of competitive golf as well as 30 weeks of the popular RIGA "Weeklies" held at our member clubs.

Of major importance this year will be the centennial celebration of the USGA Amateur Championship which will be held at Newport Country Club. Wanumetonomy Golf & CC will be the second site used in the stroke play portion of the tournament.

Newport Country Club was the site of the first USGA Amateur in 1895 and is also one of the five charter members of the USGA. Many exciting events will be held during the week of this year's Amateur including a day of golf at Rhode Island Country Club with past USGA champions. Rumor has it that even Arnold and Jack will be there.

I hope you all have a great 1995 on the links, and thank you for your continued support of the RIGA.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

What great golfing weather we had in November and December! Someone mentioned that we still could have been playing the Weeklies. No question, we sure had a longer season this past year; it was as good as I can recall in a long time.

We've been busy at the RIGA making plans for the '95 season as well as putting the final touches to our tournament schedule. 1995 should be an exciting golf season for all of us in Rhode Island with the USGA celebrating its 100th Anniversary.

Our ten-year tentative tournament Future's Chart is being reviewed and updated. We feel that a five-year schedule is more realistic. When completed it will be mailed to all clubs for their review and planning.

Both new tournaments from '94 – the Mid-Amateur and Senior Four-Ball – got off to great starts. We're looking for both of these to grow in popularity. The Senior Four-Ball will henceforth be called the Ed Perry Senior Four-Ball in memory of Ed and his 33 years of dedicated service to golf and the RIGA as Executive Secretary. This event will open our '95 major tournament schedule in May at Valley Country Club.

The Mid-Amateur will be played once again at Triggs. This year it will be held in early-June with the hope for better weather than we experienced last year in mid-May.

We're hoping for good participation in our reader's poll in selecting the best par-3 and par-5 holes from our member courses. The results could be interesting.

That's it for now. Let's hope for an early spring so we can try out that new swing we've envisioned.

– Joseph J. Sprague

Bobby Jones and Merion...

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completed the Slam here, but Gene Sarazen made seven in the 1934 U.S. Open and lost the tournament by one.

The 16th requires an approach shot over a wasteland of scotch broom and bunkers that was once a quarry. The 17th can be a devastating par-3 to which even the best players will hit a fairway wood. Then there is the 18th. Hogan stood in the fairway in the final round of the 1950 Open, a year after his near-crippling auto accident, needing a four to tie. From a downhill lie he hit a one iron onto the crowned green, two putted for the tie and won in the following day's play-off.

The legendary moments didn't stop with Hogan. In 1960 a 20 year-old kid named Nicklaus ushered in golf's modern era by absolutely overpowering Merion in the World Amateur Team Championship. Nicklaus shot 11-under leading the Americans to a 42(!) stroke victory.

Tied after 72 holes, Lee Trevino duelled with Jack Nicklaus in the 1971 U.S. Open at Merion, beating Nicklaus 68-71 in a Monday play-off for his second Open. Australian David Graham played a flawless final round, hitting all 18 of Merion's greens in regulation to capture the 1981 U.S. Open.



John Mainna

A look from behind Merion's fourth green, the second and final par-five on the golf course.

If there is such a thing as hallowed ground, Merion can certainly claim more than its fair share. One stroll around its graceful terrain, walking in the footsteps of Jones, Hogan and Nicklaus, it's difficult not to be inspired by what these players must have felt on their way to making golf history.