



THE CLASSICS

From the classic era of clubmaking

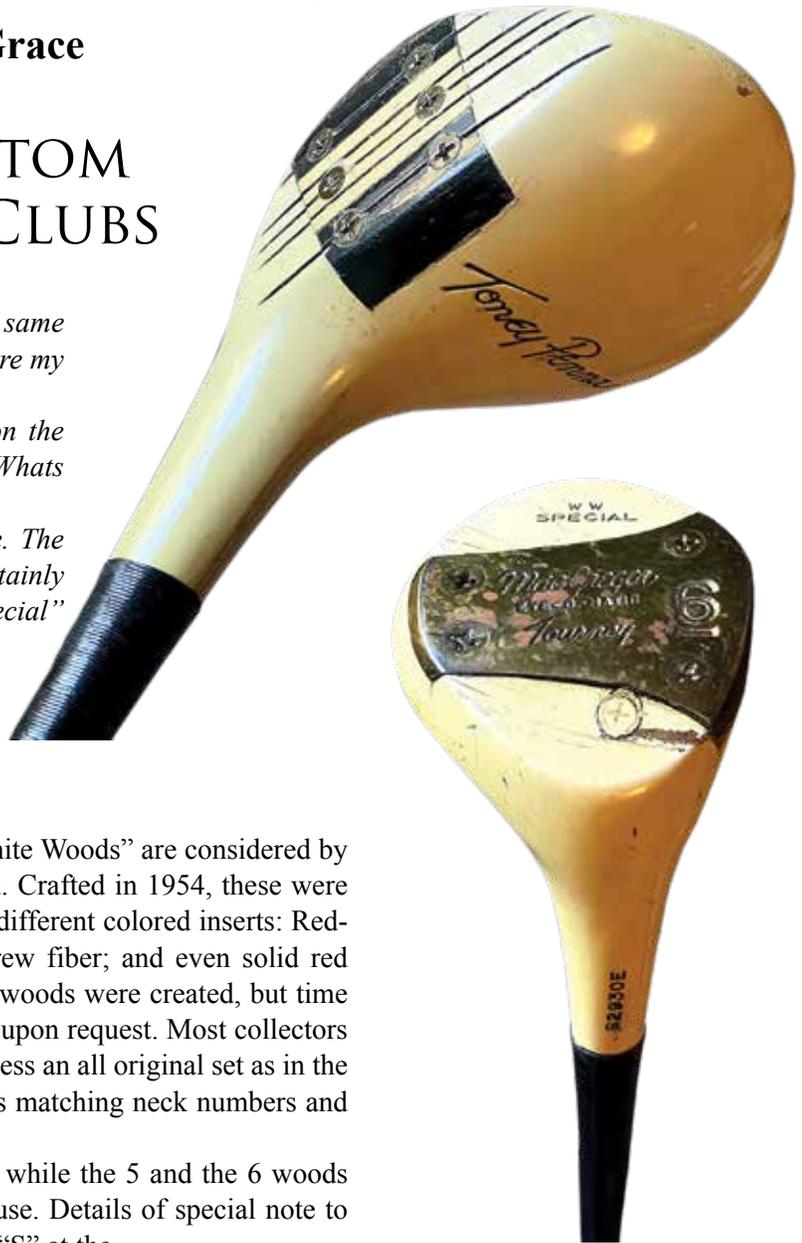
By Bobby Grace

MACGREGOR CUSTOM DEPARTMENT 'OS' CLUBS

I know all you collectors who read this have the same zeal as I do each time you go club hunting and share my belief that you never know what gems you'll find.

In future issues I'll share more info not only on the clubs to covet, but also the clubs to avoid — the Whats and What Nots.

This article, however, will focus on the positive. The clubs described here are extremely valuable and certainly keepers. In fact, these clubs are so special that "special" is in their name. — BG



White Woods Toney Penna WW Special

The MacGregor OS Toney Penna WW Special "White Woods" are considered by many the most valuable and rare woods in the world. Crafted in 1954, these were only available as custom orders and were made with different colored inserts: Red-White-Red, 6-screw fiber; Black-White-Black, 6-screw fiber; and even solid red fiber inserts. It was long believed that only 1-4 WW woods were created, but time has shown us that 5 and 6 woods were also produced upon request. Most collectors have never seen a refinished example of these, much less an all original set as in the photo below. This astounding, all original set features matching neck numbers and includes 1,2,3,4,5,and 6 woods.

Note that the 1-4 woods have hourglass soleplates while the 5 and the 6 woods have swept-back soleplates. These clubs show little use. Details of special note to collectors are that the neck numbers typically had an "S" at the beginning to signify "Special Order," though some MacGregors that were ordered special had a neck number that started with an "OS." Tourney Silver-banded True Temper shafts had either the "T" Tourney Cord grips on the WWT stamped versions or the Tourney two-tone black and burgundy leather grips on the "WW" versions.

These were the most expensive woods of their time, usually 30% more than any of their Tourney counterparts.

The other clubs in this bag of custom-ordered gems are just about as rare. The Toney Penna VIP TP-63 irons were only available by custom order in 1963 and are coveted by all classic club collectors. The rarely seen copper VIP TP IMG putter was only available if you ordered the irons. The high cost of this Penna putter explains its scarcity.



OS MacGregors

I'm always thrilled to find clubs created by the MacGregor "Ordered Special" department. This unique unit of talented people at MacGregor handled the needs of "Tour Players" as well as celebrities. Their specialty was custom orders that required extra attention. The OS group was active during 1939-1975, when MacGregor was by far the largest and most successful golf company in the world. The company dominated the tour as well as the marketplace. Pictured at right is a fine example of one of my OS discoveries. This set of totally custom Eye-o-Matic woods was custom ordered by George Thomas (Tom) Knappenberger, a well known USGA Certified Rules Official who officiated many Majors and was well respected in the world of golf. These woods have very unusual characteristics. The 6-screw fiber inserts were like the M-85Ws, but the swept-back soleplates were usually found on the 693s, 945s, and 653s. You'll note there is no "Oil Hardened" stamp on the sole above the plate, simply his name: "G.T. KNAPPENBERGER." A cool find indeed.



Custom Eye-O-Matics

Another find worthy of this article is a set of custom ordered "EYE-O-MATICS" that look like M-85s but have "CHUCK TANIS" stamped on the crown and "OIL HARDENED" stamped on the sole. Tanis, a lifelong Staff Player at MacGregor, turned pro in 1914, became head pro at Olympia Fields south of Chicago in 1936, and retired in 1968. He passed away in 1986. This set of woods is nearly museum quality thanks to the original burgundy finish and the depth of the driver face. M-85s with custom signatures on the crown are very rare and sought after by collectors around the world.

