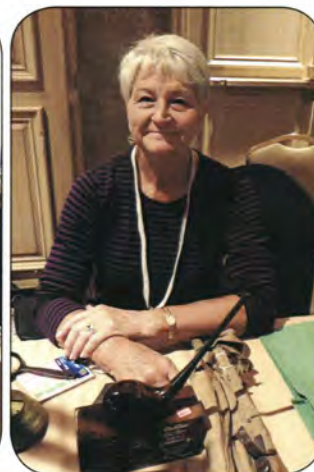




**GCS
Annual Meeting
& Trade Show
Las Vegas, 2014**



Trade Show exhibitors - A few of the many people at the Show included, clockwise from bottom right: Barbara Morris (Porterville, Calif.), Wayne and Sally Perkins (Evansville, Ind.), Tony Hoffman (San Antonio, Texas), Peter Yagi (left, Des Moines, Wash.) and Dennis Toy (Whitefish Bay, Wisc.), Glen Baker (San Diego, Calif.), and the Barrett family - Joan, John, and daughter, Carisa (Renton, Wash.)



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Golf to Goff, Las Vegas meet a real Western treat

By Jim Davis

The Suncoast Hotel and Resort, some 15 miles northwest of the famous Strip in Las Vegas, Nev., was host to the 44th Annual General Meeting, which welcomed nearly 200 participants and exhibitors this past Nov. 13-15.

Cartons of clubs and crates of precious ceramics and other items were carted through the casino proper on the lobby floor, a room that never sleeps, filled with flashing multi-colored lights on hundreds of slot machines, rows of green-surfaced gaming tables, and all surrounded by bars and restaurants. What a sight for the Las Vegas novice!

PBA auction

Most participants knew that the first evening was devoted to the PBA auction and its centerpiece, a second edition of *The Goff*, the heroi-comical poem of 1793 by Thomas Mathieson, and the first printed book devoted entirely to our favorite subject (shown above right).

Auction master George Fox allowed that he was a bit nervous about this first attempt at an auction away from his home base in San Francisco. A few golf clubs and silver items lent a modest diversity to the several shelves of rare and historical books that awaited the bidder's nod.

A brief moment of panic ensued when Fox opened the hardshell case that contained *The Goff* and discovered it missing. Turns out that a potential bidder had, after a careful examination of the rare tome, unthinkingly put it on one of the shelves rather than back in its case. This mishap discovered and the book happily replaced, the much relieved Mr. Fox began the auction.

A few hours later, almost all items had sold, including *The Goff*, for a handsome \$50,000. Tom Stewart golf clubs continue their popularity with collectors – and players – a set of seven going for \$700.

Fox said he was most happy with the results and gratified that all the auction planning had been rewarded. In fact, the fellow who had purchased *The Goff* is the same man who had earlier caused the moment of concern, George Petro of Endwell, N.Y. "I wasn't planning to bid on anything," he said. "But after I saw the book, I knew what my upper limit would be and am very happy to have it." He said he would display it at home near a facsimile edition. It was hard to tell who was happier, George Fox or George Petro.

Friday meetings

Friday was a busy day for the AGM, beginning with a GCS Board meeting at 7:15 a.m. sharp. Following their weighty discussions and decision-making, the AGM got underway at 9 a.m. with brief presentations by the various board members. Perhaps of greatest interest, other than the welcome fact that the Society is currently healthy in the financial area, was the

difficult decision by the Board to take *The Bulletin* to an online presence for three of its four annual issues, at least for now. The move will save greatly on printing and distribution

costs, as is easy to see, but is still something to digest for many who have come to see the printed version as the central collectible of their organization.

As President John Capers III noted, however, the GCS must move with the times to attract younger members, many of whom are practically born to the Internet. We shall see how it all plays out. As our *Bulletin* editor – me, actually – pointed out, whether it is produced on paper or in digital bits and bytes, *The Bulletin* remains the heart of the GCS and will always be there to tell our stories and share our news. There will, no doubt, be a period of adjustment and a certain loss in reading *The Bulletin* on screen rather than in hand, but there will be an opportunity for any individual to print his or her own hard copy. (More of this on page 30.)

Before the meeting's end, long-time member Gene Boldon rose and in his booming deep basso, delivered an emotional, heartfelt thank-you to the assembled for many years of friendship and experiences. "When I think of all you new guys coming on who will become affiliated with such fine human beings, well, it just blows my mind," he said. Mr. Boldon, who is one of the older members of the Society, recalled how founders Joe Murdoch and Bob Kuntz took him "under their wing" to get him started in golf collecting. It was a stirring moment and a reminder to all how short our time is and how fortunate we are to spend so much of it in such company.

Presentations

Brian Hulburt, president of the Las Vegas Golf Hall of Fame, offered a captivating talk on the area's famous championships, celebrities, and golf stars who have added so much to Las Vegas golfing lore. Tiger Woods, for example, when he won his first PGA Tour event, the Las Vegas Invitational, in 1996, was asked how it felt. "To be honest," he said, "I'm surprised it took this long." It was his fifth tour event. Mr. Hulburt punctuated his presentation with the occasional trivia question about Las Vegas golf, a correct answer rewarded with a handsome book on Las Vegas golf history.

John Fischer III, GCS vice president, followed with a presentation on post cards, those most easily collected and wonderfully historic of collectibles. Both old and new scenes were represented from the golf house at Franklin Park and its



association with Francis Ouimet, to the newer scenes at Pebble Beach and Bandon Dunes. The cards displayed on the large screen were delightful to see, well selected from Fischer's own collection, and offering both old hands and newer collectors a range of possibilities to enhance their pastime.

Desert golf

The Friday afternoon golf outing at the nearby Angel Park Golf Course hosted some 74 golfers, many in knickers and ties and most with a set of hickory clubs. In what has become a popular component of the AGM, the hickory golf outing offers an opportunity to test our prowess, or lack thereof, with the old weapons.

Desert golf was a new experience for some of us, who are accustomed to chasing errant shots into woods and under leaves and branches. Slices and hooks here met with scrub, cacti, sandy wastes, and rocky ground, as well as the occasional half-way-house sized boulder. Several water hazards provided ironic relief in that these are a near universal challenge in all golfing lands. Even here, in the desert, we could find comfort in their familiarity if not the lost ball to their depths.

Wide, generous fairways helped matters, although the ball seemed to fly farther than anticipated. Some credited this to the open desert scenery with its puzzling depth perception; others to the thinner air, 3,000 feet above sea level. Whatever the reason, one had to dial back when a mashie stamped at "135 yards" was flying around 150.

The outing was cut short when the sun sank behind those high western hills at around 4:30 p.m. or so. Many groups finished their last two holes in the gathering dark and most got in but 17 holes altogether. Still, good fun. For some of us, 9 to 12 holes is just right for a round of golf.

Friday banquet

Friday evening's banquet was a welcome respite to a day of desert golf or a busy and tiring afternoon on The Strip, or even to those hunting down the locations of the History Channel's *Pawn Stars* or *American Restorations*, two popular television shows filmed on or near the far end of Las Vegas Boulevard.

Such was the lively conversation between friends, new and old, that MC John Capers III was hard pressed to gain their attention from the podium.

Golf writer Curt Sampson followed lively opening remarks from Mr. Capers who recognized and thanked: Bill Reed for organizing and hosting the meeting; and British Golf Collectors Society President Philip Truett for representing that august group of like-minded collectors and historians. Mr. Capers also welcomed special guest Don Cherry, the noted golfer/singer. Now 90, Mr. Cherry was a high ranked player in his day, a veteran of nine Masters, three U.S. Opens, and three Walker Cups (1953, 1955 and 1961 – he never lost a match). Mr. Cherry then moved smoothly into entertainment, with a voice as silky as his golf swing. "Band of Gold" was his signature song and he remained a headliner for many years.

Mr. Sampson's talk was wide-ranging, touching on his many books and his experiences in writing them. Among his 14 (a number casually emphasized by Mr. Sampson) books are *Hogan* (1996), *The Masters: Golf, Money, and Power*

in Augusta, Georgia (1999); and *Eternal Summer: Palmer, Nicklaus, and Hogan in 1960, Golf's Golden Year* (2000).

Charming, engaging, and humorous almost by accident, Mr. Sampson spoke easily as though to friends and, indeed, he said later, "Speaking to this group, I am speaking to people who enjoy the same things I do. It just comes naturally." As naturally as his writing, and we are all the richer for his powerful prose and his habit of "researching by doing." For example, he said, he would be traveling to Fort Worth, Texas, immediately after the meeting to find Ben Hogan's boyhood home and trace the young Hogan's steps to Glen Garden Country Club, the golf course where Hogan and Byron Nelson became acquainted as caddies. "The course has a date with bulldozers on Dec. 1," Sampson said. He wants an opportunity to play the course once more and write about the impending demise of a course so associated with two of golf's great legends, not to mention Sandra Palmer, a 19-time LPGA winner; and Jack Grout, the coach of Jack Nicklaus. Look for his article in *Golf Digest*, the online version, dated 12/01/2014.

The Trade Show

Do we speak of the trade show? It is so familiar a scene, yet so new at the same time. Each is a new opportunity for discovery. What new treasures will grace the many tables? Will the right club so wanted to fill out a collection be found? Will classic era pyratones ever challenge hickories for supremacy? Will Hogan, Palmer, Nicklaus, and Player be considered by a new generation in the same reverent way as many of us think of Morris, Vardon, Taylor, and Park?

Times are changing, but the art of assembling a beautiful collection is still the same – luck, perseverance, experience and knowledge. All these are represented on the many exhibitors' tables.

For all the wonderful items to be found, it is still hard to beat the allure of a fine hickory golf club for satisfying taste of golf history. This show was no different in that such clubs were abundant in all their wonderful iterations – shapes, sizes, cleek marks, makers, and owners.

I admit to a certain fascination for ceramics and "smalls," the little and unusual items from silver cases to small figurines, tees, balls, and trophies. Ceramics, though these can be expensive collectibles, feature colorful and beautiful shapes, with graceful artwork made near immortal by expert glazing.

From Philip Truett's collection of post cards and books to Jack Wilson's suprisingly intact "Fold a Fairway" practice contraption, there was much to see and much to appreciate at this 44th AGM trade show.

If you failed to win at the gaming tables, you could not but win at the trade show. And your money would go much further.

In 2015

We are to meet near Chicago in 2015, from Sept. 17-19, at the Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles, Ill. There will be nearly a year until then, a year to buy, sell, and trade; to find new items and discover new depths of our favorite collecting interests.

In the meantime, enjoy the many regional shows and outings and don't forget to introduce some youngsters to the game and to the joy of collecting. You'll be rewarded many times over.

