

Golf passion and pine straw

The 2024 GHS National Convention in Pinehurst hit all the right notes

By **Taba Dale**
and **Jim Davis**

The Golf Heritage Society chose Pinehurst, N.C., for our National Convention this year, and was I, Taba, ever glad for this decision.

I had not been back to the “American Cradle of Golf” for several years. Most of us golf geeks would know that Pinehurst was established in 1895 when a Boston businessman, James Walker Tufts, purchased 5,500 acres and opened the Holly Inn. It was not a golf destination then, as the first golf course was laid out in 1897-98. The most famous course was designed by Donald Ross and it opened in 1907, at the dawn of the Golden Age of Golf, which lasted until around 1937.

The Village of Pinehurst is quite small but very charming, largely because Tufts hired Frederick Law Olmstead Sr.’s firm to design the little town. Olmstead Sr. is revered for having designed Central Park in NYC and the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., among other famous architectural wonders that include the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

We were blessed with perfect weather for a stroll around the quaint Village but the wind kicked up when I played the Thistle Dhu putting course with Spike Abernethy and our esteemed editor of *The Golf* journal, Jim Davis.

I know Jim is an accomplished hickory player, so I didn’t think I’d ever get to play a round with him. When I suggested that we play the little putting course, Jim rowed right in.

The name harkens back to 1919 when James Barber, owner of the Barber Steamship Lines of New York, came to Pinehurst, built his home and America’s first miniature golf course amid the towering pine trees. (Hence, the pine straw created by the shedding needles.)

Supposedly, when he saw his completed home and course he said, “This’ll do.” The surname Barber can be traced back to Northumberland, which bordered Scotland. With the thistle having become the Scottish national emblem, the name morphed into Thistle Dhu and it stuck.

The course itself pays homage to the famous Himalayas next to the Old Course in St Andrews. It is home to the St Andrews Ladies’ Putting Club, dating to 1867.

Back to Jim – he told me later that when he reported he played 18 holes that day to many Society members they were amused because they couldn’t figure out how he did it! Oh that Jim, he is so clever!

The GHS National Convention – Oct. 16-19

Credit goes to Bill Robertson, Bob Hansen, Peter Johnson, Rob Rendely, Richard Mandell – and, indeed, everyone on the GHS future venue committee, for envisioning a compelling itinerary, with the USGA Experience anchoring our group.

Following an early-bird golf outing on Wednesday at the Hyland Golf Club, one that featured a Persimmons and Blades championship promoted by local professional David Bass, the evening brought a highly anticipated visit and VIP tour/reception at Golf House, the USGA Experience and World Golf Hall of Fame at Pinehurst. We were welcomed very warmly and it was a perfect setting for all of our speakers.

This new facility near the Pinehurst Golf Club was, for many of us, our first visit to this fresh, new presentation of golf history. The USGA reception was outstanding in every way, from the crowd that made it standing-room-only to our gracious hosts – Hilary Cronheim (USGA Museum Director), Mike Trostle (Director of the World Golf Hall of Fame) and Maggie Lagle (Manager of Community Engagement and Public Programs) – to the displays themselves, honoring so many legendary VIPs from players to golf journalists, all presented in a tall locker-format with artifacts such as clubs, medals, books, photos and more. Wandering about was a true joy.

The first educational session on Thursday began with Jan Ludwig, a longtime Pinehurst resident historian and member of the Donald Ross Society, who discussed another of his affiliations – The Tin Whistle Society, which claims to be the oldest continuous men’s golfing society in the U.S.

The Tin Whistles are a low key group but surprisingly influential. Their members can be found in healthy numbers among the list of U.S. Amateur and Open champions and top 10 finishers; five have been presidents of the USGA. Their 46-year-old scholarship program has awarded more than two million dollars in scholarships for local students.

The GHS National Championship took place afterward on a cool but sunny Thursday afternoon at the Longleaf Golf and Family Club on the road to Southern Pines. It is a friendly course, eminently playable for every taste and style – hickories, classics, modern clubs – all in several divisions based on age and scramble teams, too. Lots of good fun to begin with on the putting green with Tom Judy winning the putting contest. Although a bit chaotic – the competition is always second to camaraderie anyway – it was a total blast. Golf winners:

Hickory Scramble – Patrick Foley, Jim Davis, Bob Mirt,

and Bruce Markwardt
 Hickory Champion – Kirk Watson with an 82
 Hickory Open Net Champ – Bill Kriechert 83
 Hickory Senior Net Champ – Steve Carney 72
 Hickory Statesman Champ – Ron Pearlman 72
 Modern Net – Rob Rendely 71
 Modern Ladies Champ – Jeannette Kohlhaas 81
 Hickory Ladies Champ – Nicole Trevino

The reception that followed at Longleaf was well done with great food and plenty of laughter and conversation among happy golfers and friends.

Friday morning began at the USGA's Golf House, beginning with our General Membership Meeting and a presentation from GHS President Bill Robertson on the status of our Society (healthy, thanks to a robust sponsorship program and emphasis on membership value), followed by GHS Vice President George Petro who described a project dear to his heart, our soon-to-be-live and reinvigorated GHS website.

Petro is a live, high-wire(d) act whose enthusiasm, if it could be bottled, would drive our Society well into the next century. To him is due the credit for the newest iteration of the GHS website, an attractive and well-organized site that presents the expertise on golf collectibles and history that is the hallmark of our Society. It is extraordinary and I can't wait for it to be visible to the whole world.

The following educational sessions began with Jerry Austri, the engaging and charming former president of the Ben Hogan Company. The astonishing stories he told us are captured in his book: *The Hogan Edge: How the Hogan Company Found and Lost its Edge*. Most memorable were his accounts of personal business meetings with a Hogan whose steely countenance alone spoke volumes.

Richard Mandell, golf course architect and Pinehurst resident, spoke on Ross' evolution as an architect and his indelible mark on Pinehurst and American golf course architecture. He knows whereof he speaks, having completed 11 Ross golf course restorations. You don't impose on a Ross course, you reveal what was intended. More can be found in his fascinating book: *The Legendary Evolution of Pinehurst*.

Noted golf art and collecting guru Bob Hansen anchored the presentations as only he could, with a classy and nuanced discussion of how the artists of their day captured the nature of the game as they knew it. Hansen brought just a few items from the Old Golf Shop, but they were first-class – he collects and sells only the best of the best.

The Golf Heritage Society is growing and embracing people of all stripes who love playing the great game of golf, who love learning, and who love sharing stories. We are a robust mixture of older members, newer members and everything in between, all bound to each other by fellowship and camaraderie.

Of all things, the annual banquet is a special time for the GHS where friends gather and relax and honors are given



BOBBY GRACE



JIM JESELNICK



CURT FREDRIXON



MEN IN BLACK

Lifetime Benefactors of the Society are recognized by their signature black blazers sourced from Don Van Pelt. From left are: Glenn Hauelsen, Mike Beckerich, Wayne Xing, John Rusbosin, Randy Condit, Jim Jeselnick, Frank Cantrel Jr., and Tom Irving. Beckerich, Condit, Rusbosin and Irving are the newest members of this group.

to those who have served the Society in so many ways. Our venue was the Country Club of North Carolina, sponsored by Rusty Wells, a member of the club. It's a beautiful, quiet spot, nestled near a lake amidst lovely homes. After cocktails and the delicious meal GHS President Bill Robertson got things going. George Petro presented the Harris-Wolke Award to Bobby Grace for his cheerful efforts to improve our games and our collecting knowledge in so many ways. Jim Davis presented the Society's Golden Quill Award for an outstanding article on golf history in our journal, *The Golf*, to Curt Fredrixon for his Spring 2024 article on the Bauer Sisters. Curt invited all GHS members to follow his lead and write about what they enjoy in golf history and collecting. Bern Bernacki then welcomed Jim Jeselnick to the GHS Hall of Fame for the countless ways Jim has worked to improve the Society. Lastly, the newest members of the "Black Blazer Club" were introduced, the Lifetime Benefactors whose crucial support the GHS is proud to acknowledge.

To end the evening, keynote speaker Mike Hicks kept us enthralled with stories and anecdotes about his many years as Payne Stewart's friend and caddy. "I never thought he'd sink that putt," he recalled thinking about that magical moment in 1999. You know the rest of that story.

More on the convention and Trade Show with a spread of photos on the following pages.....

The GHS clan in Pinehurst

The photos tell the story of a great time from golf to the USGA Golf House, brilliant presentations and time to visit the Village of Pinehurst, too. Can't wait to return!



USGA HOSTS, above, Mike Trostle, left, Maggie Lagle and Hilary Cronheim welcomed us to Golf House. Far left, Bob Fletcher takes in a display at the new Golf House. And at near left, Bill Robertson welcomed everyone to the Wednesday night reception.



JAN LUDWIG gave an excellent presentation on The Tin Whistles golfing society.



RICHARD MANDELL talked about Donald Ross and Pinehurst. Above, he is joined by fellow golf course architect Jan Bel Jan, both in their American Society of Golf Course Architects blazers.

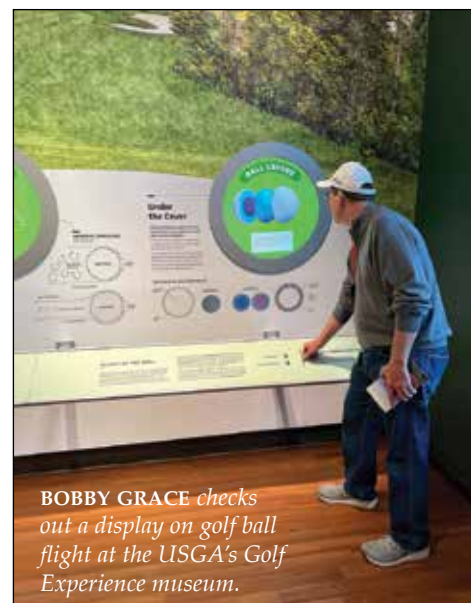


JERRY AUSTRY delivered a most compelling talk about his time as president of the Ben Hogan Co.



GOLF ART is a passion for Bob Hansen, who shared some of his deep knowledge with GHS members.

Speaking of passion, George Petro, at right, delivered an energetic talk on the features of our soon-to-be-launched reinvigorated website.



BOBBY GRACE checks out a display on golf ball flight at the USGA's Golf Experience museum.



JANET AND BOB MIRT check out a case of trophies at the USGA's Golf House.



WAYNE XING, center with books, and friends gather in front of Golf House. Wayne was just receiving the books, a gift from Alastair Johnston, for his golf museum in China.



VIP RECEPTION AT GOLF HOUSE.



GOOD FRIENDS Phil Kostolnik, left, Pete League and Wayne Aaron were pleased to see each other in Pinehurst.



VIP RECEPTION AT GOLF HOUSE.



BOB MUIR photographs the famous vest worn by Payne Stewart during his 1999 U.S. Open victory.



THE LEFT HAND LOW style of Spike Abernethy. How did he not take the GHS Championship?



THE PLAYERS AT THE 2024 GHS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

The annual GHS Trade Show

was held in the Fair Barn, a few miles from our hotel, which meant extra work for everyone involved, but there was a great buzz in the Barn from the opening bell at 9 a.m.

Overhead beams in the large and spacious barn were hung with festive lights creating an atmosphere that seemed to brighten the day and spirits as well. Business was brisk. We were pleased to have several authors on hand – Taba Dale, Ann Liguori, Richard Mandell, Jerry Austry, and Stuart Bendelow, among others, all with books to sign and stories to tell.

Says Taba: *“I was delighted to participate in the member-author book signing at the Trade Show. Firstly, my table was right next to Ann Liguori, who was signing her new book: Life on the Green, and secondly, I was signing my new first U.S. Edition of Terroir of Golf and I sold out! It is really fun and gratifying to greet people who march right up to the table and declare ‘I want to buy your book.’ I truly felt so honored to have the opportunity to be face-to-face with lovers of golf, books, travel and the big audience of wine aficionados who share all these passions.”*

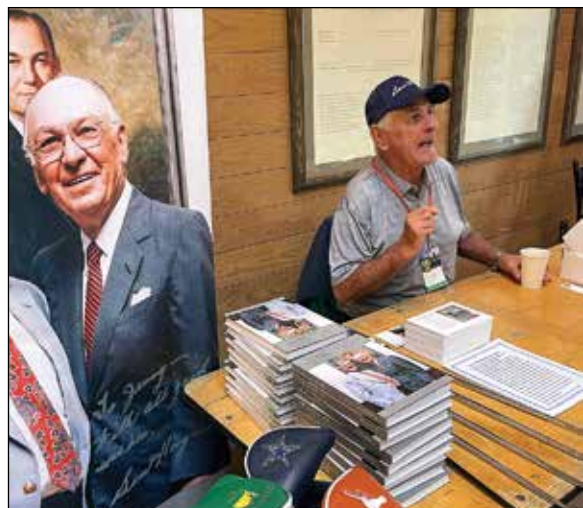
If this writer had anything to do with the great decisions, our trade shows would always be held, if not in Pinehurst, at least in a similar festive location. One can get tired of windowless, constricted hotel ballrooms. Hint, hint.

Learning, discoveries, making connections: this is what any GHS gathering is all about, but especially at the national convention. By the way, you are planning on next year in Nashville, right? (Oct. 14-17) 🏌️



THE GOOD STUFF AT THE FAIR BARN

The GHS Trade Show was bright, brilliant and festive for its 2024 edition. So much to take in!



AUTHORS AND VISITORS – Clockwise from top left: Stuart Bendelow brought copies of the second edition of his book about his famous grandfather, Thomas; Richard Mandell and his book on Pinehurst; Joel Suggs brought his new book, Golf...Success Before Every Round; John Rusbosin (left) Deb Haueisen, and Don Van Pelt; Taba Dale (left) and Ann Liguori with copies of their books; and Jerry Austry had great fun signing copies of his book about the Ben Hogan company.



English visitor and rare book collector Philip Truett.



Geoff Hensley was enjoying his first GHS trade show.



David Bass, local golf pro and persimmon proponent.



Golf antiquities expert Jeff Ellis, (right) examines a golf ball with a visitor.



Phil Kostolnik, left, and Ron Lyons examine a curious tome.



Bob Hansen, center, talks with Jim Davis about a rare photograph from Pinehurst.



Don Siok, left, and Peter Johnson look at golf art with Mary Ann Sarazen, daughter of golf legend, Gene.



AROUND THE SHOW – Clockwise from top left: GHS legend Bill Reed beckons a buyer's consideration; Kirk Watson examines a club from the wares of Tom Irving; Cindy and Joe Souther spot something of interest; Frank and Anne Cantrel; Pam Prince discussing golf balls with a visitor; and collector/dealer John Morton with an extraordinary book – a Russack's Hotel (St. Andrews) visitor registry from 1933-39 which contains the entry for Bobby Jones' visit in 1936, the names of the entire U.S. 1938 Walker Cup team and, oh, Prince Edward's signature is in the front of the book, he who would become King Edward VIII in 1936. John's asking price: \$10,000. Then again, he really didn't want to sell it.