

GHS SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Rob Ahlschwede

Golf and other Games

Viking-esque in stature, Rob Ahlschwede is a soft-spoken man whose words carry much weight. He is the equipment chair for the Society of Hickory Golfers and a long-time golf collector. Other items he collects, from marbles to toy tops, are from the games people play. – Editor

Affectionately known as “Kilty” to his golfing buddies, Rob Ahlschwede is a devoted hickory golf player and collector and a familiar figure at many major hickory events. The nickname, as you easily surmise, arose from Ahlschwede’s affinity for wearing kilts at some events, especially at the National Hickory Championship where Pete Georgiady originated the moniker.

“I grew up on a Nebraska farm where my first exposure to golf was television’s Shell’s Wonderful World of Golf,” he says. “I pestered my Dad until he made me a “one-piece” club from a branch of an osage orange (hedge) tree. I hit it until it finally broke!”

Ahlschwede graduated from the University of Nebraska and did his graduate studies at the University of Washington, Seattle. After college, he taught physical education and coached in Bellevue, Wash.; Munich, Germany; and Omaha, Neb. He is now retired following 33 years in education. “I played at golf some during school years, but did not really take up the game seriously until moving to Omaha in the late ’70s,” he says.

“I began to work hard at the game until my handicap got in to single digits. Then, about 20 years ago I went totally to the ‘dark side’ – hickories – and have not played modern clubs since.”

Ahlschwede joined the then GCS in 1983, encouraged by Roger Seivert, Warren Olson, Randy Jensen and others were his mentors in the Society.

After retirement from education, Ahlschwede worked in the pro shop at a public course in Omaha, and restored and repaired hickories with Randy Jensen at the latter’s Classic Golf Shop in Omaha. He has hosted several Golf Collector Society events in Omaha and began the River City Hickory Classic in Omaha. He has played in hickory golf events throughout the U.S., Canada, Scotland, Sweden, and Germany.

Ahlschwede and his wife, Susan, eventually moved back



ROB AHLSCHWEDE

to the great Pacific Northwest, making their home in Olympia, Wash. After working at finding hickory players and collectors, Rob, along with four other newfound friends, formed the Northwest Hickory Players. The NWHP, now one of the strongest regional hickory golf groups in the U.S., focuses more on play than collecting, but several in the group, including Ahlschwede, are long time GHS members. The NWHP hosts three two-day, events and several one-day 18-hole events. The group has brought more than 125 people to hickory golf and a few have become collectors

because of the play.

“Most of my time has been spent on promoting hickory play, but last year we established the Seattle Antique Golf Show and Sale, held in Seattle at Jefferson Park Golf Course (1914),” he says. “Pat Sutton in Portland has hosted his Portland show in the spring for over 30 years, so I figured why not in the fall? We look forward to making it an annual affair.”

When asked what he collects, Rob usually answers “the things people play with.” His collection features golf, for sure, but also marbles, fishing bobbers, hats, tops, yo-yos, baseballs, softballs, gloves, an old football and basketball... “But,” he says, looking around his room, “golf has taken over a little.”

Rob and Susan just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and are proud of their daughter, Willa, who currently is a professional staff member at the University of Arizona Museum of Art in Tucson. ¶

More photos from Rob’s “golf room” appear on the following pages.

SINGULAR CLUBS –
Displayed in a case made for “Chicago Wizard Silk Umbrellas” this case houses clubs that are rare or special to Rob. They include a Carrick, a Gray general iron, a couple of anti-shanks, a Brown-Vardon made by Gibson and his Davies Semi-Putter.





TOM STEWART RTJS – Rob is fond of this set (all with the inspection mark) because it reminds of him of various people who contributed to it. The first six came from Ralph Livingston III, another couple from Tom Irving. The value of the clubs themselves ranges to the several thousands, but the stories and the memories they have for Rob are priceless.

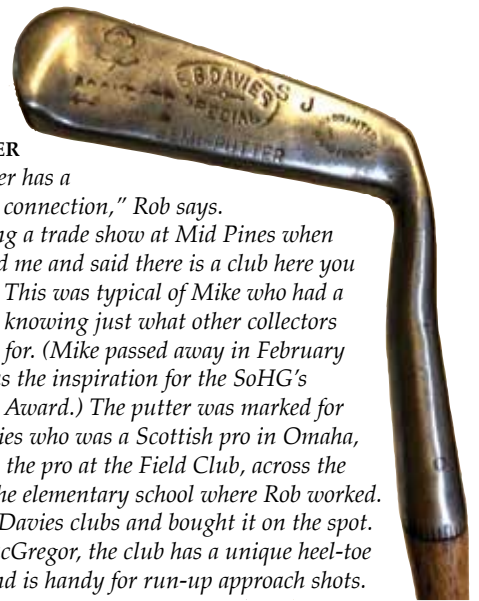
FIRST PUTTER

“My dad knew to be careful giving me golf clubs because he knew I’d be lost somewhere around the farm playing with them,” Rob says. “One day at a farm auction he bought a stovepipe bag full of old hickories for about \$5. At 9 years old, I played with them until most of them broke. I took this one, a putter, sawed off the head and was going to drill it to get the wood out. I didn’t know it had a pin. When I struck that, I got it out and replaced it with a copper rivet that we used for horse harnesses. What you see is the big head of the rivet that I shaped around the hosel. It’s one of the last two clubs I have from that bag my dad bought and was my first attempt at working on a club.”



COCKTAIL STIR STICKS

– “I’ve had these so long, I don’t recall where I found them,” Rob says. “They are sterling silver and just really unique.”



SEMI-PUTTER

– “This putter has a Mike Brown connection,” Rob says. “I was leaving a trade show at Mid Pines when Mike grabbed me and said there is a club here you need to see.” This was typical of Mike who had a penchant for knowing just what other collectors were looking for. (Mike passed away in February 2010 and was the inspiration for the SoHG’s Mike Brown Award.) The putter was marked for Stanley Davies who was a Scottish pro in Omaha, Neb. He was the pro at the Field Club, across the street from the elementary school where Rob worked. Rob collects Davies clubs and bought it on the spot. Made by MacGregor, the club has a unique heel-toe weighting and is handy for run-up approach shots.



WILLIE DUNN PUTTER – This early 1900 Willie Dunn design was made while Dunn worked for Spalding. Rob got it from Randy Jensen, trading him two common Ping putters for it. (“He’ll like that,” Rob said.) Hickories were not yet a big part of Jensen’s life and the putter itself was in rough shape. Rob restored it and it has been part of his everyday play set for the past 25 years.



The Golf Room

– Rob Ahlschwede

No captions needed. Have a wander through the collection and enjoy. It is a most special room.







