

# Golf Tales



*Aerial View of Fort Meade Clubhouse circa 1999*

Every group of golfers who have played with each other for any length of time have unique tales to tell. Our group: John M., John K., Mike, Al, T.J., Dave, Barry, Jon and I plus a few irregulars and stand-ins was no different. I've also included a few tales about things that happened while playing with other groups.

We were playing a course in Pennsylvania, just across the border from Maryland. John M's tee shot on a par 3 was what we call a "worm burner." The ball skittered along the ground, hit a sprinkler head, jumped up on the green and ran all the way to the back of the green and fell in the hole. We still refer to it as the ugliest hole-in-one on record.

On the 10th tee at Pleasant Valley in Stewartstown, PA John M. addressed his ball with a driver, aiming down the middle of this narrow, straightaway par 4. At precisely the instant of impact, he cut a loud fart,

clearly heard by everyone in the group. His ball rocketed down the middle of the fairway, perhaps one of his best drives of all time, assisted by afterburner.

On the 10th hole at Fort Meade, Maryland, Randy knocked his tee shot into a deep greenside bunker. I forget how many strokes it took him to get out of that bunker. Maybe he never got out of it. We still refer to it this day as the "Randy M. Memorial Bunker."

Randy's bunker problems reminded me of a tournament played on the University of Maryland golf course. One of the members of my foursome was a tall, well-dressed, scholarly gentleman. He reminded me of a classic, polite and proper English gentleman. His ball wound up in a deep bunker in front of a par 3 green. After about the fifth failed attempt to get out of the sand, he threw his club up in the air and yelled "Fuuuuck!!!" Everyone was in shock.

A group I played with regularly at Patuxent Greens in Laurel, MD decided to try a round at Twin Shields in Dunkirk, Maryland. One of our players was a habitual practical joker. While waiting for another group on the first tee, he once threw a hand full of golf balls up in the air and yelled, "Four!" We had the very first (earliest) tee time of the day. When we arrived, we entered the Pro Shop and there was nobody inside. While waiting, Bill noticed the manager coming across the parking lot. Bill immediately locked the door from inside. When the manager tried to open it, Bill went to the door, waving his hands back in forth, saying "We're closed! We're closed!" The manager's face was panic stricken!

Al D. was one of my favorite golf companions. He was often the best player in our group, shooting consistently in the low 80's. He was intensely serious about the game and was supremely self-critical. Al expected to hit a perfect shot every time and, if the shot was anything less than perfect, he often erupted with a stream of obscenities, directed only at himself. Immediately after the ball left the club face, he would blurt out something like, "Al, you G-damned, ignorant f\*\*k, you!" On one of our trips to Fayetteville, NC, we were playing Keith Hills on a

Sunday. The course is located on the campus of Campbell University, a private, Christian (Baptist) school. We constantly had to try to keep a lid on Al's outbursts, mostly unsuccessful. It's a wonder we didn't get thrown off the golf course. I'll never forget playing with Al and a Navy buddy, Dave Y., at Fort Meade. Al and Dave were riding in the same cart and I was in my cart, climbing up a steep hill toward the 12th green on the back nine. Al said, "This cart is a real dog," referring to how slow it was traveling up the hill. Dave said, "It ain't the cart. It's the fat ass driving it." Al was a bit heavy. He never went anywhere without plenty of eats along. At the breakfast buffet at Shoney's in Fayetteville, NC, Al would always be wearing a military field jacket which had many pockets on the outside and inside. As Al went along the buffet, he would stuff the pockets of that field jacket with muffins, apples, bananas and other goodies. When out on the course, Al would often call to me saying, "Would you like a muffin or a banana?" Al was also known for being very frugal. He made good money, but as far as I know, never spend a penny on golf clubs, golf balls or golf clothes. When Al missed a putt, one of use would usually say something like, "You might make a putt if you used a putter that you payed for." Years later, Al moved to Florida. I played a round of golf with him at Stoneybrook, his home course. Not long afterward, he passed away.

Playing Keith Hills on another occasion, we were hit with some ferocious thunderstorms. The downpour was so intense that it created a virtual lake on the green we were currently trying play. John M. and I were in a golf cart together and a few lightening strikes came quite close to where we were sitting. I think John M. was mumbling some silent prayers. On yet another occasion at Keith Hills, it was raining so hard that Jon K's driver slipped out of his grip and the club itself went further down the fairway than the ball. That's when we decided to pack it in and head for the clubhouse.

I talked our group into traveling to West Virginia and playing a couple of courses near my home town of Beckley. The courses were Grandview and Beaver Creek. The evening prior to playing Beaver Creek, we had dinner at a steak house. We were starved, having traveled for hours and

then playing a demanding and tiring 18 holes of golf. We drank a lot of beer, ate copious amounts of peanuts which were in big bowl on the table, then put down some huge steaks, baked potatoes and salad. The following day, we played Beaver Creek which is a unique, mountainous course. The 8th hole is an extreme, downhill affair. While on the 8th, those beers and peanuts and steaks suddenly wanted out. I made a beeline for the clubhouse and barely made it. John M. says he will never forget the smile of relief on my face as I stood on the porch of the clubhouse by the ninth green.

Our group often played the Enterprise Golf Course in Mitchelville, Maryland. The course is named after the aircraft carrier Enterprise and, at the time, was managed by a bunch of retired sailors. There were no tee times at Enterprise - strictly first come, first served. There was usually a line of hopeful players outside the Pro Shop door an hour or more prior to opening. The starter at Enterprise sat in a gazebo near the first tee. A sign on the gazebo read, "Bug's House." When the first tee time of the morning arrived, the starter always announced, via a loudspeaker system that was heard in the clubhouse, on the driving range and in the bathrooms, "Welcome to the Enterprise golf facility and psychiatric care center. Jones, you are on the first tee. Smith, you are on deck. If you are not on the first tee now, you are at the back of the line!" My neighbor, Gary C., played Enterprise with us on occasion. The 11th hole was a par 4 with a tee shot that had to carry over a lake, perhaps a 175-yard carry. Gary lost many a golf ball in that lake and I used to accuse him of having "water on the brain" as he stood on the tee box.

We once played Queenstown, a course on Maryland's Eastern Shore, during a tropical storm that had been downgraded from Hurricane Bob. We teed off while the eye of the storm was over the course, i.e., no rain, sun overhead and relatively light winds. By the time we reached the 9th hole, we were in the wall of the storm and there was a 30 to 40mph rain and wind right in our face. The tee shot on that hole has to carry over 100+ yards of swamp. As I recall, we packed it in after that hole.

Mike's brother Robert joined us on occasion. He was usually the best player in the group and sometimes caddied on the professional tour. One year Robert obtained "caddy passes" for a Senior's Tour tournament at Congressional Country Club, a memorable event. At the driving range, I was able to stand behind some famous players and watch them hit practice balls: Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Chi Chi Rodriguez and Lee Trevino. Chi Chi told funny stories to the spectators between hitting balls. We watched the seniors tee off on the 1st hole for a while. Most of them paused at their balls before the approach shot, checking the distance, the wind and confirming club selection with their caddies. Lee Trevino hit his drive into a fairway bunker on the left then pulled an iron out of his bag, marched directly to the bunker and knocked the ball onto the green without checking distance, wind or consulting with his caddy.

Robert joined us one summer on a trip to Maryland's Eastern Shore. We played a round at Nutter's Crossing near Salisbury on the way. On one of the par 4s, my tee shot wound up near a bush, completely blocking the line to the green. Mike and Robert were standing nearby and someone asked what I was going to do. I said something like, "I'm going to punch it out to the left and have it make a right turn and run up to the green." I hit the shot and it did exactly that. Robert dropped his club, knelt down and did a few Muslim-like bows in celebration.

If anyone out there who played with us happens to read these tales and wants to either add or correct something, please drop me an email.

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