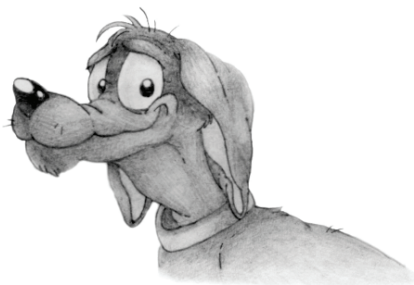


WAGS!

The fascinating story of the wives
and girlfriends - and one husband -
of golf's greatest players

DOUG GELBERT



CRUDEN BAY BOOKS

WAGS! THE FASCINATING STORY OF THE WIVES AND
GIRLFRIENDS - AND ONE HUSBAND - OF GOLF'S
GREATEST PLAYERS

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Introduction

As best anyone can tell the WAGs phenomenon - an acronym for “wives and girlfriends” of famous athletes - dates back to British football and the rabid tabloid press bobbing in its cultural wake in the early 2000s. The partners of successful sportsmen had been noted and occasionally reported on in the past but the megawatt pairing of David Beckham and Victoria Adams, better known as Posh Spice from the English girl group the Spice Girls, elevated coverage to a new level.

WAGs were first spotted in the golf world at The Belfry in England for the 2002 Ryder Cup. The jingoistic nature of the international competition gave wives and girlfriends almost as much coverage at the players. By the 2023 edition in Italy the PGA Tour on its official website blared the headline: “Ryder Cup teams, WAGs dazzle at extravagant gala.” The opening line of the story went, “Step aside, men. It’s time for the ladies to shine.”

These days it is not enough for a significant other to blend into a gallery following her man inside the ropes. On the 72nd green WAGs are maneuvered into advantageous camera positions and identified by name so the television announcers can weave her story into the narrative unfolding in the tournament.

If her man wins a conspicuous PDA is practically mandatory for the audience at home.

When Rory McIlroy burst onto the world golf stage in the early 2010s Gary Player offered some unsolicited advice to the emerging superstar, more than a half-century his junior, “For a man like Rory with talent galore, he’s got to make sure he has a woman like I’ve got, who has been married to me for 56 years, that has only encouraged me to do well and made sacrifices.”

That formula worked for the Black Knight but how about other golfing legends? What role did their ladies play in the success they enjoyed on the course? This is the book that looks at the very best golfers of all time through the lens of their wives and girlfriends. Oh, and one husband.

Young Tom Morris

Old Tom Morris is probably the oldest golfer most golf fans have heard of, “the Grand Old Man of Golf.” He is considered the first golf professional and is credited with being the first to design and build a golf course without leaving the job to nature. In 1864 he was just known as Tom Morris when he won the Open Championship, his third triumph in the five year’s golf’s oldest event had been held. The other two years Tom finished second. But that tournament would be the last time Tom Morris could be mentioned without a qualifier.

1864 was the year the golf world was introduced to Tommy, known afterwards as Young Tom Morris. The Morris men planned to play the Perth Open in April as Tommy was nearing his 13th birthday. The organizers, however, thought it unwise to allow the boy to play - and possibly embarrass - the professionals in the field. They did arrange a match with a local boy that wound up hogging the limelight anyway. Accounts in the local press concluded, “Master Morris seems to have been both born and bred to golf. He has been cast in the very mould of a golfer and plays with all the steadiness and certainty in embryo of his father.” Later that year Tommy beat his Open Champion father for the first time - a drubbing administered over the fabled St. Andrews links.

The following year Young Tom Morris made his first swings in the Open Championship, then contested in three tours around the 12-hole Prestwick Golf Club. After an opening 60 Tommy stood tied for 5th among the 12 competitors. A bad round forced his withdrawal but the young phenom made steady progress over his next two tries in the Open. In 1867 Old Tom Morris won his fourth and final Open title and the following year broke the tournament record by five strokes. But 17-year

old Tommy was three shots to the better and the family torch had officially been passed. A century and a half on it is still the only time a father and son finished 1-2 in a major championship and Young Tom Morris remains the youngest ever major champion.

Young Tom won the 1869 Open by 11 strokes and the 1870 Open by 12. His 36-hole score of 149 in 1870 would never be challenged before the tournament went to 72 holes in 1892. In fact his



154 total from 1868 earlier was the second lowest ever shot. In those days the Open was contested for the Challenge Belt which the "Champion Golfer of the Year" was entitled to retain for one year. But the rules stated that anyone winning the championship "three times in succession" would take the belt as his own property. The Challenge Belt now belonged to Young Tom Morris.

There was no trophy to play for so what choice did tourney organizers have but to cancel the event in 1871. Gotta play for something. The world's oldest golf tournament appeared to be over after just 11 years. But everyone was having too much fun to just take their ball and go home. Three clubs - Prestwick, the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers and The Royal and Ancient Golf Club - each ponied up £10 to pur-



chase a silver claret jug and the Open would resume, rotating among the three courses. Up and going again in 1872 Young Tom won again. He would have his name engraved first on the Claret Jug but this time he would take home only a medal.

Young Tom Morris was something new altogether in golf.

His celebrity spilled out beyond the golf world and he became the first golfer to make money playing the game. The tournament purses of the day were paltry but there was real money to be made in challenge matches, many of which attracted thousands of spectators. Results were eagerly awaited as far off as London. Tommy was always open to money challenges from other links gunslingers and never shy about drumming up games and backing himself in the betting pools. He would never need to mow greens or repair clubs like his father did.

This independence manifested itself off the course as Young Tom reached maturity. With his fame and burgeoning bank account there was every opportunity for Morris, the son of a greenskeeper, to make an advantageous marriage into Scottish society. His parents certainly hoped so. But as Pascal observed, "The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing of." Young Tom's attentions turned towards Margaret Drinnen, described as "a remarkably handsome and healthy young woman." Margaret had begun working in a textile mill at the age of nine and fled to St. Andrews to find work as a maid. Her employment was strike one. Strike two was that she was ten years older than Tommy, having already lived an adult life that he was just starting on. That past included a son born out of wedlock who lived only eight weeks. Strike three. When Margaret and Tommy exchanged vows on November 25, 1874 his parents were not in attendance.

Young Tom Morris was not one to bow to conventional mores. The couple conspicuously settled into a stately home at 2 Playfair Place in St. Andrews and no doubt tongues wagged in the old gray stone town about the former maid who now employed her own maid. In short order Margaret was pregnant. How did marital bliss affect the man who was listed in the national census as "Champion Golfer of Scotland?" One can only speculate. Morris was no longer invincible - there

were third-place and second-place finishes in the Open Championship in 1873 and 1874 - but neither were opponents queueing up to give Tommy two a side in a challenge match.

In early September 1875 Old Tom and Young Tom were locked in just such a match with their greatest rivals, the Park brothers, Willie and Mungo, from around the stone walls of the North Berwick links. The Morris men won this one but after hands were shook and congratulations offered Tommy was handed a telegram informing him that Margaret had gone into labor but there was a complication. Tommy left to sail across the Firth of Forth to St. Andrews in such haste that he missed the second telegram - the child was stillborn and Margaret was dead.

Young Tom Morris would follow her to the grave scarcely 100 days later, his father finding him dead in his bed on Christmas morning. Of course the mythologists were quick to attribute the early demise at age 24 to a broken heart. Tommy was indeed grief-stricken but the official cause of death was an acute attack of bleeding in the lungs, perhaps from a snow-infested match contested over six frigid days in November of perhaps just a coincidence. Young Tom's legend only grew in the re-telling over the years in pubs and books, eventually reaching the silver screen 140 years later. It was only then that Margaret's descendants back in the hardscrabble coal town of Whitburn even learned of her connection to the golfing royalty of the Morris family.

Harry Vardon

Harry Vardon grew up with five brothers and two sisters in a spartan cottage on the isle of Jersey seashore off the coast of Normandy, France. Any golf he played as a youngster was limited mostly to whacking a large shooter marble with hand-fashioned tree limbs. When Harry was eight years old in 1878 golf holes were laid out on the local Grouville Common and the following year Her Majesty Queen Victoria honored the Jersey Golf Club with a Royal warrant. Harry, the eldest of the brood, was soon at work toting clubs to bring some welcome money to the family.

By the age of 12 young Harry was in the labor force full time, putting in ten-hour days toiling on a local farm while picking up an occasional loop from the caddie yard at Royal Jersey. Vardon soon found himself in domestic service and recalled in his autobiography that the only time he had for golf for four years was on moonlit nights with his mates from time to time. Accepting a position as an apprentice gardener with one Major Spofforth, the Royal Jersey captain, at least got him back outside. It would also chart the course of the remainder of his life.

As a gamesman at the time Vardon thought of himself as mostly a sprinter and footballer. When Spofforth caught wind of Vardon's occasional efforts at golf he began inviting the teenager out for formal rounds - a kindly gesture that soon proved profitable to the Major in fourball matches at the club. Meanwhile Harry's younger brother Tom sailed to England to chase after a career as a golf professional. The possibilities in the game of golf would not be the only thing Harry Vardon discovered in the employ of Major Spofforth.

Jessie Bryant was a sheltered girl, one year older than Harry, when they met. By this time Harry was dreaming of following his brother to the main island using golf as his



passport. Jessie encouraged Harry's new passion as the two grew closer and when Vardon left in 1890 to take over greens keeping duties at Studley Royal Golf Club it was with the understanding that they would be married once he established himself in England. The roots were not down deep when Jessie posted a letter that she was "with child" and the couple was hastily married - as Victorian morals dictated - on November 15, 1891. Jessie stayed in Jersey with her parents.

Little Clarence Henry Vardon entered the world on June 25, 1892 and never enjoyed a day of good health before dying six weeks later. Jessie was shattered by the loss and retreated

from her husband and everyday life. She had never had any interest in golf, pretending to share a suitor's interests as young lovers do, and she was never keen about leaving Jersey. In sorrow, Harry went back to England alone and it would be three more years before he was able to convince Jessie to join him.

Settled in North Yorkshire on the North Sea hopes for the marriage were rekindled and Jessie was soon pregnant again. But after a few months she lost the baby and fell into a depression that essentially doomed the Vardon union. Harry buried his grief in his golf and later in 1896 claimed the first of his record six Open Championships at the Muirfield golf links. As he became the world's most celebrated golfer, at home there were separate bedrooms. Jessie never went to see Harry play in a tournament, never participated in a trophy presentation.

Freed from any marital obligations at home, Vardon traveled widely. He won a German Open and made three tours of North America. In the first, in 1900, he won the United States Open to become the first of only three Brits to capture the national opens of both golfing powers. In 1913 he finished runner-up to 20-year old amateur Francis Ouimet at the Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts in "The Greatest Game Ever Played." And in 1920 he finished one stroke back of countryman Ted Ray for the title at the age of 50.

In the 1920s Vardon was winding down his golfing career. He had won 48 championships around the world, more than any golfer up to that time. While bunking for a tournament in the Royal Hotel in Hoylake that had been the first Clubhouse of The Liverpool Golf Club Vardon connected with a hotel worker who asked for his autograph. Matilda Howell had lost her husband in the trenches of France during World War I and was in the process of rejuvenating a song-and-dance act with her sister she had enjoyed before her marriage. Vardon was 28 years older than "Tilly" but slid easily into



her milieu of dance halls and theaters.

Bred in the Victorian Age there was never any question of divorcing Jessie. The watchword was “discreet” and the media of the age was not in the business of following the most famous golfer in England’s every movement. Even though his best days on the links were behind him, Harry was able to regale Tilly with stories of his golfing triumphs, which she lapped up. For the first time Vardon found happiness away from the course as he traveled frequently to spend time with Tilly.

In 1925 Tilly found herself pregnant. She slipped away to Liverpool and quietly delivered a healthy son on January 26, 1926. Vardon was overjoyed with the arrival of Peter Howell but English society being what it was there was no way he could acknowledge paternity or his relationship with Tilly. It was agreed for the sake of propriety that Peter would be brought up by her sister and husband. Vardon provided financially for the child and visited often, usually with large gifts in tow. But as Peter grew old enough to begin asking questions about his “uncle,” Tilly requested that Harry stop coming around.

Vardon’s entire affair with Tilly Howell was so hush-hush that the public did not find out about it until 1991. Tilly never told Peter about his real father until Vardon had passed away from lung cancer in 1937, eight years after playing in his last Open Championship. Even then the details did not seep out until Peter’s wife wrote about them in a book. Jessie Bryant Vardon died in 1946 at the age of 77. She assumed a place in St. Andrew’s Churchyard in Totteridge that she had never been on the golf course - alongside of Harry.

Walter Hagen

“I never wanted to be a millionaire,” Walter Hagen once said. “I just wanted to live like one.” Hagen traveled the world playing with celebrities and royalty - always first class. He carried himself not only as if he belonged to a private club but, it was said, as if he owned it. He was addressed as Sir Walter or The Haig. There is a fair chance none of that would have happened without Margaret Johnson.

Hagen was the first golfer to ever earn a million dollars and he readily admitted that he got into the game for the money - as a little boy. The blacksmith's son could earn 10 cents a loop toting clubs at the nearby Country Club of Rochester, and maybe a nickel tip if all went well. When he wasn't polishing members' club young Walter was practicing swinging them. At the age of 14 he was plucked from the caddie yard and moved into the pro shop as an assistant.

Hagen's biggest early athletic success was as an ambidextrous baseball pitcher pursued by the Philadelphia Phillies. But after finishing 11th in his first tournament, the Canadian Open, at the age of 19 he put away dreams of joining immortal Grover Cleveland Alexander in the Philadelphia rotation. The following year Hagen finished tied for fourth at the seminal 1913 U.S. Open where Francis Ouimet famously dispatched the British stars Harry Vardon and Ted Ray in a playoff. The next year at Midlothian Golf Club in Chicago Walter Hagen won his own U.S. Open championship. He was 21 years old.

Returning to his duties in the Rochester pro shop Hagen remembered in his autobiography that his life “was all about golf for me.” Until he fell hard for a hunting dog that frequented the club grounds. Hagen tracked down the owner of the dog, the daughter of a prominent member and owner of the town's lead-



ing hotel, and pleaded to buy the hound. Margaret Johnson capitulated and began making trips to Hagen's house to make sure the dog was being properly looked after. It wasn't long before she found her affections being transferred to the the new canine caretaker. At least that's the story Gene Sarazen liked to tell; Hagen's account of the meet-cute was more prosaic and didn't involve any dogs.

However Walter Hagen and Margaret Johnson connected they were heading for the altar in St. Mary's Church on January 29, 1917. One might think that nabbing a young U.S. Open golf champion would be quite the marital coup but in those days golf professionals - no matter how

successful - were regarded as little more than servants. They weren't permitted in golf clubhouses, let alone projected as acceptable matches for wealthy socialite daughters. Walter Hagen would do more than any other golfer to change that perception but not without a push from the new Mrs. Hagen.

Margaret Johnson came from money and made no secret of her desire to continue living in the high style with which she was accustomed. Walter, meanwhile, was more than content to pass his free time hunting and fishing with the friends he had grown up with. On more than one occasion the new bride was known to summon the old adage "you can take the boy

out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy."

As the United States became entangled in World War I Hagen was enlisted to travel around the country for money-raising exhibitions. On one of his golfing adventures Walter was offered the head professional job for a millionaire's club that was forming in Detroit, Oakland Hills. The attractive contract called for a heady \$300 a month, an open schedule to play tournaments, and profits from the golf shop. Still Hagen was reluctant. He



was in no hurry to leave the familiar surroundings of Rochester which he viewed as a fine place to raise newly born Walter, Jr.

Margaret was having none of it. The bustling car capital of America was every bit the big city that Chicago was at the time and she wanted in. In her mind there was no decision to be made and in 1918 the Hagens were settling into life in southeastern Michigan. Walter was immediately homesick, writing that he even longed for the telephone poles he would pass on the drive into the Country Club of Rochester. But he would also write in his autobiography, "When I did get over it, life in my new home city hit me big!"

Margaret immersed herself in the Detroit social whirl but often it was without her husband, who kept a busy golf schedule. Representing Oakland Hills in 1919, Hagen won his second U.S. Open title at Brae Burn Country Club in Massachusetts. It had taken a playoff with Mike Brady to get the job done and when he arrived back in Detroit to be feted at Oakland Hills he had a surprise for his patrons.



He resigned - and introduced his replacement, Mike Brady.

Hagen announced himself as the country's first "unaffiliated golf professional" - what we know today as the touring pro. He embraced his new role with relish, slipping into the globe-trotting, devil-may-care persona that would become his trademark. He would show up for matches at the last minute giving every indication that he was arriving direct from an after-hours club. When asked by a weary companion before his playoff with Brady about whether it was time to turn in Hagen famously said of his opponent, "He may be in bed, but he ain't sleeping."

Walter Hagen was also the first to realize that professional golf was entertainment. He would sometimes drive the ball purposely off line to set up a recovery shot for the fans. Not that he needed to intentionally place himself in trouble on



the golf course. After drubbing the amateur sensation Bobby Jones 12 and 11 in a 72-hole challenge match the exasperated loser summed up the experience: "I would rather play a man who is straight down the fairway with his drive, on the green with his second, and down in two putts for his par. I can play a man like that at his own game, which is par golf. If one of us can get close to the pin with his approach, or hole a good putt, all right. He has earned something that I can understand. But when a man misses his drive, and then misses his second shot, and then wins the hole with a birdie...it gets my goat!"

While Walter was burnishing his reputation on the road, Margaret was back in Detroit, feeling much like Victor Frankenstein about the monster she had created. There were more and more tournaments from the Professional Golfers' Asso-



ciation of America that had formed in 1916 and he was now sailing to Europe yearly to compete in the Open Championship. Of course the winters had to be spent in Florida to keep the golf game sharp. The inevitable divorce was granted in 1921 on the easily substantiated grounds of abandonment.

One of Hagen's confidantes once observed that "Walter broke 11 of the 10 commandments." Married life would not seem to be his forte but on April 30, 1923 Hagen was back in New York City exchanging vows in the Biltmore Hotel with Edna Crosby Straus, a widow five years his senior

whom he had met barnstorming in Canada. The union began with a trip to the British Isles where Walter would fall one stroke shy of defending his Open Championship at Royal Troon. But within three years the couple was separated. The proverbial last straw was said to come when Walter returned home one night in the wee, small hours and Edna confronted him about his lack of underwear as he undressed for bed. "I must have been robbed!" was Walter's only defense.

The official grounds in this divorce were again "abandonment." But Walter had some gripes of his own and the official decree bounced around the legal system until finally being resolved in 1937, two years past Hagen's last tournament victory. No alimony was involved. There would not be a third try at marriage. Looking back on his career Hagen mused, "Romantic affairs had a pleasant habit of developing quickly in those days and I usually managed to overcome any obstacles barring the way to my 'pursuit of happiness.'"

After a flamboyant golfing lifetime Hagen bought what he considered his first home on a knoll overlooking the water in Traverse City, Michigan in 1956. He was also happy to surrender the limelight and disappeared from the golfing scene. His final years were spent in the companionship of Doris Brandes, a cocktail waitress he met in Detroit. She never saw him hit a competitive golf shot.

Despite his playboy image Hagen stayed in the life of Walter, Jr. who made several appearances at his father's tournaments. He became an accomplished amateur golfer, captaining the Notre Dame University golf team and qualifying for the U.S. Amateur three times. Walter Hagen died in 1969. He is interred in the family crypt of the Holy Sepulcher Cemetery in Oakland County Michigan along with Walter Jr., his wife Helen, and Walter III who died in a shooting accident at the age of 15. Margaret Johnson Hagen is out on the grounds.

Gene Sarazen

Eugenio Saraceni was born a couple years into the 20th century and almost made it to the 21st. When he was 16 years old Eugenio made a hole-in-one and when the feat made the local papers he thought his name “looked like it belonged on a violin.” He thought on it a while and finally decided “Sarazen” sounded like a golfer’s name. He later claimed that he had scoured phone books from around the world and could find no other listing for “Sarazen.” It would not take the world long to learn the name Gene Sarazen.

Sarazen began caddying at the age of eight at Larchmont Country Club in New York where his Italian immigrant parents had settled. He was 11 when Francis Ouimet conquered the golfing world with his surprise win in the U.S. Open in



1913. Young Gene wasn’t much interested in the historic nature of Ouimet’s achievement but in the interlocking grip on the club that he used. Sarazen slipped the little pinky of his right hand under the forefinger of his left hand and it worked perfectly for his small hands. He qualified for his first U.S. Open at age 18 and two years later won the championship at Skokie Country Club in Chicago. He was four months

and 18 days past his 20th birthday, just six days older than Ouimet had been to win his title.

Sarazen won the PGA Championship at Oakmont Country Club later in the year and defended his title in 1923 by beating his hero, Walter Hagen, in a 38-hole final. He was 21 years old and winner of three major championships. Then something happened that the golf world had never seen - Gene Sarazen's name began showing up on the newspaper society pages, linked to actresses he was dating. The 1920s were a time of the Golden Age of American Sports and the Golden Age of American Cinema. It was inevitable that the two would begin to mingle in the public imagination and Gene Sarazen was an item.

First on the tee was Derelys Perdue, who was dancing on Kansas City stages at the same age Gene was toting golf clubs. She had made her Hollywood debut as an uncredited dancer in 1921 and broke out two years later playing a private secretary in Emile Chautard's drama of mis-matched lovers, *Daytime Wives*. For her work Derelys was recognized by the Western Association of Motion Picture Advertisers as one of the year's 13 "Baby Stars" - young actresses with silent film star potential. Her bud-





ding fame seemed an ideal match for America's hottest young golfing professional but nothing sparked between the couple. Perdue's career in Hollywood ended in 1929 when studio boss Joseph Kennedy demanded that she ditch her exotic first name for the more bankable "Ann." Instead she sued him and lost.

Things were much more serious with Pauline Garon, or so it was rumored. A French-Canadian, Pauline spent seven years in a Montreal convent before running away in 1920, bound for the Broadway theatre. She soon found herself in Hollywood, scoring ever juicier roles. By 1923 she was also a Baby Star, hailed as legendary director Cecil B. DeMille's hot new discovery. According to Motion Picture Magazine Pauline had also been discovered by Gene Sarazen, reporting that the two were engaged to be married as of December 4, 1923. A Central New York monochrome snapshot of the couple was said to show "both exuding an air of elegance and sophistication; Sarazen stands tall in his golf attire (quite a trick for the 5'5" linkster) while Garon radiates glamour in her timeless beauty."

For her part Garon vehemently denied any such engagement. And in this case it appeared where there was smoke there was no fire. Miss Garon built a career in silent films that would make her what we call a B-lister today. The first of her three marriages would take place in 1926. For his part, six months after Gene Sarazen was supposedly engaged to Pauline Garon he was married.

Mary Catherine Henry was not in show business. She was an Indiana girl working as a stenographer when she met Sarazen at a golf tournament. The couple would remain together for 62 years until Mary's death in 1986, creating a model for the ideal PGA Tour marriage. Ben Hogan would one day remark that Gene talked often about Mary, as if it was as rare a thing on the professional tour as a round in the 90s. Sarazen was no stranger to loyalty - about the same time he began courting Mary he signed an endorsement contract with the Wilson

Sporting Goods Company that would continue for 75 years.

At first married life did not seem to agree with the 22-year old Sarazen's golf game. Although there were several top five finishes Sarazen would not win another important tournament in his twenties. His much admired long, graceful draw off the tee too often turned into a troublesome hook at crucial times. Sarazen tried anything to get himself out his dreaded "slump" - even changing his grip at one point. His troubles on the golf course yielded one positive result, however. Perhaps because he was finding himself in more sand bunkers than he was accustomed to Gene started fiddling with his lofted irons. By 1931, after adding solder to the bottom of the club and filing the sole at an angle Sarazen had fashioned the first modern - and legal - sand wedge. The Wilson Company owned the rights to his invention so he would have to make his money with it on the golf course.

Mary Sarazen remained supportive throughout Gene's golfing trials, appearing smiling for newspaper photographers and dutifully filling a scrapbook with clippings. It is even said that she loaned Gene money and insisted he sail to England to play in the 1932 Open Championship. At Prince's Golf Club in Sandwich Sarazen instructed his caddie Skip Daniels to insert his new sand wedge upside down in the bag just in case officials might want to ban the club. He won by five shots. There would be a flurry of major championship titles in the coming years bringing the Sarazen total to seven. The last was in the 1935 Masters when he knocked a 4-wood into the hole on the 15th at Augusta for a double eagle. With that win Gene Sarazen became the first golfer to win all four professional major championships. Only four players have achieved the lifetime Grand Slam since.

During the Sarazen renaissance Gene and Mary bought a 200-acre dairy farm in Connecticut, earning Sarazen the sobriquet "The Squire." On the course Sarazen's activities drifted more to exhibition tours. In the 1960s he signed on as the first

host for Shell's Wonderful World of Golf, the first televised golf show. The idea was to re-create the tradition of challenge matches of Sarazen's golden era at courses around the world with stars of the current era. An entire new generation of golf fans came to know Gene Sarazen as a celebrity television announcer and many may have been surprised when in 1973, using his lifetime exemption to the Open Championship, the 71-year old made a hole in one at Royal Troon's famed 8th hole, "The Postage Stamp." Fifty years after his first appearance in the Open Champion he punched a 5-iron into the cup on the 123-yard hole. More pages for Mary Sarazen's bulging scrapbooks.

The Sarazens first set up a Florida outpost in 1928 when they built a Mediterranean-styled 3,294-square foot hacienda in New Port Richey for \$20,000. One room was designed just for golf clubs and trophies. In retirement Gene and Mary settled on Marco Island where they established the Gene and Mary Sarazen Foundation. Gene, who always regretted having to leave school after the sixth grade, received an honorary degree from Siena College in New York in 1978. Dr. Sarazen spearheaded a campaign to raise \$100,000 for the scholarships whose endowment has today grown to more than \$3 million.

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Bobby Jones

In the Golden Age of sports there were no bigger fans of superstar athletes than sportswriters. So when Babe Ruth missed half of the 1925 baseball season suffering from gonorrhea it showed up in the newspaper as a really, really, I mean seriously bad case of indigestion from eating too many hot dogs. Bill Tilden was the best player in tennis; the fact that he was gay never escaped the locker room. Golf was not immune from such mythmaking. As Bobby Jones rose to the top of the golf world his status as an amateur slaying big name pros was ballyhooed to the extent that the game almost seemed like an afterthought. It was understandable. Only recently had the pay-for-play crowd begun to dominate the national championships and Jones represented the last of the romanticized breed to play

the sport at its highest level for the "love of the game."

To many Bobby Jones was the most naturally gifted golfer to ever play. He may well have been able to put down his law books at night and win an occasional U.S. Open the next day. But in a seven year stretch from 1924 to 1930 Jones entered 18 national tournaments and won 12 and finished second in three more. There is no way he was able to compile such a record with clubs in the closet for six months a year.



Indeed, there were long periods wintering in Florida, tournaments entered against professionals, and plenty of practice ahead of the championships Jones entered.

Where does Mary Rice Malone fit into the Bobby Jones mythology? Scarcely at all. Not in biographies or in Jones' own version of his story, *Down The Fairway*, published in 1927. The *New York Times* devoted more than 2,100 words to its obituary of Bobby Jones in 1971. The contribution afforded his career by Mary required one line - "in 1924, he married Mary Malone, his high school sweetheart."

Hardly any photographs of the couple surfaced in the public.

Mary Malone hailed from old money South Carolina and Georgia, families where women were "noted for their beauty and charm." She met Bob on a trolley car but he may have known of her existence earlier as he was friends with her brothers at Georgia Tech. Their courtship lasted five years before the wedding ceremony took place on the lawn of her parents' handsome home in the Druid Hills section of Atlanta. Jones was the current national champion at the time, having captured his first U.S. Open the previous year at Inwood Country Club in New York. After the ceremony the



couple motored into the Blue Ridge Mountains for a honeymoon at the Biltmore Forest Country Club in Asheville.

Mary was only five months younger than Bob but to contemporaries that gap appeared more like a gaping chasm. The pair were mismatched intellectually; Mary's education stopped in prepschools for girls in Atlanta while Jones earned an undergraduate degree in engineering from Georgia Tech, another bache-



lor's degree in literature at Harvard University and he attended law classes at Emory University until passing the Georgia bar.

As a society belle Mary was used to being the center of attention. When she made her formal debut in 1922 the Atlanta Journal Constitution gushed, "She is a young woman of unusual beauty and charm, possessing lustrous black hair and deep brown eyes, with exquisite coloring." If it was an admiring spotlight she craved, Mary certainly married the wrong man. Bobby Jones had been in the national headlines since competing in the United States in the United States Amateur at the age of

14 and he was accustomed to having ticker tape parades down Broadway in New York City thrown in his honor. Mary was prone to jealous fits of resentment towards her husband's fame and seldom was on hand for his tournaments. When she was she never bothered to go out on the course and watch him play.

One time Mrs. Jones was in Bobby's company was in 1930 as he sailed to Europe on the RMS Aquitania. By a quirk of scheduling Jones had noticed that it would be possible that year to win the national Open and national Amateur of both Britain and the United States. It was this goal he set secretly to accomplish, telling only his wife. Mary was along because the United States Golf Association was picking up the tab for the voyage and Bob promised her a vacation in France.

Jones indeed won the two British titles leaving only the U.S. Amateur at Merion Golf Club in Philadelphia to complete what was first called "the cycle." When he did so, finishing out his final match on the 11th hole, Mary was not in attendance. She learned about her husband's victory when a local Atlanta newspaper reporter called her at home. The news she was more thrilled to hear was that the "Grand Slam" meant Bob Jones was retiring from competitive golf at the age of 28.

Looking from the outside Bob and Mary Jones appeared not to have much in common but something about Mary certainly agreed with the Jones golf game. You can't argue with winning 70% of the national championships entered during their marriage. Jones explained his retirement this way - "First come my wife and children. Next comes my profession--the law. Finally, and never as a life in itself, comes golf."

Was that true or was that simply pablum for the adoring press burnishing his reputation as the ultimate untarnished amateur? If Bobby Jones had failed in his pursuit of the Grand Slam in 1930 would there have been more golf in the future? As it was, Jones quickly shed his amateur sta-

tus by cashing a \$250,000 check from Hollywood to film 18 short instructional films with A-List movie stars. Back home he started the Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters tournament where the green jacket awarded to the winner would one day be a more coveted trophy to many than the Open Championship and U.S. Open cups Jones held.

In 1948 friends began noticing signs of paralysis in Bobby's movements. Suffering from syringomyelia, a degenerative spinal disease, he would never play another round of golf. Jones retreated completely from the public eye as he withered to less than 100 pounds, save for an emotional appearance in St. Andrews, Scotland in 1958 where he was awarded the Freedom of the City. Mary was stricken with cancer of the larynx in the early 1960s but she survived to bury her husband in a private ceremony in December of 1971. She followed him to Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta three years later. You can usually see golf balls collected at the grave site.



Byron Nelson

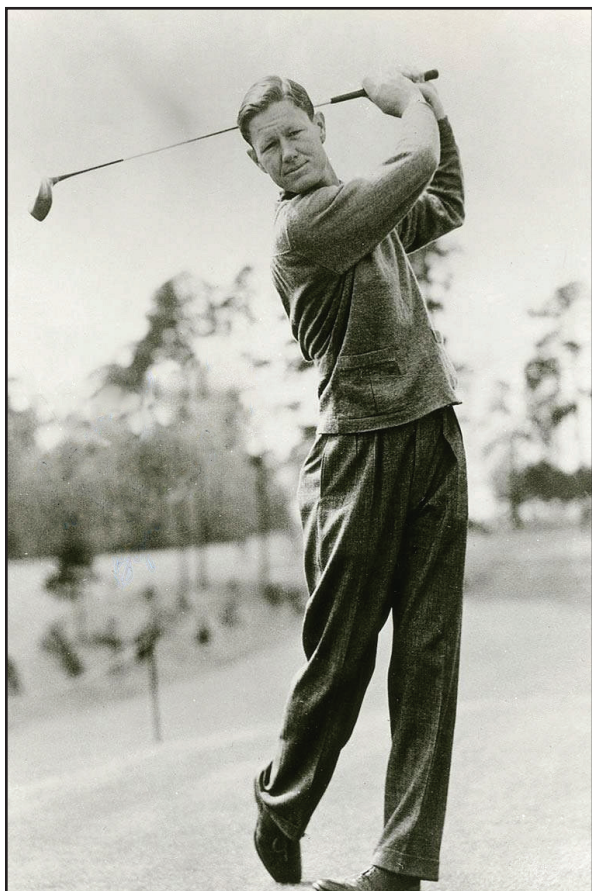
In the summer of 1932 20-year old Byron Nelson took a 200-mile bus ride to Texarkana, Texas and paid \$5 to enter the newly formed Texarkana Open. That's what it took to join the PGA Tour in those days. Byron finished third and pocketed \$75, enough to send him west to California and the start of the winter tour in November. After his third tournament Nelson was out of money and hitching his way back east on Route 66. Luckily the Texarkana Country Club was looking for a pro and Byron signed on for a steady \$60 a month.

As he did everywhere he went Nelson sought out a suitable church for Sunday services. At the Texarkana Church of Christ he found his attention drifting to one particular pretty, dark-haired girl. Louise Shofner was the daughter of the local grocery store owner and Byron made his move after services to no avail. She turned him down twice more during the week. "Seems she was all dated-up," Nelson remembered years later about the popular Louise. A patient suitor, Byron kept sidling up to Louise's pew until she agreed to a movie. It was not long before there was an agreement to marry as soon as Nelson could "get a time together."

He again targeted the West Coast swing to make his stake - this time with \$600 borrowed from Mr. Shofner and a sleek Model A roadster from the local Ford dealer. This time there was enough money to buy gas to come home and pay back his future father-in-law. When he left again for California in 1934 Louise was with him. In the San Francisco Match Play Championship Nelson took down reigning United States and British Amateur champion in the opening round and the newspaper headline blared HONEYMOONER DEFEATS LAWSON LITTLE. The headline writer actually took liberties. The Nel-

sons had been married for several months by then and their actual honeymoon had lasted one night. After driving 120 miles to Hot Springs, Arkansas they were both so nervous they drove back home.

Nelson won his first PGA title the following year at the New Jersey State Open and his name began showing up in the headlines. From the beginning Byron Nelson played professional golf with only one goal - earn enough money to buy a Texas ranch. Every time he cashed a winner's check it represented "another 10 acres or another cow." Due to a fertility issue the Nelsons never had children and Louise became a fixture at tournaments, often seen with her needlepoint. In interviews when asked about the influences in his career Nelson always had a



one word response: "Louise." She played the supportive partner but she could also deliver a kick to the pants if needed.

World War II impeded on the progress of the Texas spread. A blood problem kept Nelson out of active service but his days were turned over to hundreds of fund-raising exhibition matches. His only pay was expenses. With the war winding down in 1945 Nelson set out to make up for lost time.

In the most incredible year ever seen in professional golf Lord Byron entered 35 official events, won 18 and finished second seven more times. Eleven of the wins had been in a row. His stroke average of 68.33 for the season has never been equalled. Byron was ready to put a downpayment on the ranch but it was Louise who said not so fast. She said they would stay on tour until there was enough money to pay for that ranch without raiding their savings. So Byron went out again in 1946 and along the way became the first golfer to win 50 lifetime PGA titles. Number 51 came in July at the Chicago Victory National Open and the dream ranch jigsaw was complete. There had been a remarkable 113 consecutive cuts made chasing that ranch - and in those days only the top 15 or 20 finishers earned a check. Nelson paid \$52,000 cash for 630 acres in Roanoke, Texas and retired at age of 34 to be a gentleman rancher.

There was the occasional trip away from Fairways Ranch for a golf exhibition - he won the Bing Crosby Clambake in Pebble Beach in 1951 by three strokes in his only PGA Tour appearance in retirement. Keeping a promise to take Louise to Paris, the Nelsons went to France in 1955. While Louise rode the elevator up the Eiffel Tower Byron signed up for the French Open and became the first American to win since Walter Hagen in 1920. He was in Augusta every year to play the Masters until 1966, collecting six Top Tens and finishing 15th at the age of 53. Hall-of-Famers Ken Venturi and Tom Watson called for private lessons. And there was a 12-year stint serving as a beloved golf analyst with Jim McKay on ABC Sports. But mostly for his final 50 years Byron identified as a cattleman. He was not a natural like he was at golf - the only real moneymaker on the ranch was his egg operation. At one time the Nelsons oversaw 17,000 hens.

In 1983 Louise suffered a stroke and Byron became a full-time caretaker for the last two years of her life. Friends feared

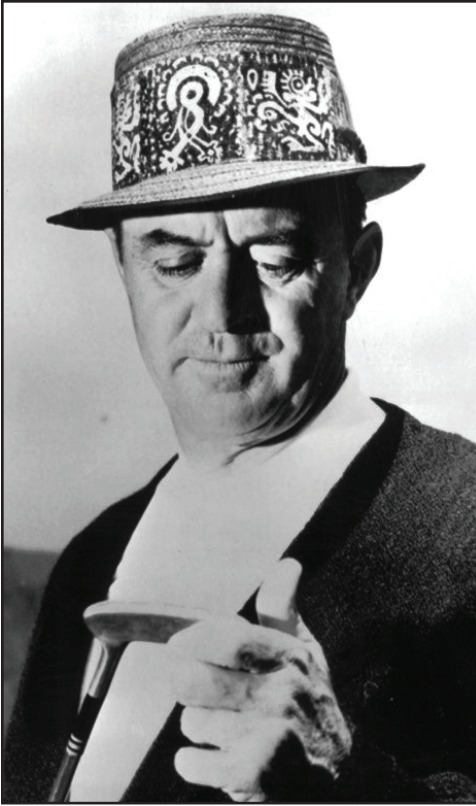
Byron, who had lost 30 pounds, would soon follow her. But Nelson rallied and several months later was playing in the Bogie Busters charity tournament in Dayton, Ohio. By chance he ran into 42-year old volunteer Peggy Simmons who Nelson had met briefly a few years earlier. Lord Byron was off on his second great romance and he and Peggy were married within the year. Byron assumed he would not have much time left to spend with Peggy so they agreed to celebrate their anniversary every month on the 15th instead of waiting for a year to pass. They made it to 238 anniversaries.

Sam Snead

Sam and Audrey Snead enjoyed a marriage that really could have flourished only in the peculiar time of the mid-1900s. It was an era when women were content to stay home with the family and famous men could keep a looser interpretation of the institution of marriage. There was no 24-hour news cycle to feed and the press never reported on anything that did not happen in golf spikes. On tour it was well known that if you wanted to get a good night's sleep during a tournament don't get a hotel room next to Sam Snead. Back in West Virginia Audrey Snead had a big home, the latest model cars, a maid and a husband who was never home. It was a formula for the Sneads that worked for 50 years.

Around Hot Springs, Virginia the Sneads and Karneses families had known each other, not always amicably, for decades. As teenagers Sam met his match with the blonde-haired Audrey Karnes, on and off the course. There has likely never been as gifted a natural athlete who ended up in golf as Sam Snead. Audrey had no problem finding a back pin position with a 2-iron. Audrey was the class valedictorian who also enjoyed the bawdy jokes that Sam told. They also could argue like only those who really care about each other can do. Their courtship was an off and on affair for years.

It was not until 1940 when Sam was 28 and Audrey was 26 that they actually tied the knot. By that time Sam had already won 18 tournaments and been the money leader on Tour. Seems that Sam's mother Laura was so against the union that he waited until she died at the age of 73 to dare make Audrey his wife. Like so many couples the Sneads motored up to Niagara Falls for their honeymoon. Unlike most bridegrooms Sam took time out from the nuptial bliss to win the Canadian Open in a play-



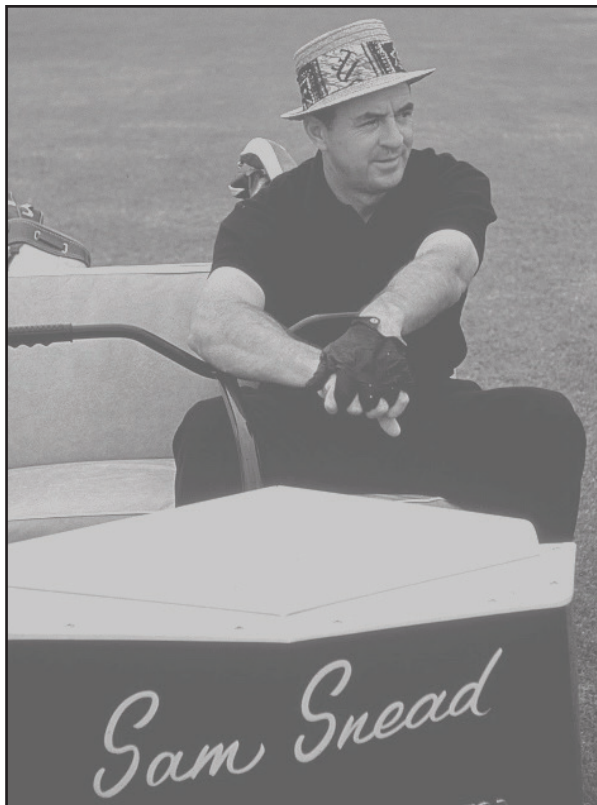
off with Jug McSpadden. After waiting so many years to get married the timing of the wedding was probably not a coincidence.

Audrey tried life on the Tour for a year or so but nothing about the life appealed to her. She disliked the travel, the food, the roadside motels - pretty much everything about it. Sam left to serve in the U.S. Navy in 1942 and after he returned home with a medical discharge for a bad back Audrey never returned with him to the grind. Their first son, Jack, arrived the next year. Sam meanwhile

rejoined life on the road with relish. He rarely missed a tournament and usually filled his off days with lucrative exhibitions. He also stayed at it longer than anybody. When he was 47 years old he shot a 59 in the Greenbrier Open. When he was 52 years old Snead became the oldest PGA Tour winner ever when he triumphed at the Greensboro Open. When he was 61 he became the oldest player to make the cut at the U.S. Open. At age 67 Snead became the youngest player to shoot his age on Tour with a 67 in the third round of the Quad Cities Open. The next day he shot 66. Altogether Sam's time away from home resulted in 164 course records, 135 wins worldwide and a record 82 victories on the PGA Tour. Snead made 42 holes-in-one in his career, using every club save his putter.

It was not all fun and games. In 1952 Audrey and Sam wel-

comed their second son. From the beginning it was obvious that little Terry was “not right in the head,” as it was called back then. Today he might have been identified as being on the autism spectrum and raised completely differently. As it was Terry was placed in an institutional school for over 30 years. Audrey was convinced that Terry’s condition was due to a genetic defect on her side of the family - her



mother had significant mental health problems - and she cut off all physical relations with Sam for fear of perpetuating the defective trait. Sam told his nephew, fellow PGA professional J.C. Snead, that he never and Audrey never had sex for the final 40 years of their marriage.

Audrey died just a few weeks into the new year in 1990. Al Barkow reported that Sam’s longtime friend Bob Girling claimed he only saw Snead cry twice. The first time was when he was telling about how Terry was so scared of flying that he gripped Sam’s arm the entire flight and the other was when Audrey died.

Ben Hogan

There will always be a debate as to who was the greatest golfer of all time. But there will never be any question that no one worked harder to get into the conversation than Ben Hogan. Jones, Nicklaus and Woods were all golfing prodigies. Hogan won his first PGA tournament at the age of 28; by that time Nicklaus had seven major championship titles, Woods had eight and Jones had retired with 13.

Growing up Ben wasn't even the best player in the caddie yard at the Glen Garden Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas. That would have been Byron Nelson whose natural swing was so pure that when the United States Golf Association set out to creating an automatic testing machine it modeled the contraption after Nelson. Hogan once begrudgingly copped to admiration for his lifelong frenemy, "Byron's got a good game. But he'd be a lot better if he practiced." The ailment that sent Hogan to the driving range for so many years was a hard-running hook. Hogan was beginning to see his future in a Fort Worth pro shop and not the professional golf tour in 1940 when he rolled into Pinehurst on bald tires with \$30 in his pocket for the North and South Open. He was grateful for the free meals and lodging in the Carolina Hotel Richard Tufts provided entrants. After winning by four strokes Ben told reporters, ""I won one just in time. I had finished second and third so many times I was beginning to think I was an also-ran. I needed that win. They've kidded me about practicing so much. I'd go out there before a round and practice, and when I was through I'd practice some more. Well, they can kid me all they want because it finally paid off. I know it's what finally got me in the groove to win."

Looking back on his career Hogan's mother Clara reflected, "Valerie is the only one who can honestly say, 'I told you

so.' The rest of us hoped Ben would make it, but Valerie was always sure he would."

Ben Hogan met Valerie Fox in passing when he was 14 years old. The crossed paths again in 1932 when the 20-year old Hogan took an assistant pro job in Cleburne, south of Fort Worth. Valerie, a year older, was attending Texas Christian University. This time there was a movie date and a stop at a lemonade stand. Arriving back at the Fox house Ben asked for a kiss and got instead a thank-you for the evening. It would be three years before the couple were married in the house.

There would be plenty of dark days ahead. Hogan's struggles on the golf course not only tore at his psyche as an athlete but tortured his self-image as a man able to provide for his wife. Ben's father had committed suicide, pulling the trigger in front of his son when he was eight-years old, condemning the family to a life of poverty. Ben Hogan was battling many demons in the depths of the Great Depression. "I tried to quit this game thousands of times...we were staying in crummy hotels and driving broken-down cars. That was no way to live," he once remembered. Valerie would hear nothing of the self-doubt, standing fast in her support. Hogan would call her "my only true friend and partner in life."

Ben and Valerie had no children so she devoted her life to "Team Hogan." She would travel to tournaments although she stayed mostly in the background because she was too nervous to watch Ben play in person. So it was that Valerie was in the passenger seat of the Hogan's Cadillac as Ben wheeled out of the El Capitan Motel in Van Horn, Texas on a foggy February morning in July of 1949. The next tournament was in Arizona, 500 miles away. Not ten miles into the trip Hogan stared into the headlights of a Greyhound bus in his lane trying to pass a truck, barreling towards the Cadillac. He just had time to throw his body across Valerie before impact. Valerie escaped with only

minor bruises. The steering wheel, however, was driven like a spear into the driver's seat. Ben's instinctive action to protect his wife had likely saved his life. But there was a shattered collarbone, a pelvis fractured in two places, a broken ankle and cracked ribs. The last thing Ben asked Valerie as he was lifted into the ambulance was whether his golf clubs had survived. Yes.

There were reports from the hospital that those clubs would never be needed again. Twenty pounds disappeared from his taut 137-pound frame. Again Valerie was having



none of the negativity. "Ben will be himself again, bones, nerves and all," Valerie reassured doubters. Sixteen months later Ben Hogan was winning a playoff to raise the U.S. Open trophy. It was so dramatic that Hollywood rushed a movie into the theaters with Glenn Ford starring as Ben. Anne Baxter earned raves for her star turn as Valerie.

If anything *Follow The Sun* was released too soon. Hogan's comeback continued in 1952 and 1953 as he won five of the seven major championships he entered. But the aftermath from the accident made preparation for championship golf too difficult and Ben retired from full-time competitive golf in 1955.

After 20 years of a marriage with golf at its core their relationship suffered. It was harder living with a legend than being one. There were times Ben required a sabbatical and moved into a local hotel. Still, Valerie and Ben celebrated their 62nd anniversary before his passing in 1997. The woman he once called "the real PGA and Open Champion" followed him two years later.

Babe Didrikson

The promoter of the 1938 Los Angeles Open thought it would be entertaining to pair Babe Didrikson, competing in a men's PGA event for the first time, with George Zaharias, a world class professional wrestler, and Presbyterian minister C. Pardee Erdman in the opening round. The trio indeed siphoned off the majority of the fans but it seems George and Babe only had eyes for each other. They would require the services of a minister before the year was out.

George Zaharias began life as Theodore Vetoyanis in Pueblo, Colorado, the first of Greek immigrants Gus and Dimitra's five children born in America. George was a strong lad and when he turned 20 he started his wrestling career. His first billing was as Ted Victory before a promoter changed his name to Zaharias, the Greek word for sugar. There was nothing sweet about his persona in the ring, however, as the Crying Greek from Cripple Creek cultivated a "bad guy" image prone



to sticking thumbs in an opponent's eye or delivering a kick to the head to a fallen adversary. The 300-pounder once estimated that he climbed into the ring more than 7,000 times during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Younger brothers Chris and Tom followed him into wrestling, both adopting the name Zaharias.

Even wrestling every night of the week across America could not bring George enough fame to match that of Mildred Didrikson.

Growing up in Beaumont, Texas she excelled at every sport she tried. She hit a baseball so far her friends started calling her "Babe" after the Yankees slugger. When she was 21 Didrikson entered the women's national track and field championships in Illinois. It was a team event but Babe competed by herself as the only member of the Golden Cyclones. Over the course of an afternoon she won six gold medals and set four world records. Her total of 30 points easily outpaced the 22 from the Illinois Athletic club with its 20 members. The competition was a qualifier for the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles but by rule she was limited to three events. Didrikson won gold the javelin throw and the 80-meter hurdles but only a silver medal in the high jump even though she set the world record. Her technique of soaring over the bar headfirst was deemed to be invalid.

Sportswriter Grantland Rice suggested that she take up golf and three years later she was playing in the Los Angeles Open, when all you needed to do to play was fill out an application form. Bobby Jones had called her one of the ten best golfers in the world of any gender and Byron Nelson said he could only think of eight men who could outdrive her. Didrikson missed the cut at the Griffith Park course shooting 84-81 but she was likely distracted by her playing partner.

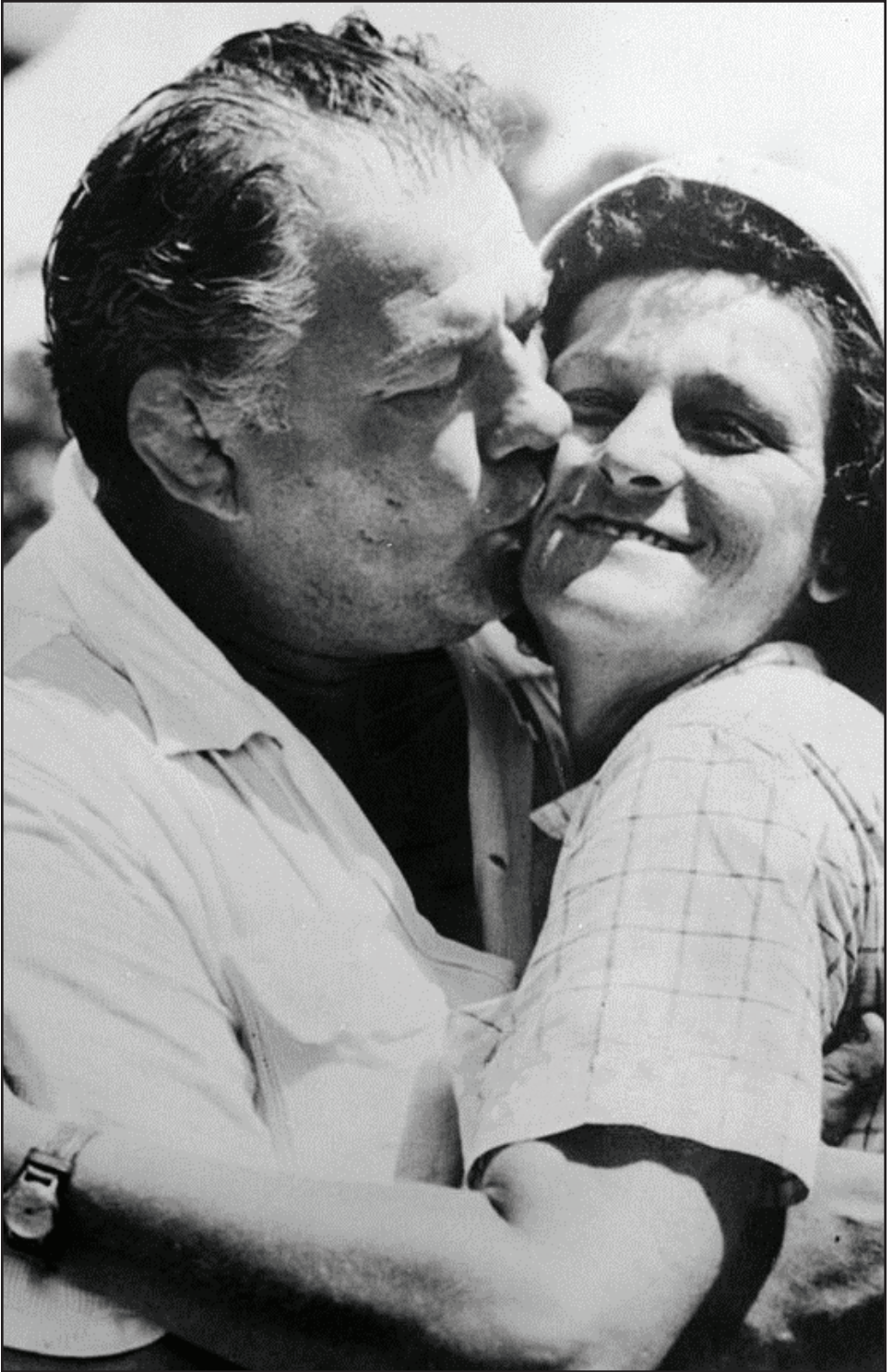
Once George and Babe were married he quit wrestling to manage Babe's career. There was no women's professional tour at the time so George had to promote her with a rigorous schedule of exhibitions and endorsements. From the outside Zaharias could be viewed as a Svengali figure but Babe was no slouch when it came to promoting herself in the arena of men's sports. Under his direction she worked to "feminize" her appearance, growing out her hair and appearing in public with painted nails.

By 1945 the Los Angeles Open had evolved since Babe's first appearance. Qualifying was now required and Didrikson shot 76-76 to make the field. Her appearance this time was

not treated as a sideshow. She made the 36-hole cut but did not survive the 54-hole cut for a paycheck that was in effect at the time. No woman has yet to make a cut in a PGA Tour event. As an amateur she burnished her reputation in national championships where she could. There was a title in the U.S. Women's Amateur in 1946 and the British Ladies Amateur in 1947. She won the 1948 U.S. Women's Open at Atlantic City Country Club by eight strokes. At one point there were 17 consecutive tournament wins. Babe Zaharias also demonstrated there was interest in the women's game. Her galleries were among the largest of the day for men or women and her popularity helped spur the creation of the LPGA tour in 1950.

By this time George had skipped out of his management role as Fred Corcoran, known as Mr. Golf, took over responsibility for Babe's career and the LPGA. Zaharias was also being elbowed out of Babe's personal life at the same time. She traveled the women's circuit with 19-year old Elizabeth Dodd who she was mentoring. After Didrikson was stricken with the cancer that would claim her life in 1956 at the age of 45 Dodd moved into the house with George and Babe. Babe Zaharias was much too popular for anyone to question the nature of the relationship at the time but it has led to prurient speculation over the years. Babe published her autobiography in 1955 and dedicated it "In memory of my mother and father, and to my husband, George, without whom there never would have been a life to lead."

George tried marriage again in 1960 with 43-year old former blonde actress Betty Burgess. She never adapted to living in Babe's shadow and six months later she was off pursuing matrimony for the fourth time. In 1981 Harriett Aposteles, who George had known growing up in Pueblo, signed on as wife/caretaker to the wheelchair bound Zaharias until his death three years later.



Arnold Palmer

Who could have ever thunk it? A golfer as media superstar. A golfer as matinee idol. A golfer who wherever he went would answer to just a single name - Arnie. Or maybe King. How could a girl raised in small towns in central Pennsylvania be expected to cope with the spotlight of worldwide attention? After all, Arnold Palmer was just a paint salesman when he met Winifred Walzer.

In the 1950s band leader Fred Waring turned Shawnee Country Club on an island in the Delaware River into a playground for his celebrity friends. Arnold Palmer had long wanted to attend one of Waring's golf bashes but could never afford to take time off from his job selling paint for Bill Wehnes in Cleveland, Ohio. The chance came in 1954 but it took winning the United States Amateur Championship the week before at Detroit Country Club to earn the 25-year old Palmer an extra week off from work.

During the tournament Fred Waring's college-aged daughter Dixie and her friend Winifred Walzer served as unofficial tournament "hostesses." After a practice round Palmer bumped into the girls and casually invited Walzer to come out and watch him play the next day. The 19-year old business student at Brown University was indeed on the Shawnee links the following day, ostensibly to follow her "Uncle Fred." Palmer spotted her on the 11th hole and the pair were inseparable the rest of the week. By Saturday Palmer had won the tournament and proposed marriage.

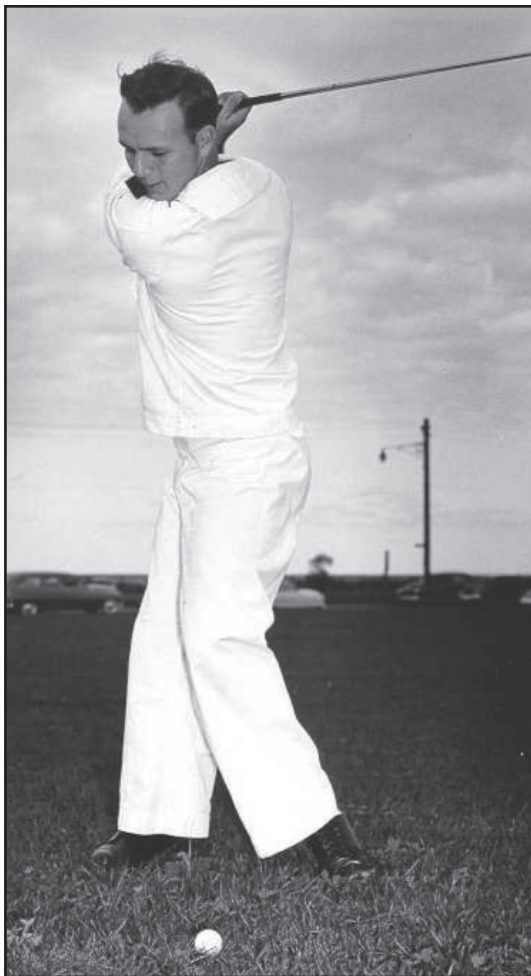
It was not a wedding but an elopement. After all, one of the things that attracted Palmer to Winnie in the first place had been a rebellious streak. He also sensed that Winnie would be comfortable in any situation, a plus for what would await them as Arnold and Winnie would reign as golf's First Couple for 45 years until her death in 1999. One situation she would not

abide however, was life on the golf tour in a trailer as the Palmers experienced it during Arnold's first year in 1955. There would be a first Tour victory so the Palmers were able to unhitch the trailer back in Latrobe and settle into a ranch house where the Palmers welcomed the first of two daughters in 1956.

Winnie retreated from tour life to raise Peggy and Amy and manage some of the Palmer family's far-flung enterprises, including a line of home furnishings she helped design. Winnie handled all the Palmer finances, making sure bills were paid. She took care of Arnold's travel

arrangements and filled out his tournament entry forms. On the charitable front she spearheaded fundraising for the Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women & Children in Orlando, Florida, serving on the board of directors for more than a decade.

In 1997 Arnold was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Surgery and radiation sent the disease into remission but almost as soon as he was declared cancer free Winnie was stricken with ovarian cancer. As was her wont she laid out meticulous details for her funeral service - including music and prayers - a year in advance of her passing.



In a surprise to no one, it was a private memorial service.

In 2005 Palmer wed again, tying the knot with Kathleen “Kit” Gawthrop, a 66-year old widow with three children. She had met Arnold back in the 1970s when her husband and father-in-law were involved in the ownership group of the Pebble Beach Golf Links. Kit had been an accomplished golfer in her own right until sidelined by back issues. It was a different relationship at this time in Palmer’s life. Two years later Arnie handed playing partner Lee Trevino his scorecard in the middle of a Senior Tour event and told him to stop keeping score. The greatest odyssey in golf history was over. Instead of tournaments and corporate outings Arnold and Kit’s life revolved around domino games and their Golden Retriever, Mulligan.

After an impromptu wedding in Hawaii Palmer clued in reporters, “She’s a great lady. I’ve known her for a long time. She’s just very special. Our honeymoon started about a year and a half ago and hopefully it will last for another 10 or 15 years.” Like almost everything in Palmer’s life it came to pass; Arnold died in Pittsburgh 12 1/2 years later at the age of 87.

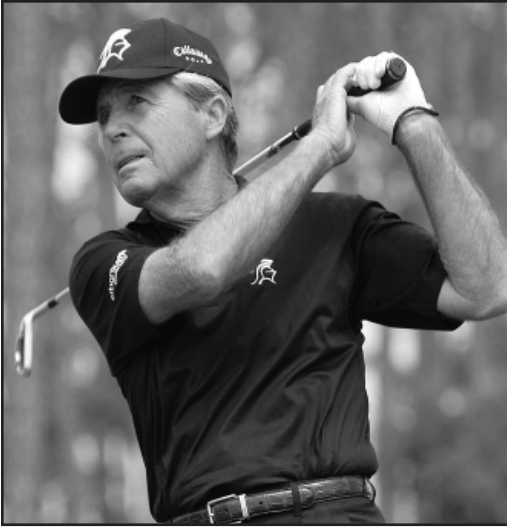
Gary Player

Vivienne Verwey's father was a golf professional and so was her brother. So it was very likely that growing up she could see golf being part of her adult life. But even if young Vivienne had been shown a magic looking glass of her future she would not have believed what her world would become after 14-year old Gary Player peeked over a fence to steal a look at her.

Gary asked Vivienne to marry him when he was 15 years old. But he was not the brash, impulsive sort. They would wait until he was earning enough money to support the big family they both wanted. That wouldn't take too long, Gary figured, since he planned on being the best golfer in the world. He turned pro at the age of 17 and two years later won the first of 13 South African Open championships. Not quite yet. Player flew to Australia and won three tournaments in three months. He cabled home: "Buy the dress."

When she decided to devote her life to being Mrs. Gary Player Vivienne sacrificed a bit of her own athletic career. She had been a competitive swimmer and knew her way around a golf course. During one round she once made two holes-in-one and the story goes a third bounced





off the flagstick.

In the beginning Vivienne performed the role of dutiful tour wife. When Gary won his first major title, the Open Championship at Muirfield in 1959, she was waiting by the 18th green with their first child Jennifer, only three months old. In an age when travel from South Africa to the United States took 40 hours

and required four stops Vivienne became expert at traveling with six children in tow.

But inevitably she couldn't keep up the pace as Player collected 167 first place trophies in professional tournaments around the globe. "She is the best wife that any man could ever wish for," he once said without exaggeration. "You know, no other woman would have stayed with me. I spent more time on airplanes than anyone in this planet. She fully supported my career and raised our six children almost single-handedly while I was touring the world playing golf." Even phone calls had to be scheduled like a tee time.

In her fifties Vivienne joined the Church of the Latter Day Saints. Together they founded The Gary & Vivienne Player Foundation on the family farm to benefit underprivileged children. The work to lift children out of poverty around the world grew, building even more frequent flyer miles.

Vivienne and Gary Player were wed for 64 years until her death from pancreatic cancer in 2021. In the end Gary Player would trademark the title of "World's Most Traveled Athlete." And thanks to Vivienne he never once packed his own bag.

Jack Nicklaus

The Nicklaus trophy case began filling almost immediately after Charlie Nicklaus signed up his son for one of Jack Grout's two-hour group junior golf classes at Scioto Country Club in Columbus, Ohio: the Scioto Club Juvenile Trophy at 11, the first of five straight Ohio State Junior Championships at 12, a U.S. Amateur appearance at 15, an Ohio State Open at 16, a first U.S. Open and a first national championship in the U.S. National Jaycees Championship at 17, the first of two U.S. Amateur titles at 19. By this time Jack Nicklaus was planning to marry Barbara Bash with a reception in the Scioto clubhouse ballroom. Nicklaus pictured his life as a pharmacist like his dad and a gentleman amateur golfer like his idol Bobby Jones. Maybe sell insurance. Something like that.

But professional golf had changed in 1960. Arnold Palmer had brought money into the game. It was no longer necessary for a player to grind out a living over 45 weeks on the tour. As a professional Jack Nicklaus would build his golf schedule around the four major championships. There would be time to spend at home with the family - he made it a credo to never be away from his family for more than two weeks. Nicklaus would create the 21st century model for the golfer as corporation. Barbara would be the CEO of the home division and Jack the COO of the golfing department.

Nicklaus took care of his end. In the first 107 major championships the Golden Bear entered after his marriage he finished an astounding first or second 37 times. If young pro players held Jack Nicklaus in awe, tour wives were even more in awe of Barbara for the way she managed the Nicklaus household, five children strong, and philanthropic activities. She was known simply as "The First Lady of Golf."



The nursing student met the pre-pharmacy major on the first week of their freshman year on the Ohio State campus when Barbara stopped to chat to a friend. Mary had to get away to class and introduced her to the husky blond guy she was sort of dating. Jack walked Barbara to the bacteriology building for their “first date.” Barbara had Jack’s fraternity pin by the end of sophomore year. The next Christmas would be for the engagement ring. When things got serious Barba-

ra figured she should learn something about this golf thing. She signed up for the golf class at Ohio State, banging balls into an old tin building on campus. The final was five holes on a real golf course. Barbara made three bogies and two pars. When she got home she ribbed Jack about why he needed to practice so much. It turned out Barbara had reached the pinnacle of her golfing career; Jack was just starting on his.

That career would be unparalleled in professional golf. As domestic duties lightened Barbara's energies shifted to charity work. The Nicklaus Children's Health Care Foundation began in 2004, raising more than \$150 million to provide Florida children access to top-shelf health care. Nicklaus once explained the symmetry of their decades-long relationship: "Barbara gave to me when I played and when I was doing golf courses. And the health-care charities now are more her thing, and I am more giving to her." For her charitable works Barbara Nicklaus was inducted into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame. Make that two Hall-of-Famers in the Nicklaus family.

Lee Trevino

Most times when a woman marries a young golf pro she does so with a clear vision of the life ahead of her. Such was not the case with Lee Buck Trevino. In his early twenties even he couldn't imagine competing with the players on the PGA tour. He was only interested in beating his 1,000 balls a day at Hardy Greenwood's driving range and pitch-and-putt course in North Dallas and winning his daily games at the Tension Park muni.

Like other golfing greats before him Lee quit school early and fell into work at a golf course caddy yard. But where most of the others graduated into country club pro shops Trevino took his four handicap and headed off for the United States Marine Corps. He liked life as a machine gunner in Asia so much he re-upped for a second two-year hitch. Corporal Trevino was teaching rifle range classes for the Special Services but there was plenty of time to play golf with the brass as well. By the time he was discharged in 1960 he had made up his mind that golf would be his future.

As with many returning veterans Trevino was not single for long. By the time Linda picked up her high school diploma she was already pregnant. The marriage didn't last a year before Linda moved out with little Ricky and headed for Missouri. She couldn't see building a life with a "golf bum."

There was still no hint of a PGA Tour future when Lee started dating another teenager, Claudia Fenley who was tearing tickets at the local Capri Theatre. They were married in 1964 and Trevino cashed his first professional check the following year by winning the Texas State Open. But he was denied a PGA card and instead found himself, at age 26, living in a motel in El Paso as an assistant pro at Horizon Hills Country Club. It was at least a step up - Lee and Claudia had started in



El Paso living in a trailer on a farm.

But Lee's sights were now on the PGA Tour, using the U.S. Open as his launching pad. He qualified in 1966 and borrowed money to travel to the Olympic Club in San Francisco where he finished 54th. What others might consider an encouraging debut for an unknown Mexican-American club pro Lee considered the end of a dream. The next year Claudia had to pay the \$20 entry fee and convince Lee to try and qualify again. This time he was low qualifier from the Texas region and stormed to a fifth place finish at Baltustrol in New Jersey, earning him tour playing privileges for the rest of the year.

In 1968 Trevino became one of the biggest surprise winners in U.S. Open history, besting Jack Nicklaus by four strokes

at Oak Hill Country Club in Rochester, New York. In gaining his first Tour victory Lee Buck had tied the tournament scoring record and was the first player ever to break 70 four times in the Open. Many considered it a fluke victory by an ex-Marine with no golfing pedigree. Instead it was only the first step to superstardom - and the demise of his marriage. Claudia was left to raise the couple's three children mostly on her own. She picked out the family house alone and when she asked out of the marriage after a rocky 17 years she pointed directly at the grind of the PGA Tour as the biggest culprit in the union's failure.

By the time Trevino took a third swing at marriage he was 44 years old and able to put golf in a healthier perspective. It helped that Claudia Bove was the daughter of a golf pro and was acquainted with the lifestyle going in. In fact, they had first met when she was 10 years old and gave Lee a cup of lemonade when he playing in his fourth pro tournament in Hartford, Connecticut. He stayed in touch with the family and 15 years later reconnected by chance as Claudia was being transferred by American Airlines to Dallas. Shortly after marrying, Trevino won his last title, the PGA Championship, with a new record for the tournament.

If ever there was a golfer made for the Senior tour it was Lee Trevino. But even though Trevino won Champion's Tour Player of the Year honors three of his first four years and became the tour's all-time winningest player he made more room for his family in his schedule. Lee Buck could even be seen in the pick-up line at school for daughter Olivia and son Daniel.

Tom Watson

Tom Watson met Linda Rubin during a junior high school staging of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera, *The Pirates of Penzance*. He was a stage manager, she was in the chorus. He was private and cerebral. She was outgoing and bubbly. Who knows how their lives had turned out if she had been the one on stage and not cast in the supporting role?

When it came time for college Tom left Kansas City for Stanford University and Linda headed east. But the attraction was too strong and she soon transferred to Mills College, an hour from the Palo Alto campus. They both earned psychology degrees but their talks about the future were mostly aimed at joining their fathers' businesses back in Missouri.

Tom showed flashes of brilliance playing college golf but he was forever fiddling with his swing and never truly distinguished himself. He surprised Linda when he told her that he was going to try and be a touring pro. It took her almost two years to give up the idea of a businessman husband home every night for dinner at 6:00 p.m. and begin the wedding plans. Nonetheless, Linda was quoted a few years later as saying if she knew how great life was out on tour she would have "married him in college."

Tom Watson won his first PGA tournament at the age of 25, the following year he was a major champion after capturing the Open Championship in a playoff. Juggling travel plans, buying clothes, and answering fan mail was great for Linda Watson until it wasn't. After 25 years Linda wanted out of being Mrs. Tom Watson.

Hilary Holton had seen the darkest side of PGA Tour life. She grew up in Rhodesia, today Zimbabwe, excelling at just about every sport she tried. As a 20-year old in 1976 she qualified for the Rhodesian Olympic team in the long jump, high



jump, and hurdles. Hilary never got to compete in Montreal as her country was banned for its racial segregation policies. Nine years later she married countryman Denis Watson and moved to North Carolina to chase his PGA dreams. Watson was a rising star who lost the Open Championship that year by a single stroke after incurring a two-stroke penalty for waiting more than 10 seconds for a putt hanging on the lip of the cup to fall. The following year Watson would thrash a 9-iron recovery shot from the trees only to hit a submerged stump. Nine surgeries on his wrist, elbow and neck would follow and he never again regained his winning form of the PGA Tour as the marriage withered away after a dozen years.

Hilary would see no family PGA victories after marrying Tom in 1999 - the final win for the six-time PGA Play-

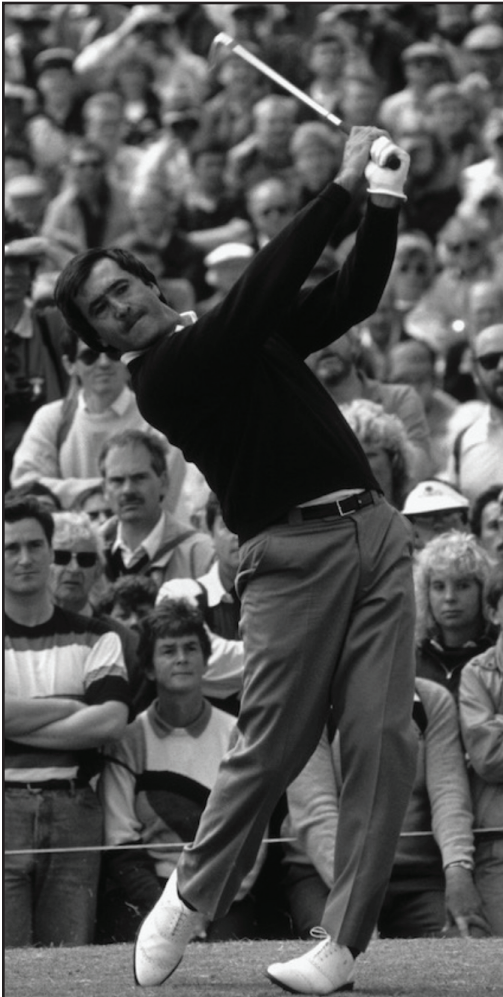
er of the Year came a year earlier at Colonial at the age of 48. There would be six major championships on the Champions Tour to enjoy, however. And happily Denis Watson would also recover his game after turning 50, winning four times, including the Senior PGA Championship in 2007.

Tom continued to play tournament golf well into his 60s but by that time he wasn't even the leading money winner in his own house. Hilary had grown up riding and jumping horses and on the Watson farm in Kansas she was introduced to the sport of cutting where horse and rider work to separate and hold one cow from its herd. Hilary competed at the highest levels of the sport where Tom considered her a "1 or 2 handicap." She earned more than \$380,000 in her cutting career, competing to the end of a battle with pancreatic cancer in 2019.

Several years after Hilary's passing Tom tapped the extended golf family again. At the age of 73 Watson became engaged to CBS Sports executive LeslieAnne Wade who he had known for 15 years before getting engaged in May of 2022. Previously Wade had enjoyed a "long personal and professional relationship" with Hall-of-Fame golfer and CBS presenter Nick Faldo. A wedding followed within ten weeks but the union was doomed after just three months when LeslieAnne contracted an unexpected illness.

Seve Ballesteros

Championship golf had never seen anything like Severiano Ballesteros before. There was his swashbuckling style, of course, but other charismatic golfers - notably Arnold Palmer - had been flamboyant shotmakers. No, it was the fact that Seve remained single throughout his twenties and was the first player to win five major championships as a bachelor. Seve got married in November 1988, a few months after capturing



his third Open Championship. He would never win another major, never even contend. There were another 11 wins on the European Tour but in the majors? 24 missed cuts in his last 43 appearances. Coincidence?

The romance of Seve Ballesteros and Carmen Botín began in 1983 when she was 17 and shuttled to the local golf club for lessons. Carmen's father was the billionaire head of the aristocratic Banco Santander that dated back to the 1850s with a charter from Queen Isabel II of Spain. Seve's family were farm laborers - he learned the game by hitting shots on the beach with a 3-iron,

the only club available to him. Everywhere she went Carmen was accompanied by a chaperone.

Their courtship was carried on - mostly in secret - for five years. When the nuptials were finally announced many in the regal Botín family were clearly baffled. Carmen is marrying a golfer? As commentator Peter Alliss mused, ““I’m sure one or two of the grandees thought she had married a caddie. The fact that he was the most famous caddie in the world did not really cut much ice.” Her older sister Ana had married a fellow banker and a member of the peerage of Spain, something the Botíns could better understand.

The couple welcomed three children - Javier Baldomero, Miguel and Carmen - into the family but the back problems that were sabotaging Seve’s play on the golf course began manifesting themselves in the marriage. Ballesteros became increasingly frustrated with his inability to compete, affecting his mental health and leading to a divorce in 2004. It had been nine years since his last title - a European Tour record 50th - at the Spanish Open.

Following his separation from Carmen Seve began an ill-fated relationship with 27-year old Fatima Galarza. She died in a car crash and shortly afterwards the brain cancer that would kill him at the age of 54 was discovered. Those closest to him were by his bedside at the end, most prominently Carmen Ballesteros.

Phil Mickelson

Phil and Amy. The duo resurrected something golf fans had not seen in a generation - the superstar golfer with the superstar marriage. Arnie and Winnie. Jack and Barbara. Gary and Vivienne. Phil and Amy.

Thing was, Amy McBride was probably considered a bigger catch on the Arizona State University campus when they met than Phil Mickelson - and he had already won a PGA tournament as an amateur. Amy was a dancer with the NBA Phoenix Suns Dancers. She came from a tennis family and when he told her on their first date - on the tennis court - that he was a pro golfer she figured he worked in a local golf shop. Even after being clued in that Phil had won three NCAA individual championships for the Sun Devils Amy still didn't grasp the whole golf thing. When she went to her first tournament with him she assumed they would be walking hand in hand down the fairway and have lunch together after nine holes.

There was never any question the two would be married after graduation in 1992 but the knot was not officially tied until November 1996. By that time Phil already owned nine PGA titles and placed in the Top Ten in six major championships. In 1999 at the U.S. Open in Pinehurst, North Carolina the Mickelsons were expecting their first child. Phil played with a pager on his belt and a private plane at the ready to fly back to California in case Amy went into labor. Amy did go into labor but she never called and Phil went on to finish second to Payne Stewart. He made it home in time to assist in the delivery of Amanda.

Amy was a fixture on the PGA Tour, popular with fans and players' wives alike. She was a familiar sight around the 72nd green with the growing Mickelson family - Sophia arriving in 2001 and Evan in 2003 - waiting to congratulate Phil after one

of his 45 career wins. She was so recognizable that her absence in 2009 was noticeable. Amy was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 37 and Phil immediately left the Tour. When news came out the Tour Wives and PGA Tour organized a “Pink Out” at the next tournament. The disease was spotted early and Amy went on to make a full recovery - and deliver a kiss to Phil at Augusta when he won the Masters the following year. Breast cancer awareness is now one of Amy’s several charitable causes.

As Phil’s career moved into his 40s he more and more made headlines for his activities off the golf course than on. There was an investigation into insider trading in the stock market and an addiction to gambling. When the Saudi-backed LIV Golf tour emerged Phil led the defectors from the PGA Tour to the rival league. Always active on social media he posted that Amy “has “loved me and supported me through my darkest and most difficult times” and he “couldn’t have gotten through without her.” Golf fans would be quick to forgive. After all, it’s Phil and Amy.

Tiger Woods

As Tiger Woods compiled the most spectacular golfing record ever achieved by a 25-year old golfer (eight major championships including the “Tiger Slam” when he held all four trophies simultaneously) the public was privy to only two relationships - his mother Kutilda and his father Earl. Golf fans were familiar with the Eldrick Woods story: Earl, retired Army, teaching him the game and naming him after a fellow Vietnam veteran; putting on television against Bob Hope on the Mike Douglas Show at the age of 2; winning so many Junior World Golf championship trophies that he threw them all away by the time he finished grade school; winning three consecutive U.S. Junior Amateur titles and three consecutive U.S. Amateur titles; playing his first PGA event at the age of 16. Nowhere in the tale was a high school sweetheart or bestowed college fraternity pin mentioned.

When television cameras caught a victorious Tiger Woods coming off a 72nd green it was often to Earl where he would head. Until Elin Nordegren entered the picture. Elin’s mother was a Swedish politician and her father a radio journalist. She modeled and worked in retail while aiming at a degree in child psychology until golfer Jesper Parnevik offered her a position as au pair for his children on Tour. It did not go unnoticed by Parnevik that an unusual number of single golfers were pestering him for an introduction. Included in that line was Tiger Woods but Elin was in a relationship and not interested. A formal meeting was not arranged until the 2001 Open Championship; a wedding would take place on October 5, 2004.

The two kept a low profile - Woods after all named his 155-foot yacht Privacy - until Tiger crashed a Cadillac Escalade in his Florida driveway in November 2009. Speculation and innuendo spilled out until the official divorce

papers were signed on August 23, 2010. It turns out that Tiger Woods was able to accomplish something more remarkable off the course than the mind-blowing shotes he executed on the links - in the internet age where journalists no longer were on the payroll to protect an athlete's peccadilloes Woods was able to hide a litany of marital indiscretions.

Elin and Tiger remained friendly, co-parenting their two children Sam and Charlie. As Tiger went about repairing his image and rebuilding his golf game Elin returned to school to get that psychology degree. She earned a 3.96 GPA and was named "Outstanding Senior" of the Rollins College Class of 2014. She even stepped out of her preferred seclusion to speak at commencement.

Tiger's next public romance was with skier Lindsey Vonn, the first American woman to win a gold medal in the Olympic downhill. Woods and Vonn, also recently divorced, kept up a high-profile relationship for several years until they parted. Seems Lindsey's ski schedule was as hectic as Tiger's golf demands and there was no giving in from either side. They too parted as friends.

Things were not so amicable when things ended with Erica Herman. At first Erica seemed to slide into the Woods sphere seamlessly. She was the general manager of The Woods Jupiter, Tiger's restaurant in Florida. She got along famously with the Woods children and even had the seal of approval from Elin. However, she began to view the relationship as more permanent than he did. The coupling came apart in a flurry of lawsuits brought by Ms. Herman, most of which were asking for eight-figure sums of money. All were dismissed.

Tiger Woods set many golfing records, some of which will likely never be matched. One took place at the 2019 Masters when he electrified the golfing world by winning his fifth Green Jacket. It was the first major title he had won as a divorced man and the ninth while not being married. That achievement is likely to last a long time.

