



Member Profile

Pete Georgiady

Kernersville, N.C., USA

When it comes to golf, there are three watershed moments in my life worth mentioning, writes Pete Georgiady.

They start with my first round of golf in 1958, at age 10 with my neighborhood buddies. It was played on the Lincoln Park 9-hole muni in Milwaukee, my regular course as I grew up.

Second was spending a year in Scotland, perhaps most notably the first time I teed up the ball on the first hole of the Old Course. My buddy and I walked on – no waiting – as a twosome after paying our £1 (\$2.40 in 1971). Carnoustie was only 75p. That year in Scotland was my first taste of golf history.

The third was joining the Golf Collector's Society in 1978. A significant number of my friendships were made and maintained through my membership and activity in the Society and, subsequently, hickory golf.

I can readily say something that many others can also relate to: I don't play as much golf as I would like. What fills the void is the amount of time I spend collecting old golf clubs, communicating with other collectors, and writing on the history of golf equipment. When I began collecting clubs there was a dearth of information available and hopefully I have been able to fill that void for other collectors.

(Pete's books on golf club collecting, and value guides have become invaluable aids to both novice and seasoned collectors. – Ed.)

My first hickory golf was played at an early "Dayton Fly-In" meeting hosted by Bob Kuntz, probably 1979. I just showed up with clubs from my collection I thought might withstand hitting a few balls. We played a small town course north of Dayton in Tipp City. Afterward I was impressed that we could swing hard and hit golf balls without the old relics breaking. I loved the experience, the camaraderie and haven't looked back since.

My contribution to the hickory golf realm is the National Hickory Championship. In 1997 Oakhurst course owner Lewis Keller and I were playing the course all alone. We were so casual and conversational, having a good time on a beautiful spring day, it took us three hours to play nine holes. On the eighth hole I said to him, "Why can't we have a tournament here?" A year later we staged the very first two-day hickory event. In June 2016 we'll gather again for number 19.

One of my favorite hickory moments was 10 or 12 years ago at the National Hickory at Oakhurst. I was teeing off at 7:30 on Saturday morning and Bill Campbell (1964 U.S. Amateur Champion, eight Walker Cup teams, two U.S. Senior Amateur championships, former president of the USGA, inductee into the World Golf Hall of Fame, and former Captain of the R&A GC, only the third such American so honored, after Francis Ouimet and Joe Dey) came to the course to see me. He walked the first three holes with my group so he and I could catch up on things. Then he excused himself, went to the airport and flew to Scotland that afternoon.



Bill Campbell, right, with Pete Georgiady at the NHC in Oakhurst. Campbell stopped by en route to Scotland to have a visit. In 2012, junior NHC player Seth Lomison had the honor of meeting Campbell, who told the youngster that his greatest honor was being the youngest player to qualify for the U.S. Amateur since Bobby Jones. This was as a 15-year-old in 1938. Campbell passed away in 2013.

Besides golf, I've had a day job in the high technology industry for the past 41 years – IBM, Xerox, Lockheed, and Ricoh. My legacy is my son, Bryan, who has a Tom Morris club collection and has played hickories on many occasions. One important current interest is introducing other young people to golf history, which I do through my local First Tee organization. Part of that program is to sponsor some deserving junior golfers to play in the NHC so that they can actually experience the history they received in their classroom. In this way we can hopefully plant seeds for the next generation of golf historians and hickory golfers.

Pete and his wife, Kay, live in Kernersville, N.C.

How often do you play hickories?

Not often enough. Of the rounds I play perhaps 60-75% each year are played with hickories, either style – 19th or 20th century.

What's in your play set?

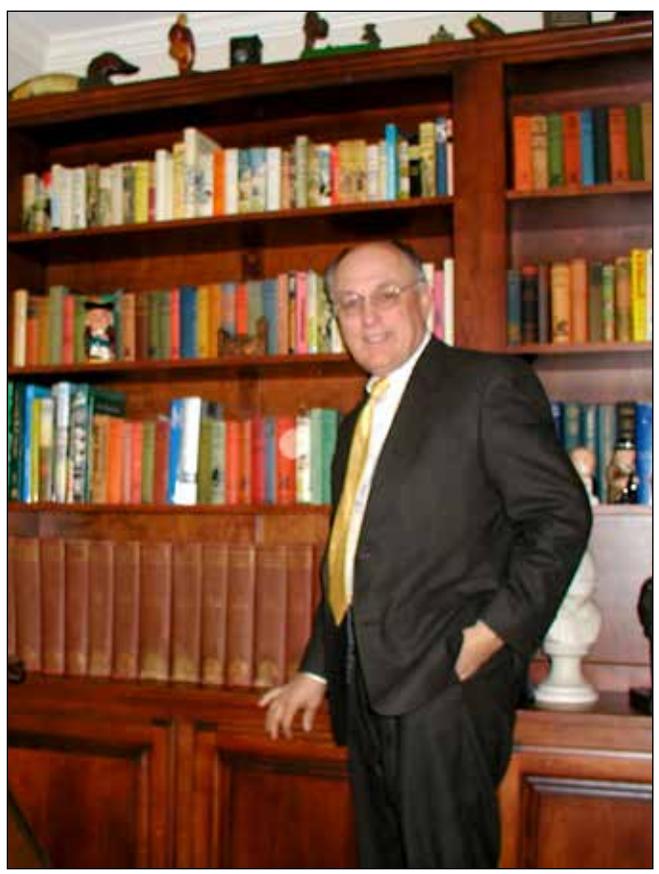
I have a bunch of playable clubs that I rotate depending on where I am playing. But these lists would be the most indicative:

19th Century

Replica long nose from Louisville Golf Cleek – WH Booth, Beckenham (1890)
Long blade mashie – Tom Stewart, serpent mark (1895)
Lofter – Robert Condie single fern, mark (1893)
Heavy Niblick – T Carruthers, short, bore-through hosel (1891)
Putter – Willie Wilson bent blade, registered "Taylor's Putter" (1895)

20th Century

Brassie – WH Downs (Grand Rapids)
Spoon – Bulldog style, Jack Parr (Manchester)
Long iron ("rough iron") – Rollins & Parker Eclipse model
Mashie – Tom Stewart 6 (from Ralph Livingston)
Jigger – Spalding Dedstop 4 deep groove, Willie Collins
Mashie Niblick – George Nicoll, Zenith model 82 low profile
Niblick – Stokes Co., Smith pattern anti-shank
Putter – AH Scott DSO model aluminum long nose mallet



A man and his books. *"The five shelves of smaller books contain my Wodehouse collection," Pete Georgiady says. "It's about 40 percent first editions and the rest reading copies. I hope to start plowing through them in retirement. I have been collecting them, though not as actively as I once was, since before I got into golf clubs. I think my favorite piece, if one can have only one Wodehouse favorite, is The Great Sermon Handicap short story. The bottom shelf is my 13 volume Oxford English Dictionary, which I have had for over 40 years and I love."*

Favorite club?

In my gutty set, the Stewart long blade mashie must be the perfect weight/balance/flex for me because I have been hitting some great shots with it. In my rubber core set, my Nicoll Zenith mashie niblick has been in continual use since 1980. That should speak for itself.

Favorite course for hickories?

Without question Oakhurst Links. In the whole of the universe there is only one course like Oakhurst. Anyone that wants to feel the real hickory era aura should play there.

Favorite hickory tournament?

The National Hickory Championship is the grand daddy of all hickory events. I might be a bit biased in choosing it but I put in almost 400 hours of preparation every year to make it a great event. The special qualities of the Oakhurst course provide the rest of the thrills. The course and grounds belong entirely to us for three days every year. That is as special as it gets.

Any particular player or aspect of golf history you especially enjoy?

For the last 40 years the history of golf equipment and the stories of the old club makers have been my primary interests, mostly because that part of golf history was largely overlooked for years.

Best thing about hickory golf?

In playing gutty golf especially, the primitive equipment and the irregular course conditions make the challenges great, the experience unique. As you play you wonder how this difficult and punishing sport ever became popular in America.

Ideas to promote hickory golf?

- Start with informal hickory play-days for local SoHG and GCS members.
- If you run or sponsor an event, promote it locally through local media. Most newspapers have a free community event calendar. Send an invite to the TV's sports department. Challenge the media people to play your group.
- Get a golfing friend interested by inviting him/her to play sometime.
- Volunteer to speak at a men's club meeting at a local country club. Demonstrate at a member-guest event.

Most recent book on golf that you read?

Guaranteed it is usually whichever of my books is currently being prepared for publication – reading, rereading, proofing, reading again, and again... But from other folks, Roger McStravick's St Andrews in the Footsteps of Old Tom Morris is a remarkable treasury of old golf information and photos.

Note – Among the several books he has authored or co-authored, Pete has produced articles for many golfing magazines and is a valued contributor to the Bulletin of the Golf Collectors Society and the Wee Nip of the Society of Hickory Golfers. He is on the Museum & Library Committee of the USGA. He is an indefatigable researcher, founder of the National Hickory Championship, and a valued friend and mentor. His many books may be found online by searching for Airlie Hall Press in your browser, or by title through such as Amazon.com. These include:

- Compendium of British Club Makers
- George Nicoll of Leven (co-authored with Roger Hill)
- Cleek Marks and Trademarks on Antique Golf Clubs (co-authored with Pat Kennedy)
- North American Club Makers
- Survival! An Anecdotal History of the National Hickory Championship
- Wood Shafted Golf Club Value Guide
- Collecting Antique Golf Clubs
- Putting at the Palace (fiction, 2015)
- Antique Golf Collectibles – Identification and Value Guide (Published by Collector Books, 2006)