



Member Profile

Gerry Cassel

Shelton, Wash., USA

Michigan-born Gerry Cassel Jr. has been on the move all his life, he says, every three years or so.

"Traveling is in my blood," he says. "In my lifetime I have been to all 50 states, 95 countries, and six continents. One benefit of all those moves is that I have close friends in every place I have lived."

He picked up golf in 1981 at age 7. "The golf course became my babysitter every place I lived. My first lessons were given by Chi Chi Rodriguez, an emeritus at my course in Southern California, that took pity on our little group of kids with no coach."

The game stayed with him through his 13-year service in the U.S. Air Force, 1992-2005, although an injury interrupted his game from 1997-98. A short while later, a car accident also held him back from the course.

"I could not walk and had no motivation," he says.

Still, a little course next to his house offered a 3-year membership for 7 days a week and unlimited golf for \$300.

"I bought memberships for me, my son, and my father, Cassel says. "I started going to the course every day after rehab. For the first few months I would walk and play three holes then go home. After six months I could walk seven holes, and by the end of the year I could walk nine holes. The following year I could do 12-15 holes. I did not track a handicap and I played alone most days."

Today, Cassel owns property on the Alderbrook Golf and Yacht Club in Union, Wash., his home course, and planning to build on the site.

"I can now walk and play 36 or more holes in one day," he says. "In 2014-2015 I took lessons from the head professional at Chambers Bay, home of the 2015 U.S. Open. That same year, the weekend after the Open, I played the same tees as the pros and shot 80! I went from a 26 handicap in 2014 and ended at a 6 in 2015."

It was in 2019 that he picked up the hickory bug after playing with a vintage bag from the 1940s "just for gee-whiz!"

That led to the purchase of a set of Burke matched hickory irons in 2019.

"I love the feeling I get when they are hit well!," he says. "It's the same feeling I had as a teenager hitting modern clubs good for the first time. Its intoxicating. I am now all in. Clothes, hats, clubs, etc.

"My bucket list now includes playing historical golf courses with my hickories."

How often do you play hickories?

I play 100% from March through October. I play my modern bag all winter. Then in February, I start playing my hickories.

What's in your play set?

I don't carry every club, I add and remove as course yardages dictate. Each club actually has three different shots. Full, knockdown, and straight arm pitch. I am only showing Knockdown to Full yardages

Driver_ Carolina Hickory Replica (Louisville Golf product assembled at Pinehurst N.C.)- 245+ yards
Brassie_ Wilsonian replica from Louisville Golf - 190 to 230 yards
Cleek_ Carolina Hickory Replica (Louisville Golf product assembled at Pinehurst N.C.)- 155 to 205 yards
Driving Iron**- Kroydon H7 - 230 yards
Mid Iron_ Long Burke matched Irons - 150 to 210 yards
Mid Mashie_ Long Burke matched Irons - 140 to 190 yards
Mashie Iron_ Long Burke matched Irons - 130 to 170 yards
Mashie_ Long Burke matched Irons - 120 to 160 yards
Spade Mashie_ Burke Golfrite - 110 to 145 yards
Mashie Niblick_ Long Burke matched Irons - 100 to 135 yards
Niblick_ Burke Stainless Matched Iron (from my first set) - 50 to 100 yards
Jigger**- O-V-K hand forged - Green side out to 150
Putter**- AMPCO harder than steel 10-0

** Clubs played by my friend when he was 13. Passed away 2021.



Gerry Cassel Jr. watches another great shot fly toward the green at Alderbrook.

Favorite club?

I have several. I give names to the ones that matter!

Woody is the driver.

Big Red is the brassie.

Lil Woody is the cleek.

The Wally 2 is my driving iron.

Wally's Whizzer, or the Whiz, is my jigger.

The Wally P! is my putter – anything within three feet is a gimme (ask me to tell you the story!).

What ball do you play?

The Callaway Supersoft or Superhot; the Wilson Duo or Elite 55. And someday a gutta-percha.

Favorite course for hickories?

Chambers Bay at University Place, Wash. It's a true links course.

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

Harry Vardon, because he came from poor background and through sheer desire and effort became a legend.

Best thing about hickory golf?

For now, the exhilarating feeling of hitting a ball well. I picture Harry Vardon in heaven clapping on a great shot, saying, "Well done boy, well done!"

Ideas to promote hickory golf?

I have started the Alderbrook Golf and Yacht Club Vintage Golf and Hickory Society. Our first event will be May 2 on World Hickory Golf Day. If you play hickories at a golf course, people will ask questions. I plan to collect, rescue, and play vintage clubs the rest of my life.