



## Member Profile Bruce Johnson Jewell, Iowa, USA

**B**ruce Johnson, a native of the Lombard suburb of Chicago, is a 1968 graduate of Loyola University with a degree in biology. He later completed a masters in health care administration at Des Moines University and retired in 2012 from a 28-year career as director of laboratory services for the McFarland Clinic in Ames, Iowa.

Along the way he helped design and implement laboratory projects for medical clinics and has taught courses in health care administration. He also held research and teaching assistant ships at Iowa State University in the department of Zoology and entomology.

Bruce is now active in his community as president of the Jewell Area Development Enterprise, which he founded to help improve the economic and cultural life in the community. He has served on boards for the local youth and family center, shelter service, and is currently the mayor pro tem for Jewell.

Somehow, between graduating from Loyola and graduate school in Des Moines, Bruce found time to successfully propose marriage to one Marie Schaller, who thought this young man looked like a keeper. The two were married in 1973.

He started playing golf after moving to Iowa in 1969 and bought his first set of hickories in January 2015 with the thought to play them now and again. Instead, he says, "I have played them exclusively ever since purchasing them, and have never had more fun!"

Having traded his white lab coat for plus-fours, Bruce has become an 18.8 handicap with the old sticks. He has twice participated in both the Ames Hickory Classic in Iowa as well as the Interstate Hickory Tournament in Camdenton, Mo.

No fair weather golfer, since 2001 Bruce has played golf each month in Iowa, an accomplishment of perseverance, if not golfing lunacy, recognized by the Ames Tribune, which documented his golfing doggedness in a front-page article in March 2010.

In his defense, Bruce says that "I have discovered that, in winter, water hazards are not very hazardous."

### How often do you play hickories?

*I play hickories exclusively. During the 2016 season, I played the equivalent of 120 9-hole rounds at my two local courses – the Jewell Golf & Country Club, in Jewell Iowa; and the River Bend Golf Course in Story City, Iowa. I played about 20 18-hole rounds elsewhere. Probably around 2-3 times per week, on average. I'm living proof that the old adage is false that the more you play, the better you get! Hickory handicap index is currently 18.8.*

### What's in your play set?

*My set consists of three woods – brassie, spoon and baffy, though sometimes I'll only put two of them in my bag. Also five irons – mid-iron, mashie iron, mashie, mashie niblick and niblick – plus a putter. I have duplicates of many of the irons, and three extra putters; so I have the equivalent of two playing sets.*

### Favorite club?

*At this stage in my Hickory golfing experience, I do not hit any of the clubs noticeably better than any other; so I cannot yet say that any one of them is my favorite.*

### What ball do you play?

*I usually play a Wilson Staff Duo (compression rating = 29), but sometimes will play Callaway Super Soft (Rating = 35). I have also played the Wilson Staff Duo Spin (Rating = 35) once or twice. I have a number of the Callaway balls in colors for winter golf.*

### Favorite course for hickories?

*I'm a member at two local 9-hole courses (see above), both of which I find admirably suited to hickory play. Each is under 3,000 yards from the tees I usually play, and neither one has much elevation change so walking is easy. Nor are there very many bunkers or other hazards. And both are well groomed and maintained.*



**Bruce Johnson on the 17th tee at Old Kinderhook during the 2016 Interstate Hickory Tournament.**

### Favorite hickory tournament?

*I've only played so far in two tournaments (twice each), both of which I have really enjoyed. One is the Ames Hickory Classic (Ames, IA), sponsored by Ames Silversmithing, a local business that happens to be owned by a hickory player, and held annually at the Ames Golf and Country Club. The second is the Interstate Hickory Tournament, which has been played at Old Kinderhook Course in Camdenton Mo., in the Lake of the Ozarks area.*

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

*I have never really gotten into the history of golf, but I did thoroughly enjoy a History Channel documentary called Golf: Links in Time (2005), which did a wonderful job of explaining the history of the game. The video is available at many libraries and also available for purchase from a number of sources.*

### Best thing about hickory golf?

*Hmmm. Not sure I can put my finger on one thing. I can honestly say I've never had as much fun playing the game as I do using my hickories. Near as I can pinpoint it, attractive elements include:*

- The clubs are not nearly as forgiving as modern clubs, so when I hit it well, it is particularly gratifying.*
- I cannot hit them nearly as far, so therefore have an excuse to play shorter tees!*
- There's something uniquely satisfying about looking over a lie and saying to my playing partner "Hmmm, I think this shot calls for a mashie."*

### Ideas to promote hickory golf?

*I have subscribed to a couple of the popular golfing magazines, but have never seen any coverage in them of hickory golf. Someone with writing talent should submit an article to Golf magazine or Golf Digest about a tournament such as the U.S. Hickory Open. Or any other hickory topic, such as one of the really good hickory tournament players.*

### Most recent book on golf that you read?

*Two books I have enjoyed are:*

- Who's Your Caddy, by Rick Reilly (2003). This book is a riot!*
- Tales from the Q School: Inside Golf's Fifth Major, by John Feinstein (2007). An interesting look at the individuals vying for their tour cards.*

*Most of my current light reading consists of presidential biographies. I am reading bios of all the presidents, in order; currently on William Howard Taft (president No. 27) who, it turns out, was a golf fanatic at a time when the only clubs were hickories.*