



## Member Profile **Roger Hill** Grand Rapids, Mich.

**R**oger Hill did not come to golf early. But when he did, he jumped in with both feet.

“My dad played a little in a company league, but I was too busy playing every other sport when I was a kid and just wasn’t interested in golf,” he says. “It’s funny, though, how many times Red Run Country Club (a Willie Park Jr. course) shows up in my early life. One dance, one photoshoot and, most of all, the opportunity to caddie at Red Run (foolishly declined as baseball was calling). Red Run and golf kept popping up and I didn’t recognize the signs.”

Roger later played with Chuck Koscis, who was Michigan amateur player of the century and 88 years old at the time. “Chuck regaled us with stories of his days at Red Run and matches with all the greats of the day including Sarazen and Hagen,” he says. “I knew somewhere that I had missed out on a great thing.”

It wasn’t until he was 35 and well into his career as a commercial photographer that Roger started golfing. “I specialized in furniture photography and regularly attended the Southern Furniture Market in High Point, N.C. where my client had me photograph show room sets and then he’d play golf on his way home,” he says. “One year, he suggested that my wife join his and fly down to meet us and play golf.”

Roger and his wife had planned on tennis and fly fishing instead, but took up the offer and met the client at High Hampton Inn in Cashiers, N.C. for a weekend.

“All it took was a shot or two, especially the shot over a pond to a picturesque par 3 and I was hooked,” Roger says. “Lessons followed, then practice, then club membership and later trying out hickories with Ralph Livingston. I joined the Golf Collectors Society, played in “Hickory Hackers” and eventually helping start the SoHG when it became clear that a serious players group needed to be formed.”

Roger now plays mostly with hickories – “only twice with moderns this year” – and helped form the Michigan Hickory Tour, which meets monthly at courses around the state.

“My wife, Christine, plays (not so much hickories) but has encouraged my participation all along,” he says. “We have two Abyssinian cats named Uncle Mungo and Young Willie, but that’s a story for another time.”

### **How often do you play hickories?**

*All the time. Play in organized Michigan events every month and a couple of national events. Hoping to get back across the pond next fall for the English Hickory and Grail, and my home course in Scotland – Machrihanish.*

### **What’s in your play set?**

*I collect George Nicolls so there’s mostly Nicolls in the set along with a jigger from Grand Rapids. I’m experimenting with a new flanged niblick from Martin and Kirkaldy as I’ve never liked most Nicoll niblicks. Here’s what’s current:*

Nicoll niblick  
Nicoll deep deep groove Mashie Niblick  
Nicoll weak Mashie  
Nicoll Braid Mashie (my first club!)  
Grand Rapids Jigger  
Nicoll Iron  
Nicoll driving Iron  
Sunderland 1 1/12 iron (aluminium)  
Jack White spoon  
Carnoustie driver  
All my back up woods are Nicolls, but I’d rather save them than wear them out.

### **Favorite club?**

*Nicoll Zenith Driving Iron. Straight, long, best club I’ve ever owned. Has served me very well in Scotland on links courses.*



**Roger Hill is one of the driving forces in modern hickory golf and a long-time golf collector.**

### **What ball do you play?**

*Wilson 50 or Duo...very soft, the Duo is more durable.*

### **Favorite course for hickories?**

*Machrihanish and Troon are both fabulous with hickories. In the U.S., probably Mid Pines.*

### **Favorite hickory tournament?**

*Belvedere Hickory Open, followed closely by Mid Pines.*

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

*Best player who never won a major but with 29 tour victories: Mac Smith. His name was on the first club I found at a flea market and I’ve researched him almost to the point that I feel like I know him.*

### **Best thing about hickory golf?**

*Everyone’s so excited about golf when playing with hickories. So completely different than the post-mortems when playing with modern gear.*

### **Ideas to promote SoHG, hickory golf?**

*Everyone needs to bring a friend, start a regular group. Regional groups are the way.*

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

*I read and reread “To the Linksland” by Michael Bamberger. It’s how I found Machrihanish.*

**Note:** Roger is one of the original modern hickory players in the U.S. He is a former president of the Golf Collectors Society, a founding member of the SoHG and a member of the U.S. Hickory Grail team. He continues to serve on the SoHG board. Roger co-authored a book with Pete Georgiady about the golf clubs of George Nicoll and is a familiar and welcome face at regional trade shows and hickory tournaments. He enjoys collecting clubs and other memorabilia of Willie Park Jr. He and the late Ralph Livingston were Mike Brown honorees in 2011. Among his other hickory golf achievements, Roger was the winner of the inaugural McNabb Cup.