

SPANKY

It is not breaking news to report Mark Spangler, a Geneva fraternity brother, passed away on Dec. 1. And far be it from me to write a worthy eulogy. I saw Spanky two or three times yearly, but we communicated often through the technology of the internet. A couple observations I construed throughout my association with Mark was he liked golf, Ohio State Football, and hard liquor, especially sweet hard liquor like J.D. Honey. He lived with a constant smile despite his many hardships. His grin was genuine, not put on, which signified how much he enjoyed life. Everyone was his friend even individuals he never met. After beating cancer once before, he lost the rematch. He was 65 years old.

Within hours of his death, I received this communique from Tony McGuckin.

“Spanky (Mark) I am at a loss of words of your passing. I’ll never forget the day I came into the golf scene and the constant encouragement you always showed me in my lack of golf game. Watching me on the golf course was extremely hard to do, I know, but you always had tips for me and words of encouragement that kept me going.

“Winning the Gavin Cup this year with my partner Ron doesn’t happen for me without the many tips and words of confidence from you and many others in our golf leagues. The annual golf trips to Kentucky and Geneva-on-the-Lake will never be the same anymore. Friday Night Golf League and the Sunday Tour will have a void that could never be filled.

“Spanky, I wish we could have played one more round together with many beers in hand. Rest easy my friend until we meet again.”

Hear-Hear, Tony. My story shows much the same character but in a different light. Two years in a row, poor Spanky drew me as a Gavin Cup partner. My golf game has been an albatross to many partners as Blaise Plageman will attest. Blaise reminds me every year how I cost him the Cup with my play. That reputation did not bother Spanky. He was excited to join forces with me. The results were the same, out of the money, but he appreciated my effort. Mr. Spangler had a way of making me feel wanted and special.

He made everyone around him feel wanted and special. Spanky participated in the most recent Geneva Open and showed no signs the cancer returned. He shot his customary 88, 93, 85 scores playing even golf with his 16 strokes handicap. He developed an established practice of nearly 45 years sticking around until he heard the words "last call". No place more evident of that habit than in Geneva. He was a late-night participant at Lumpy's Geneva Clubhouse. There was a mason jar of Apple Pie to finish and anyone within arms reach was encouraged to help him consume it to the very end. When that was gone, he shared his flask of Jack Daniels Honey.

Charter Member Dick Barrett had a Mark Spangler story he relayed to me.

"When Jack and I started playing golf with Mark it was apparent Mark was about hitting big drives. He could take a triple bogey on a hole but if this hole involved a big drive, he was happy.

"One day on the course after Mark spanked one down the fairway a discussion came about how far he did drive his ball. Mark with glee said it was about 240 yards. I said something like...hell, Mark, that's about as far as Paula Creamer drives the ball on the LPGA Tour.

"From that point and several years thereafter everyone in our foursome called Mark 'Paula' every time he got a hold of a good one. He just loved this and would just laugh and try for another 'Paula Worthy' drive."

My earliest recollection of Spanky joining the Geneva Open was 2011. Before that year, details are fuzzy. There is more clarity on the beginning of time than Mark's early life. Much of that mystery stems from the fact he grew up on another planet called Bucyrus, Ohio. He started to play on the Sunday Tour when Dick Barrett was Commissioner. Dick first remembered Spanky at a Pine Hills event. Mini-Legend Jack Berger first saw him at a Valley View Tour stop. Dick thought Paul Flautt introduced Spanky to the tour, but Jack remembers a truck driver named Dewey as his presenter. And neither one of those guys do recreational drugs or overindulge with alcohol. Jack did tell me Spanky "was a printer for more than 20 years and was laid off when Covid started. He always told me he was the biggest prick growing up, never believed him. He is truly one of the best guys I have met in my golf journey."

The best way to close this eulogy for Mark Spangler is to reprint the last paragraph of "The Golfer's Prayer" which was printed on his holy card.

"And finally, when we've putted out on the 18th green, we pray that we will have demonstrated the integrity of our character, so that you will judge us worthy enough to join your threesome and play eternally on your heavenly course. Amen".

CHIP SHOTS

GENEVA 2023

DATES – JULY 28th, JULY 29th, & JULY 30th – The question most often asked of me this time of year is “When is Geneva?” This year’s event tees off on Friday, July 28, and continues on Saturday, July 29 and concludes on Sunday, July 30. Got it? I emphasize these dates, July 28, July 29, and July 30 so you can schedule around them and not miss the tourney. Any vacations, any reunions, any weddings, any funerals, any other activities, move from that weekend. It is highly probable, bordering on guaranteed, that a practice round on July 27 for any and all interested will be played on the course of Friday’s, July 28, opening round. That track has not been secured but will be passed to you as soon as tee times are made. I have not checked with the Summertime Inn (formerly Pera’s, formerly Bates Motel) but I believe rooms are still available for those needing overnight accommodations. That belief stems from a room booked for Ray Ballard’s sons, Alex and Connor, two rookies attending this year who made their arrangements in January. The number for the Summertime Inn is 440-466-8675. Tell Patty you need a room for “The Golfers” on July 28 and July 29. She will fix you up. With the bulk of the winter behind us and the Lombardi Trophy enroute to a new trophy case, it is time to punt to golf and prepare to compete for the Gavin Cup. This exercise will take place on JULY 28th, JULY 29th, and JULY 30th.

A HALFWAY TO GENEVA LUNCHEON – Several from the Geneva fraternity gathered at the Gahanna Grill the day after Christmas for grub, cocktails, and laughs. The turnout was not as big as expected but the 11 who did show ate well, drank off their hangovers, and left amused and satisfied. The Columbus weather was frigid, and the area was still recovering from an icy based snowstorm which made travel treacherous. Despite the conditions, there was a diverse collection of personalities and a book of short stories shared. Three of the four Legends were on hand, Vince Gatto, Fritz Ford, and me. Still active players in attendance were Bob Rutherford, Pat Dorn, Tim Black, and Ray Ballard. Two, who have not played Geneva in years, were Gary Metzger and Frank Centofanti. It was good to see Mike Weilbacher who sat across the table from me. He is as good of a historian,

both Geneva and South End wise, that ever was born. Blessing us with her presence was Ray Ballard's wife, Karen, who brought charm and class to a group short of those traits. Hats off to the Gahanna Grill. The service was great. All in all, it was a wonderful two hours. Many who attended expressed a desire to make this a yearly event. Since then, I heard from several who did not make the luncheon. They regretted their absence but promised to commit next year.

TRUTH REVEALED – One thing Mike Weilbacher said at the Gahanna Grill caught my attention. In passing, as if not a big deal, Squid remarked that Mel Voll got married. Wait? What? For years the truth about Mel's married status was a mystery. He lived with a woman for 15 years and he always referred to her as "the old lady," but the status of their relationship was uncertain. It was my duty to investigate and report the details. After all, the Geneva family wants to know, and Mel is Geneva family. In typical Mel fashion, his marriage was not typical. Mel told the story as only Mel could, in ballad form and with plenty of humor. Six years ago, QFM96 radio station in Columbus held a promotion to put listeners on the air. In Mel's written application he stressed, "I'm the funniest guy I know." Those words caught the attention of the program director and Mel Voll's act hit the airways. It was during this live radio broadcast Mel called "his old lady" and proposed, heard by an abundance of classic rockers. The gig nearly blew up in his face when "his old lady" took her sweet time accepting. She was much more receptive two weeks later when he gave her a ring at a Kentucky Derby party. The winner of the Run for the Roses that year was Always Dreaming which may have been appropriate for "his old lady" since they remained engaged for over 5 years. Last Fall (2022) inside an AMVETS hall on a Saturday morning, Nov. 12, before a noon Ohio State football game versus Indiana, Mel tied the knot. He saved plenty of money not sending wedding invitations. I am not privied enough to know who performed the ceremony (minister, justice of the peace, military officer, bartender), but I know Mel and "his old lady", Karen, are officially bound together as written and signed on a marriage certificate. Could there be "Little Mel" running around soon?

I REPEAT – JULY 28th, July 29th, & JULY 30th - Have those dates registered yet? Initial preparations for the 2023 Geneva Open are underway. By the next publication, Friday's course and tee times should be booked. I am calling for Tony McGuckin and Rn Szymczak to perform their responsibility to have their names

enshrined on the Gavin Cup. Any suggestions, comments, or rookie participants who would like to join our fun, contact either Blaize Plageman or me. We will lend an ear to what you have to say and if practical, take your ideas into consideration. We may not implement your concept but as David Feherty says, "Experience is what you get when you don't get what you want."

CHIP SHOTS

MADISON ON FRIDAY

MADISON COUNTRY CLUB IS SET – On July 28 at noon, Legends Vince Gatto and Gary Glanzman playing with Mini-Legends Jerry Graves and Jack Berger will lead the Geneva brigade through the trees and over the creeks of this mature, elegantly landscaped piece of property known as Madison Country Club. Built in 1923, gee, that makes Madison 100 years old. If you do not know how big trees grow in 100 years, you will learn. Each stray shot will test your recovery skills. The last time the Geneva Open was played in Madison was 2017. Dagon Abdon blistered the course with a 69. That sets the bar pretty high for a bunch of hackers. Second best that afternoon was a 79 posted by Legend Gary Glanzman. The scorecard measures 6,126 yards from the white tees and 5,394 from the gold tee boxes. Before I hear Pat Dorn bitch about Dick Plageman's handicap, adjustments will be made if Dick plays the senior tees. The Handicap Committee vowed to me and promised the field to make Geneva fair and fun for all. I look forward to returning to Madison. It is another showcase of Northeast Ohio golf courses.

SOUTHEND SHOUT OUT – About a month ago I received this e-mail from Don Jander.

“Wanted to share a quick story. I just got back from a Myrtle Beach golf trip with my high school buddies and I couldn't help bring up our Geneva trip to the boys. They were amazed at the amount of players that gather for that weekend. I have always been amazed at the connection that you and the fellas who you went to school with still get together. My high school friends and I are now doing the same and I now understand how that warms one's heart.

“You and the rest of the Wehrle and South boys have been awesome to this DeSales grad, and I really appreciate it. You're all Legends in my book.”

It is true the foundation of Geneva Open is pure Southend of Columbus. The inscription on its cornerstone reads Adrian Skunza. Today's Geneva, however, is a refurbished and expanded structure with personalities from regions as close as DeSales and as far away as Ironton, Cleveland, Cincitucky, Vegas, Texas, Florida,

and Utah. Diverse in lifestyles, we bond with common goals to have a good time and get along. Still, that pat on the back from Don is humbly appreciated. The tight knit relationships formed 50 years ago from spending Friday nights socializing in Plank's Cafe or playing on a Southend softball team, even passing loose women back and forth without incident brought pride and friendships so strong they still exist today. Over the years we learned the world is bigger than the Southend of Columbus. By the turn of the century, new members were welcomed to the Geneva fraternity. Their presence enhances the Geneva experiences and has been fruitful in making this outing a must attend event. Few continue to live in the Southend these days. Yeah, but even today there is something special about our Southend origin evidenced by the name on the Geneva trophy. Sr. Gavin... Oh, I have some choice words about that nun. She was more like the Grinch than Mother Theresa. It scares all of us that we may reside on the same cloud as her in heaven someday. The long witchlike fingernails of Sr. Gavin's strict discipline left many scars but was the Band-Aid that miraculously pulled us together as an extended family. Did you know she had the gonads to expel Legend Vince Gatto from Wehrle High School? Her picture should accompany the word witch in the dictionary. She was Wehrle's warden and when our sentence expired, Wehrle alumni developed a closeness almost to a cult. I appreciate Don Jander getting it and bringing his observation to everyone's attention.

THE GENEVA STOMP – The annual pilgrimage to Geneva is only months away. The Geneva gathering may fall hundreds of thousands folks short of the annual trip to Mecca for the Hajj. Yeah, but I would be willing to bet that none of those Muslims are Geneva Worthy. I do not believe Allah cedes the same glow from his assembly as Geneva. Let's face it, concoctions are missing from those Mecca trips which we find so vital in social gatherings. Faces light up like the Strip in Vegas with each reunion in Geneva. Some faces light up at the crack of dawn. Brings back the story of Scottie Riffle, a player for years. Poor Scottie, one year he struggled staying on his feet on the 14th tee box at Hemlock on a Friday afternoon round. When asked how long Scottie had been drinking, Billy Boggess responded with a smile, "Since we left Iron-ton." This foolishness convenes for the 47th year on July 28 at Madison. It is a tradition in golf that maybe superseded only by the four majors. Can't wait! I look forward to partying with my Geneva friends. Friends bring happiness. Best friends bring beer.

CHIP SHOTS

NEW SHERIFF – BIG SCREW UP

HEMLOCK TO THE RESCUE – Every three or four years the Geneva Open must render to the transition of a new leader running the affairs of the Geneva-on-the-Lake golf course. This is one of those years. As Legend Fritz Ford quoted, “It’s a pain to have to train new people.” Gone is Mark. Sitting in the manager’s seat these days is a dude named Brian. The exchange of power brought on a screw up we have only experienced one other time in 47 Geneva’s. The tee times according to Mark were set when we crowned our champions last year around the 18th green. Brian was not informed, and we’ll be damned if he booked another outing on Saturday, July 29. That was a kick in the ass moment when I was informed of this shocking development. Just imagine C.J. Stroud playing his senior season quarterbacking at the University of Michigan. After the anger and panic passed, it was important for Blaise and me to make new arrangements. SATURDAY’S EARLY ROUND WILL BE PLAYED AT HEMLOCK SPRINGS STARTING AT 8:30 AM. We will play the Scramble, Sunday golf and hold the Commissioner’s Dinner back at Geneva. This scenario occurred once before, many years ago, when we followed an all-women’s outing which Legend Vince Gatto called “dykes on spikes.” That year we skipped the Scramble. We are determined to keep the Scramble this time aware many look forward to the competition and brings an enormous amount of fun.

LOGISTICS RECOURSE – The change of venue brings a whole new list of considerations and approaches. Time will be of the essence. Tee times for the Scramble commence at 3:30. This may require lunch on the run. While the trip from Hemlock to Geneva-on-the-Lake takes 15 minutes, loading and unloading, organizing the unorganized, and getting the Scramble in motion on time is like a trail drive pushing the beef to the stock yard for timely USDA Prime cuts. I started watching reruns of Rawhide for lessons learned. The Competition Committee will gather to determine where to set the Skill Shots. And money? A recalculation of finances from both outing and individual pocketbooks is necessary. Thank goodness I have advisors and plenty of alcohol to guide me. A much more definitive agenda will be revealed in the next Geneva update.

TRULY LEGENDARY – I drove through the acreage of what was once Riviera Country Club in Dublin, Ohio last month. The only indication the property was a prestigious golf course are the ponds and creeks that tested golf skills throughout the track and now bring beauty and tranquility meshed around the newly constructed houses. So many homes built in such a short time. Homes that MAY sell for \$150,000 on Thurman Avenue, costing upwards to a million bucks because of the proximity of Muirfield Village. Why am I writing about a new housing development? A street sign caught my eye, “GATTO LANE.” Yep! Legend Vince Gatto is not only a Geneva Legend, but his legendary status also reaches far and wide around the Columbus scene. Vince was a charter member of Riviera Country Club and still belongs to the American Italian Golf Association which owned the course. For a while, Mr. Gatto had a voice in A-I matters. If you are unaware, Vince is not shy about expressing his opinion, and he will state his case using varied reasons, some from his Italian upbringing, some from personal experiences, and some just plain far-fetched. There was an incident in Geneva many years ago when Vince defended his decision to Chuck Webb, the Geneva pro, for playing an eightsome during the Scramble. Many moons have passed, and time has taken its toll on his golf game. He carries a 17 handicap these days after playing to single digits most of his golfing life. Vince lost hearing in one ear. The shuffling of feet when he walks is now permanent and not just when he is tipsy. This does not make him less of a Legend. Though his golf game has suffered, he is still strong with opinions. There is something special about having a street named Gatto, something of which to be proud. Not even does Jack Nicklaus has a street named for him at Muirfield Village. I drove through the Riviera complex and could not find a street named “Alexander Alley.”

CHALLENGED TO SUCCEED – My inspiration for this new 2023 Geneva challenge stems from two different facets. The great Deputy Barney Fife would say, “You have to nip it in the bud. Nip-it! Nip-it! Nip-it!” The legendary Beatles sang, “Take a sad song and make it better.” With cooperation of the field, if we work together, we can pull this off with little or no hiccups. It more than likely requires skipping breakfast at Mary’s Kitchen on Saturday morning. I have an idea of possibly arranging the Saturday foursomes ahead of time and setting up tee schedules like Friday’s round. This requires informing me of your groupings by July Fourth. This should be feasible since most already have arrangements. Those who

do not have a game will be slotted by the Pairings Committee. Another idea under consideration is playing with your Gavin Cup partner and paired with another twosome. Again, tee times will be assigned. The less chaos and stress I encounter, the longer my time on this earth. I am not naive. I know calm seas do not make a good sailor but at my age, rough waters have a Titanic impact.

DECISIONS MADE

SOMETHINGS DIFFERENT – Have you heard? Geneva will be different this year. The necessity to move Saturday's early round from the famed Geneva course to Hemlock shook up a few traditions and probably introduced new ones. With an 8:30 starting time at Hemlock it becomes important that tee times and pairings are predetermined to assure all play. If you have a foursome, threesome, or twosome for Saturday, let me know. I will pass your information to the Pairings Committee. The intent is to keep this round as close and as enjoyable as in the past. Those without a game will be joined together with like personalities and like skills to fill the groups. I have already received a few entries. Another change will be with the Skill Shot competition. A different venue dictates different challenges. Earmark to claim \$50 bounties for best golf shots are all four par 3's for Closest to the Pin, No.6 for Closest Second Shot, Longest Drive will occur on No.12 fairway, and Longest Made First Putt will take place on the 16th green. That adds two extra Skill Shots from past Geneva's. The Competition Committee added one more addendum to this year's curriculum. A Skins Game will become part of Scramble's agenda. A \$240 pool will be divvied for each team's Skin. The thought is earning a Skin during this tournament will be as hard as finding a plant-based barbecue in Texas. Got all that? If not, I am here to keep it straight. You will know at the Commissioner's Dinner if you won.

SOMETHINGS SAME – After all the mumble jumble in the previous paragraph on changes, many traditions remain intact. Best Ball Champions (Ben Lloyd, Nick Boggess, Matt Mazzocco, and Ron Szymczak) will defend their crown. In case you forgot, they shot a Geneva record of 16 under par. "A" players pick their squads to attempt to defeat the champs at the Commissioner's Dinner. Two-man teams, drawn on Thursday night, will compete to capture the Gavin Cup from current holders Ron Szymczak and Tony McGuckin. They promise it will not be easy. Per usual, there will be Skins games on Friday and Saturday. The Scramble will be back on the hallowed grounds of Geneva starting at 3:30. The Commissioner's Dinner will follow in the Geneva shelter with steaks hitting the grill around 7:30

and winning stipends distributed throughout the feast. The practice round on July 27 has a noon tee time at Madison for anyone interested in scouting the course. Skins will be played. Shawn Dorn's number is 614-778-9560 to be part of this warmup. See! Not everything is new. I have it on good authority that plenty of beer and booze will be available up and down the Strip. Not sure what Doc has in store to serve at Lumpy's Gathering House. His Manhattans and Old Fashions are exquisite.

JELLY'S BRAINCHILD – Picture this, A scene we witnessed many times, revitamizing after a round of golf, this time in Kentucky, with a cocktail in one hand and a joint in the other. Off on one of my space adventures, I have believed for 50 years this combination would be beneficial to settle many conflicts from Beijing to Washington and all across the world. Intoxicants have been vital throughout the history of mankind including its creative effect on documents like the Declaration of Independence, songs like White Rabbit and Purple Haze, and movies like Fantasia. Okay! I get it. I am off on one of my wild tangents. But maybe, on this May afternoon, a new seed fermented. There was a gleam in Tony McGuckin's eyes when he suggested a golf trip to Las Vegas, a gleam as bright as the midday sun in the Sonoran Desert. Why did he pick me to reveal his dream? I can only guess. "Whoa!" I said. Count me in but I made it very clear I am not organizing such a tedious undertaking. He asked if I would endorse the jaunt and I promised I would. Jelly's first order of business is to see if there is interest. Here is a call to think seriously about golf and gambling in Vegas and let Tony know if such a junket is feasible. Interest is priority to make Tony's dream come true. I know two of us will commit.

SETTING THE FIELD – It is that time. Below you will find a list of committed and possible participants of the 2023 Geneva Open. The sooner we know the field, the better the outing. Merchandise can be ordered. Tee times can be adjusted at the three courses. Pairings can be devised for Madison and Hemlock and the Scramble teams can be created. If your name is on the list and you are not attending or if you plan to play and your name is absent, please let me know. I am looking for that light at the end of the tunnel. Of course, it is important to heed the words of Metallica who sang, "Be careful of the light at the end of the tunnel. That soothing light may be the light of a freight train coming at you."

POTENTIAL FIELD

Dagon Abdon	Shawn Dorn	Mark Kovachy
Todd Abdon	Fritz Ford	Bob Elflein
Sam Kovachy	Gary Glanzman	Ray Ballard
Frank Alexander	Ben Lloyd	Gary Mazzocco
Dick Barrett	Greg Gudenkauf	Matt Mazzocco
Jerry Graves	Alex Ballard	Jack Berger
Nate McCorkle	Tim Black	Vince Gatto
Richie Heskett	Tom Black	Tony McGuckin
Steve Miller	Brian Hughes	Bill Boggess
Craig Marshall	Jay Green	Keith Boggess
Mike Pagnanelli	Tim Hughes	Blaise Plageman
Don Jander	Dick Plageman	Nick Boggess
Dick Plageman	Richie Heskett	Jared Boling
Bob Rutherford	Tom Jech	Jacob Davis
Pat Dorn	Tom Prunte	Mark Johnson
Rick Jonas	Don Rutherford	Ron Szymczak
Kerry Joyce	Paden West	Zack Jonas
Kyle Willis		

CHIP SHOTS

JULY IS GENEVA

DAYS TO GO – The countdown has switched from months to days. Round one is set for Friday, July 28 at noon. The ceremonial opening tee shots will be stroked by the traditional foursome consisting of Legends Gary Glanzman and Vince Gatto playing with Mini-Legends Jack Berger and Jerry Graves. Their legendary leadership guides the field around Friday courses promoting the creation of new memories that someday may be told to our grandkids. Well...maybe we should wait until they are 35 to tell Geneva stories. Lord knows the last thing we want to do is botch their moral upbringing. The mixture of young and old, drunks and teetotalers, married or single is a true melting pot in Geneva, America like our forefathers intended and wary of adversity. Although the old timers are traditionalists, sometimes it becomes necessary to make changes. Having to play Hemlock on Saturday necessitates one such instance. In the past I collected for Geneva green fees paying Saturday and Sunday golf. This year I will only ask for \$120 to cover payouts and tournament expenses. Green fees will fall on everyone individually. That includes the Scramble. I hope to negotiate a decent price for those 9 holes. But I beg of you, do not let the almighty dollar ruin the weekend. Click! Click! Click! The seconds continue to tick away until Geneva day. I hear the excitement and good vibes in every chat from this year's participants.

GENEVA MONEY GAMES – Long before gambling became legal throughout the country, the Geneva Open wagered yearly on golf skills. Some swear that is not gambling. Back 40 years ago when we bet through bookies, Legend Vince Gatto learned an important lesson from his father, Joe. Victimized by Mr. Gatto's tongue lashing on gambling, Vince spurted, "You play golf every day and you bet on the golf course." Without hesitation and quickly defending his practice and the integrity of the game, his father responded, "That's not gambling, that's golf." Geneva is full of "golf." Individual winnings for Skins on Friday and Saturday plus the best Skill Shots on Saturday are stable transactions distributed at the Commissioner's Dinner. Team games can line pockets with Andrew Jackson's if your teams perform best. The Scramble Committee is hard at work putting those

squads together. Twelve foursomes will compete in this competition. The grueling three-day match for the Gavin Cup will consist of 24 teams. Ron Szymczak and Tony McGuckin will defend their title. The remaining combatants will be drawn at Lumpy's Gathering House on Thursday night amidst concoctions of Manhattan's and Old-Fashions. It is a wonder Blaise and I get it right, but many witnesses look over our backs to be sure it is on the up and up. The Best Ball game on Sunday consists of eleven groups chasing last year's winner (Ben Lloyd-Nick Boggess-Matt Mazzocco-Ron Szymczak). The competing teams will be chosen by "A" players at the Commissioner's Dinner. It is worth noting the defending champs shot a record 16 under par. Ron Szymczak closed with a blistering 71.

STAMP OF APPROVAL – Kerry Joyce and I engaged in a scouting exhibition of Madison Country Club a few weeks back. Both of us concluded the course will be a competitive, challenging, fair, and manageable test of golf. Kerry spent most of his time inspecting the fairways and they were as good as any Geneva venue. I seemed to tour some of the other acreage of the golf course. My assessment of these off fairways locations is do not go there. If you do hit an errant shot, creative skills will be tested. The trees are dense and tall. The course opened in 1923. Only a few of us were around then. Seedlings 100 years ago has grown into ominous forestry for wayward hitters. The gold tees for seniors have been moved up 700 yards from the regular white tees. That is a forgiving and Christian gesture. Short hitters can better manage creeks and ponds we would otherwise have trouble crossing. Madison features both long holes and short holes. The greens are far less undulating and easier to read than Chardon Lakes, last year's Friday track. All this information has been forwarded to the Handicap Committee. Players will compete on equal ground. Playing Madison should be fun. If not, you do not like golf. The only reason not to have fun is you.

BEACHED ON THE COURSE – Proving that no one escapes my poison pen including me, I have a story to disclose. This occurred at Raymond Memorial Golf Course during a Sunday Tour event. Having blasted a sand shot on the green, I needed to walk 30 feet to fetch a rake. Stomping back to perform my gardening duty, my foot slipped off the corner of the bunker. Imagine this tub of lard falling belly first into the sand trap. I have never seen a beached whale waddling on shore trying to return to its natural state, but I think I know how he feels. I peeked over the high lip of the bunker and noticed my playing partners lining up their

putts. Not one of them witnessed the humorous moment. We all experienced such a time. Embarrassed. Did anyone see me? A frightening thought crossed my mind as I laid in the soft sand. Would if I could not get up? Would Blaise Plageman have to toss me a rope to tie one end around my waist and the other end around the bumper of the cart? I did feel relief that I did not sign for the cart. By the grace of God, adrenalin, and determination, I climbed to my feet, brushed the sand from my clothes, and proceeded like nothing happened. Sitting safely by my computer and having a good laugh at myself, I felt an obligation to talk about the incident. I feel fortunate there are no tables in sand traps.

FINAL DETAILS – The field is pretty much set. It is time for the designated Committees to finalize their work. The Handicap Committee is crunching current day numbers to establish fair competition. The Committee Chairman has a philosophy for those unhappy with their handicaps. “Play worse” is his advice. Once the Committee settles on handicaps, the names are sent to the Pairings and Scramble Committees. We then wait anxiously for them to complete their work. The Scramble Committee has a tough task putting together fair and competitive teams. Their worksheet looks like John Madden’s telestrator when he is trying to explain a play. I mean this guy goes here unless that guy goes there then this dude settles in this spot opening a lane on that side forcing him to fill this gap and BOOM! It all comes together successfully. Besides handicaps, the Scramble Committee must deal with lengths of drives. Players like Nick Bogges and Don Jander poke their drives farther than “A” players Todd Abdon and Legend Gary Glanzman. It is important to arm the shorter hitters with lengthier “B” and “C” competitors. The Scramble Committee does a fantastic job. This year, the Pairings Committee is handed an extra task of slotting foursomes for Friday’s round at Madison C.C. but also Saturday’s play at Hemlock. The Scramble teams and the tee times for Friday and Saturday golf will be sent by e-mail as soon as they are completed. The workings of Geneva are no mystery proving true the words of Al McGuire when he said, “The only mystery in life is why kamikaze pilots wore helmets.”

2023 BEST BALL WRAP UP

BREAK UP THE DYNASTY

The BEST BALL TOURNAMENT was played on a soggy, marsh-like turf. Unintended water hazards sprung up in the damndest, most unwanted places, like acne popping out over a young teen's face. Most other areas had us hitting from wet, spongy lies. We are all aware that course conditions and the weather present different challenges each day even on the same course. Hmmm. I wonder if the game's inventors, drinking their Scotch Whiskey, had this in mind when they first started hitting the ball over a large piece of property in the 15th century? Unlike today's pansy, football players who want to play their games in a controlled atmosphere, there is no dome in golf. Somedays it takes enormous fortitude, willpower, and determination to play 18 holes in less than desirous conditions.

In 2021, early July rains blessed us with the best manicured Geneva in many years. Dry and hard was the state of the 2022 Geneva Open. This year was a slushy mess. Do you think any of these scenarios deterred the team of Ben Lloyd-Nick Boggess-Matt Mazzocco-Ron Szymczak from achieving their goal? Hell no! For the first time in Geneva history, we have a three-peat winner in the BEST BALL competition. They scored a 62, ten under par. The margin of victory was one stroke over the team of Dagon Abdon-Paden West-Jacob Davis-Bob Rutherford-Don Rutherford.

If only Jim Nantz, Trevor Immelman, the CBS cameras and the Goodyear Blimp was on hand to bring us the exciting action. We would have seen the Dagon Abdon squad was one shot better on the 17th tee. Both Nick Boggess and Ron Szymczak parred the hole that John Skunza named the Widow Maker. Catching a stroke that par netted them a birdie 3. Dagon's foursome had to settle for a double bogey and net 5. Despite the fact the Lloyd group could only manage a par on 18 and Dagon birdied, the damage from the previous hole was too much to overcome.

Last year the Lloyd boys shattered the field by 4 shots so this year's one stroke victory proved them beatable. Szymczak carded an 80, nine strokes higher than 2022's score. Ron did not have to carry the team this time. Ben Lloyd's 92,

including natural birdies on No. 6 and No. 12 were huge factors contributing to their win. Steady Matt Mazzocco played to an 85 like always and assisted when others faltered. Maybe the biggest reason for their success was Nick Boggess. Cannot overlook his 74 but that is expected. His non-golf prowess, tipping the cart girl (I heard \$100) like a wise guy kept her away from the rest of the field. Many showed signs of parchiness as they climbed the hill on 18. It was a competitive practice from the Bill Belichick philosophy, bend the rules to the limit to get the advantage.

A general consensus believes the course in this swampy condition played much harder than usual. Most every golf club in the land would have demanded cart path only for the weekend. The new ruts we implanted in the fairways may become permanent craters. Next year Geneva may play more like golf's original venues back in Scotland. That will present a different obstacle for Ben Lloyd-Nick Boggess-Matt Mazzocco-Ron Szymczak to overcome in defending their title as they go for four in a row.

GAVIN CUP WRAP UP

THE LAWMEN

Saturday in Geneva is labeled “Moving Day”. The only move that day was in the clubhouse as rain halted play and forced cancellation of round 2. I want to give a shout out to Emily who did a wonderful job keeping 46 frustrated golfers well lubricated. Another tip of the cap goes to the golf club designer that sold Mark Kovachy one of his revolutionary putters that stands on its own to help line putts and carries the weight of a small safe for \$125. He has since sent it to the scrap yard. As it turned out, we could have awarded the Gavin Cup right then. After Friday’s round at Madison, Pat Dorn and Craig Marshall held a 5 shot lead over Rick Jonas and Steve Miller. When Sunday’s round at Geneva finished, Pat Dorn and Craig Marshall earned the trophy easily, winning by 4 strokes over Rick Jonas and Steve Miller. Finishing third in the competition were Dagon Abdon and Jacob Davis. Yeah, but they were eight strokes behind the champions and never a serious threat.

The Marshall and the retired Homicide Detective (one carries a gun and the other, thankfully, does not) put the field on notice Friday that their game was sharp. Pat Dorn carded a 75 (best round of the day). Craig Marshall toured Madison in 89 swings, damn good for a 24 handicapper. Their message was stamped, signed, sent, then displayed on Blaise Plageman’s door Friday Night for all to read. It said by the numbers, “Come and get us you suckers.” On Sunday, with Geneva playing as tough as it has in years, Pat and Craig continued their fine showing shooting plenty well enough to keep the field at bay, reminiscent of Brian Harmon’s game at the British Open. No rope-a-dope for those lawmen, it was more like the Ali Shuffle.

Upon learning he won the Gavin Cup, I heard some disturbing comments from Craig Marshall. He expressed reluctance about returning home with the trophy. He mumbled something about his wife. Wait! What? She does not want to wax and dust this magnificent masterpiece? It is an insult to Craig’s accomplishment. I cannot imagine Mrs. Chandler Stephenson reacting in such a manner when her husband brings home the Stanley Cup. I would be willing to bet

the Claret Jug is proudly displayed in the Brian Harman house. To exhibit such a negative attitude about this beautiful piece of furniture is as upsetting as spitting on the Holy Grail. The Geneva Open expects a heartfelt apology. Of course, the Handicap Committee can make it nearly impossible for Craig to win again.

Despite Mrs. Marshall's negative attitude towards the Gavin Cup, I hope it does not offend her, the name Craig Marshall will be forever engraved on the trophy. It is his second time winning and he personally is honored. He won in 2021. For Pat Dorn, he is a third time champion. Pat first captured the Cup in 2004 and again in 2009. Winning the Gavin Cup is no easy achievement. Before the first tee shot at Madison was hit, Nick Boggess emphasized to me that his personal goal was to win the Gavin Cup. All the Best Balls, Scrambles, and Skins Nick won over the years, the Gavin Cup has eluded him. I tried to comfort him by pointing out that some of the biggest names in sports have been shut out of their most wanted prizes. Arnold Palmer never won the PGA thus never claiming a career Grand Slam. Rory's pursuit needs an elusive Master's victory. Hell, Dan Marino never won a Super Bowl and Charles Barklay has no NBA championship ring. Not the case for Pat Dorn and Craig Marshall who can brag they are multiple Gavin Cup champions. Show off your trophy proudly.

2023 SCRAMBLE WRAP UP

A SPIRITED RIDE

Eleven foursomes milled around the first tee and the putting green waiting. The outing that moved us from Geneva's hallowed grounds to a rained out round at Hemlock Springs need finish before we could begin. Because it was a Shot Gun start all the golf carts became available at one time. It looked like a herd of youngsters racing to get their Dodge-Em cars as 44 grown men secured their buggies for the Scramble. After a 45 minutes delay it was finally "start your engines." The green flag was waved, and the Scramble began.

Many years the Scramble needs more than nine holes to determine a winner. With the late start, we can count our blessings that Blaise Plageman-Richie Heskett-Shawn Dorn-Craig Marshall finished the job without going into overtime. The initial tee shot came after 4 P.M. and that brought darkness into play if extra holes were needed. They finished with a 29, a score of 7 under par. One thing about Scramble victories, they are fine examples of teamwork and golf's ham and egg game, evidenced with this group of hackers because no one in this field shoots a 29 without help.

By the time the checkered flag was waved, and the last putt dropped to the bottom of the cup, Blaise Plageman-Richie Heskett-Shawn Dorn-Craig Marshall scored better than the other ten teams. I guarantee they did not celebrate with milk. I have it from reliable sources that other intoxicated products were consumed for this celebration. Even I raised my whiskey glass and toasted the champs. Win or lose, the Scramble is a great time.

The winning foursome put the peddle to the metal immediately. An eagle-birdie start had them 3 under par after two holes. As if their race car needed to make an unscheduled pit stop, they only managed par on the next three holes. Wait? What? They did have cart problems. Blaise's machine broke down. In no condition to walk and carry his clubs, they radioed the clubhouse who sent a replacement vehicle. The switch was made. One problem was solved but another created. Blaise could not leave the delivery driver stranded so far away from the clubhouse. Hustling into the fresh cart the two hurriedly headed back. Rushing

through mud puddles and bouncing hard over every rut with Grand Prix speed, at least as much speed as a golf cart can muster, they arrived at their destination drenched and shook up but gleaming from adventure. Rejoining his Scramble team, Blaise somehow regrouped, settled, returned his heartbeat and body parts to normal, and eventually played good golf. They closed with four straight birdies to reach 7 under par and capture the Scramble Championship.

The Competition Committee introduced a new game for the Scramble. Besides prize money for winning the event, a \$240 purse was set aside for Skins. One Skin was claimed. The team of Don Jander-Tom Prunte-Tom Black-Tony McGuckin collected the entire ante with an eagle 2 on the 6th hole. It was not a lucky gap wedge from 100 yards away that found the bottom of the cup. No sir! Don Jander smoked his drive 315 yards onto the green. That was not a fluke. Don is annually one of the favorites to win the Long Drive Skills Competition. It was surprising, however, that at 5:30 he was sober enough to hit the sweet spot on his driver. Need I remind you the course resembled a marsh and not the paved Indianapolis Speedway. Jander's 315 yards tee ball was damn-near all carry. He is a man who carries a big stick and delivers. Tom Prunte took over from there and calmly made the putt and the team could claim their pittance. Only one Skin worked much the way the Competition Committee figured.

The same Committee enacted a new policy for the Scramble which caused a bit of a fuss. In years past, everyone played from the same tees. Possibly affected by the waxing Maize Moon, it was decided those 65 and older could play the up tees. The Competition Committee heard arguments from both sides before making their decision. Once the finish line was crossed and the moon was replaced by bright sunshine on Sunday morning, all the rumblings ceased, and it was agreed this new policy was more than fair. Even from the up tees the old men could not hit the 6th green with their tee shots.

SKINS & SKILL SHOTS WRAP UP

INDIVIDUALITY

The past three articles have recapped the team games from Geneva. I would like to take this opportunity to give pats on the back to those who bested the field with their individual play. Several of the names regularly win one of these honors. Some will surprise you. One name guaranteed not to appear for stellar performances is Frank Alexander. His golf is like a tangled strand of Christmas lights constantly fighting to unjumble his game and, try as he does, cannot hit two good shots on a hole. He brings to light Judge Smails philosophy in Caddy Shack when he said;

It's easy to grin
When your ship comes in,
And you got the Stock Market beat.
But the man worthwhile
Is the man who can smile
When his shorts are too tight in the seat.

Tell me if you heard these names before. Collecting Skin money were Legend Gary Glanzman, Nick Boggess, and Pat Dorn. They were three of the five winners at Madison on Friday. Pat earned his Skin with an eagle on No. 8. Two others pocketing \$90 for a Friday Skin were Tim Black and Rick Jonas. What amazes us about Rick's play is he subscribes to Carl's (Bill Murray character in Caddy Shack) daily agenda. "This is a hybrid," Carl said talking about the different grasses on the golf course. "This is a cross of blue grass, Kentucky blue grass, featherbed bench, and Northern California sinsemilla. The amazing stuff about this is that you can play 36 holes on it in the afternoon, take it home, and just get stoned to the bejesus-belt that night on the stuff." That is why Rick Jonas is known as a Doobie Brother.

Could that stuff be magical? Rick captured another Skin on Sunday with his birdie on No. 5 at Geneva. He was one of three winners in the "A" flight. He shared the \$240 purse with Nick Boggess and Dagon Abdon. Nick birdied 10 and Dagon eagled 7. The "B" flight provided a different list of winners in the Skins game. Paden West, Shawn Dorn, Ben Lloyd, Gary Mazzocco, and Jamie Vernon hit the jackpot with their play filling their pocketbook with an extra \$60 apiece. Shawn won with a par on the tough 8th hole. The others carded birdies for their payday.

Those are the guys who played a hole better than everybody else. Here are the fellows who hit the best shot on designated holes. Todd Abdon, Ron Szymczak, and Shawn Dorn hit Closest to the Pin on the par 3's. Miraculously, not one player hit 14 green. Shawn's pin shot onto the 16th green was close enough to award him the prize despite Mike Pagnanelli moving the marker which was in his line then forgetting to replace it. Mini-Legend Jerry Graves made the Longest Putt on No. 9, a flat, straight on 10-footer. Dagon Abdon belted the Longest Drive. The Closest 2nd Shot on the 15th hole was hit by Gary Mazzocco which set him up nicely for his Skin. Skilled shots from skilled golfers. Notice Frank Alexander was not listed. Feeling frustrated at my performance I reminded myself of the line by Ty Webb (played by Chevy Chase in Caddy Shack) to Judge Smalls when he said, "Don't sell yourself short. You're a tremendous slouch."

Ahhh! But I do have something to brag upon. I beat Nick Boggess in a \$5 Nassau match. O.K.! I got 30 strokes, 15 a side. I buried him. Nick's 74 was no match for my 97. Sure, I will be more than happy to give him a chance to chase his money next year. Truthfully, Frank Alexander is not cut out to be a golfer. If you see my game, then you know few dig up a course as well as me. Perhaps I should try my hand at something else. As Judge Smalls so elegantly stressed, "The world needs ditch diggers too."

CHIP SHOTS

LEFTOVERS

GENEVA'S SUCCESS – Many thank you's for the fun and excellent times in the Geneva Open. This year was more of a challenge than recent outings. The mess up at the Geneva course causing a change of venues for early Saturday golf, the thunderous rain eventually washing out the round, last minute scratches screwing the best laid plans for Best Ball, Gavin Cup, and Scramble teams, etc., etc. The moxie and temperament of the 46 golfers who did attend gets a huge tip of the cap for overlooking these setbacks and having fun. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you, a million times. A few individuals need to be mentioned for their behind-the-scenes contributions. Legend Fritz Ford designed the caps and umbrellas and arranged them delivered on time. I refuse to blame Fritz for the wet weather to test the quality of the umbrellas. Blaise Plageman annually takes helpings of responsibilities off my plate. That guy can gobble leftovers like a bulldog and is willing to accept any scraps needed attended. I am forever grateful. The work he puts into Geneva's preparations and his behind-the-scenes efforts during the weekend, more times than not, goes unrecognized. For Blaise to go unrecognized is an illusion David Copperfield could not perform. Prompt and accurate results are credited to Ben Lloyd who brought Geneva to the computer age. Shawn Dorn is instrumental in organizing the Scramble and arranging Thursday's practice round. Those fellows perform these duties yearly. Others step up when needed like Mark and Sam Kovachy who went propane hunting when a tank was not available for the Commissioner's dinner. Good thing. What was I going to do with 50 steaks, 20 pounds of potato salad, and enough tossed salad to feed Bugs Bunny for a year? So many more could be mentioned but I will save you the boredom of reading their efforts. I am grateful, nonetheless. I do want to take this opportunity to give a special "thank you" to Mini-Legend Jack Berger. Every year he says, "If there is anything I can do to help, I'm there for you." Somehow, from that point forward, he knows how to avoid me until his bags are packed and he is ready to drive home.

PARENTING RIGHT – A follow up to my dissertation concerning Craig Marshall's wife, unhappy about displaying the Gavin Cup Trophy because it

disrupts the décor of the house. I present Chapter 2. If you missed or forgot the commentary, scroll down to “The Gavin Cup Wrap Up” and refresh your memory. Scroll down further and a new photo of Craig with his sons Crosby and Beck displaying proud emotions from their Father’s achievement. They look to be doing a happy dance around the Gavin Cup. That is a dad providing good leadership in teaching his children the value and reward of hard work. Odds are Crosby and Beck will grow to be mature and responsible leaders in this country and find success in whatever course of life they pursue. The other half of the Gavin Cup team, Pat Dorn, is rehabbing from knee surgery. His son, Shawn, keeps us updated on Pat’s recovery and shows the respect his Father deserves by pushing him through therapy just as Pat would do him. Shawn exhibits much delight in this reversed role.

ALUMNI DAY – The deluge that dropped on the Geneva region came pouring down off Lake Erie’s shores like a monsoon. The masses gathered inside the Hemlock clubhouse, a perfect setting for surprise visitors. The sudden appearance of Mike Weilbacher, Donice Foreaker, Jack Pontsler, and Judd Ballard invigorated many as if Santa Claus and his elves crashed the family Christmas party. Squid and Pine blessed the Geneva field for many years and are part of Geneva’s rich history setting standards on and off the course, traditions still practiced today. Squid stopped participating since the Covid pandemic. Donice found a wife and more household responsibilities several years earlier and for the good of all, health wise included, dropped the Geneva trip from his yearly adventures. They hung around for more than four hours, tipping a few, catching up on life and rehashing the past. That, my friends, is part of the Geneva experience. Although Jack and Judd never stroked a shot in Geneva, they learned what Geneva is all about and why Geneva talk lasts twelve months a year. It was fantastic to see these guys. I salute!

FIRE OUT – Imagine returning after 4 days in Geneva-on-the-Lake and finding your furniture on the front lawn. The initial shock would send you into a wonderland. The awry of couch, table, and lampstands decorating the yard in a replica of Sanford and Sons Junk Yard directs the brain to burglary or eviction. A closer look gives evidence of a fire. Sure enough, the pure white, freshly painted walls were now a Confederate gray. The smell of smoke clings to every hair in your nostrils. Puddles of water dot the floor. The front door hatched by a fireman’s ax.

This is what Jay Green endeavored. So stunned and not thinking straight, Jay slept in his car for two nights with only his Geneva clothes in his possession. Coming to his senses, he moved from his SUV to the Hyatt where he still resides as workers try to make his home habitable again. Jay is still unsure of the cause but originally blamed faulty wirelines in a home built around 1950. The last time I spoke to Jay, he was upbeat believing he would win millions of dollars from a magazine sweepstakes.

WRAPPING IT UP – Closing the lid on the 2023 Geneva Open, we can call it successful if we come away with fond memories. Memories that will bring smiles to faces each time we rehash the weekend. Winning money is inconsequential. It is not the \$15 I won from Nick Boggess from our \$5 Nassau bet that I remember. It is the bragging rights that I took those 30 strokes he spotted me, and I beat him. That is what is imbedded in my memory. As the years pass, we will hear more stories. 46 golfers all have tales to tell. As mentioned earlier, it is those 46 and their involvement that makes the weekend special. We will do it again next year. The dates for 2024 are July 26, July 27, and July 28. Look forward to it. I am. Bring on Nick Boggess. If he is not scared of me, I will be more than happy to give him a rematch. In the philosophical words of Bill Parcells, “If you are afraid of confrontation, you are not going to do well.”

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS CAROL

Many stories, poems, films, and TV shows have been written about Christmas Eve. I am introducing a new one. The characters in this piece are real or at least used to be real. Much of this short story is true and some is constructed from my drug induced imagination. I will leave you to cypher the difference.

The tale begins in my bedroom on Christmas Eve. I am lamenting, tossing and turning in mental agony. Earlier in the day I lost \$500 betting on the Browns to beat the Houston Texans. Cleveland lost the game, I lost my money, and playoff hopes were becoming unattainable. Over and over, I see C.J. Stroud float the game winning touchdown pass over Denzel Ward's outstretched reach in the corner of the end zone, pounding the nail in Cleveland's once promising season and ruining Christmas for me and my family.

"Why? Why do you pick on me, God?" I cry out repeatedly. "I've been a loser all my life. A whipping boy for golfers, bookies, and politicians to dig deep in my pockets and extract most of my hard work earnings. Does my lack of success humor You?"

Too much Crown Royal and a burned-out body finally allowed me to fall asleep. Not for long. I awoke to the eerie sound of someone calling my name. "Fraaank!...Fraaank!...Fraaank!" Who in the hell is calling me at this time of night? My eyes focus on a frail spirit, skinny as a telephone pole. I know this figure but, initially, could not put the pieces together. He drank a huge gulp of Seven and Seven then puffed on his cigarette.

"Welby?" I shouted. "It can't be you. You've been dead for years."

"I am your ghost of Christmas past," he said in a strong voice.

He took another sip of his Seven and Seven and another puff on his cigarette.

"There is no smoking inside buildings now-a-days," I bluntly emphasized.

"I have been sent to remind you of your past," he scowled.

He repeated once more his forever-remembered habit of drinking his Seven and Seven and smoking his cigarette.

“Come with me,” Welby ordered.

“Can I pour me a drink first?” I asked.

He looked at me and shook his head as if to call me an asshole without saying a word. I rolled out of bed in my pajamas and men’s nightcap. Welby disappeared through my bedroom window. I followed but was abruptly stopped by the glass. Welby reappeared.

“I forgot,” he said. “You are still human. I am not used to associating with mortals anymore.”

He opened the window and we exited. It was not my yard we entered. It was Room 12 at Pera’s Motel. The first thing I saw was Ralph DiCarolus. It was obvious he was not happy. Steam blew from his nostrils and ears. He was a pressure cooker about to blow his top. His right foot scraped the floor like a bull ready to charge. Jim Centorbi stood next to Ralph, and he did not look pleased either. Behind them was Don Jander making loud hyenas sounds. I do not remember the scene, but I know the event. I reluctantly turned my head, and the broken table came into view, a product of my drunken, doobie infested condition. I glanced back at Welby. Giving me time to recollect, he swallowed more of his drink and took a drag from his smoke.

“You were lucky that night,” he said. “You drank enough to have died from alcohol poison, or your crash into the table could have seriously hurt you.”

He hurried me from the room before Ralph attacked. I saw the pumps servicing cars at the old Shell station on I-71 and Rt. 18. The time was the early 1980’s. Jerry Graves and I were on our way to Geneva from Columbus. We stopped to pee and fuel. I almost did not recognize Jerry. He was 40 years younger and 40 pounds lighter. It was him alright, all of 4’10” tall, working like a sanitation engineer, disposing of 12 empty Michelob beer cans that decorated the back floorboard of his custom designed Cutlas. I saw myself grab the half empty can that I absurdly placed on the car’s hood while I made my potty break. Standing close by, observing the cleanup operation was a Deputy Sheriff of Medina County. I suppose it was that can that tipped the officer. Why he allowed us to continue is still a mystery. I looked like a hippie with my Robert Plant haircut. It was a different time back then. The cops were more compassionate and

understanding. He told us not to advertise and sent us on our way. Following us until we crossed the Medina County line, he kept an eye on Jerry's driving. I remember the relief when he turned back. We still had 12 more Michelob's in the cooler, and we immediately proceeded to consume them so not to leave any evidence of breaking the law.

I peeked at Welby. He gulped another swallow of his Seven and Seven and followed with a puff from his cigarette. He just looked forward.

"You were lucky," he emphasized. "Lucky you were not arrested and lucky you made it to Geneva alive."

"Apparently I used up all my luck," I smirked. "If you give me \$500, I promise I'll never gamble again."

"I am a ghost not a genie," he informed me.

His habit of a drink then a drag followed his words. You would think the longer I spent with Welby, the more comfortable I would become. That was not the case. I sure could use a drink. He exhaled the smoke in my face.

The second the atmosphere cleared, I saw myself in the back of my car looking frantically for my briefcase. I had searched every inch of my hotel room and found nothing. I hoped it was in my car. It was not on the seats, and it was not under the seats. I had to find it. Knowing what I was thinking, Welby repeated his ritual of a drink from his glass and a puff from his cigarette. That demon alcohol. This was a morning after a Commissioner's Dinner, held that year at the Pickled Pepper. When the banquet finished, I took residency at the bar and parked the briefcase at my feet. That flexible, leather case was a lock box for Sunday's green fees and purses for the Best Ball Tournament and the Gavin Cup, nearly \$4,000 cash. I watched as I rummaged through my car. If I left that briefcase at the bar, I could kiss that money, my ass, and my marriage good-bye. The relief when I opened the trunk and saw the bag. You would have thought I found Blackbeard's Treasure.

"You were damn lucky again," Welby repeated.

"Yeah, like you never got drunk and blacked out," I rebutted.

This was not about Welby, it was about me. He drank and smoked then guided me back through my window. Damn, the room was cold. Welby left the window open and on December 24, the wind had a bite that would smolder the fire of hell. I thought it unthoughtful for a ghost. I jumped back into bed and covered myself with the comforter. He finished his Seven and Seven and took one last drag from his nicotine stick. He put the butt inside the glass and set the glass on the end table.

“You will have another visitor in an hour,” he smirked.

He started to slide out the window.

“Shut the window on your way out,” I ordered. “Were you born in a barn?”

The hour passed and I awoke to a familiar sound. “Ho! Ho! Ho!” came from the kitchen. There was Santa Claus. He stood by the table eating a pizzelle and drinking a tumbler of bourbon. He was in his element.

“These are good,” he declared. “I am tired of Chocolate Chip Cookies. Did you make these?”

I nodded. He washed down his treat with the bourbon.

“Don’t tell Mrs. Claus,” he requested. “She hates when I come home drunk. Come on. We have work to do.”

He led me to the fireplace. Up the chimney he shot like one of the tubes in a bank’s drive-thru window. He hollered for me to do the same. After squatting and scrunching to climb into the fire pit, I ascended towards the roof. My fat belly prevented me from reaching my destination.

“I’m stuck,” I screamed.

“HO! HO! HO!” Santa giggled.

I heard him mumble something about a porn queen not getting her massage oil this Christmas and that is what he poured on me. Smooth and lubricated like a Trojan, I finished my journey up the stack covered in oil and soot. Before I could bitch, I was enamored by the beautiful red sleigh and the nine reindeer who motored the vehicle. I may have stood there all night admiring the

scene if Santa Claus had not ordered me into his sleigh. He shook on the reigns and into the night we flew.

“Now Dasher! Now Dancer! Now Prancer and Vixen! On Comet! On Cupid! On Donner and Blitzen!” he bellowed.

“On Rudolph!” I yelled.

Santa looked disgusted.

“That’s not part of the poem,” he scolded.

I never flew in an F-14 Tomcat but those reindeers flew at warp speed. In a New York minute we landed on the hill behind the 9th green at the Geneva-on-the-Lake golf course. We were out of place in a sleigh and nine reindeers while the other 32 guys sat in golf carts sipping on their favorite beverage. Nobody noticed, however. They were all having a good time heckling oncoming golfers as if they were Democrats at a Republican gathering. I realized it was the Scramble Tournament during the Geneva Open.

“HO! HO! HO!” Santa laughed. “Look what you created. You should be proud.”

Santa was wrong. I did not create this. The 36 golfers make this such a fun event. I just structure the outing giving them a chance to make it special. But! If Santa wants to give me a pat on the back, then I will vaunt his praises.

The last foursome was on the 9th tee. They were one shot off the lead. A birdie was a must to force a playoff. Bob Rutherford teed first. The ball popped high in the air like a Texas Leaguer in baseball. The tune from the gallery sounded like the scales in music climbing higher as the ball rose then dropping as it fell. “oh-Oh-OH-Oh-oh!” Splash. Drowned in a watery grave at the bottom of the creek.

“I hope you brought your swimsuit,” Jay Green hollered.

Alex Ballard hit next. The crowd sounded like the train that can as they chugged trying to push the ball along but it stopped ten feet short of the green. Tim Black’s tee ball was shaped like a banana and he sliced into the greenside bunker bringing a chorus of boos that would make Bronx residents proud. Leave it

to Nick Boggess to turn those boo's into loud thunderous cheers as his shot rolled pin high just 13 feet from the hole.

Santa turned me towards the shelter house. Those same 36 golfers were chomping on Mel Voll's perfectly grilled steaks and sides of potatoes, salad, and Italian bread. Whether they played well or not, it no longer mattered. Women learned long ago one of the two best routes to a man's heart is through his stomach. The Commissioner's Dinner is living proof. I saw myself standing before the group holding an envelope full of cash and announcing the winning Scramble team.

"Congratulations to Blaise Plageman, Richie Heskett, Shawn Dorn, and Craig Marshall for winning the Scramble," I declared.

I turned to Santa. He read my mind.

"No, Nick did not make the putt," he informed me. "His frustration has long passed with every savory bite and pints of beer. Ho! Ho! Ho! It is time to go."

He patted my back before he grabbed the reigns. The sleigh lifted. Before we returned home, we hovered over Lumpy's Hideaway. Doctor Hate served Jack Berger another Manhattan. In 71 years, the three days of Geneva is the longest stretch of time that Doc smiles continuously. Sitting around the table on the patio was Fritz Ford, Pat Dorn, Ron Szymczak, Dick Plageman and me sharing stories over Doc's cocktails and having a grand time. The sleigh departed and I got Santa's message.

"Damn! It is cold up here," I complained. "Don't you have a coat in one of those bags I could wear?"

"You wouldn't want to take a wrap from poor Billy Simpson, would you?" Santa paraphrased. "He hadn't had winter gear for two years."

Santa's lessons were hitting home. I toughened the cold. We could not have slid down the chimney into my living room fast enough. Santa made his way to the plate of pizzelles and stuffed a handful into his pocket. He gulped another tumbler of bourbon then made his way back to the fireplace.

"Hey! What about my gifts?" I inquired.

“Ho! Ho! Ho!” he laughed. “I just gave you the most wonderful gift of all.”

He laid “his finger aside of his nose, and giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.” The bells on his sleigh jingled. I heard him laugh, “Ho! Ho! Ho!” and Santa was gone.

I started to walk towards my room. What just happened here? I turned back and there was no fireplace. The house never had a fireplace. The living room was back in its original architectural composition. I read Charles Dicken’s book, and I knew another chapter was coming. Instead of returning to bed, I parked my ass on the recliner.

This time when I awoke, I stood on smoke, but it did not smell like smoke. Standing beside me was an old man, bald on top but hair hanging down, covering his ears and draping over his shoulders. His beard and moustache were egg white. The gown he donned hung to his sandal covered feet. I am not a total idiot. I surmised he was from a different era. Behind him were pearly gates, locked so no one could enter.

“St. Peter?” I winced.

I touched my arms, my chest, my stomach, my legs. I was still too fat to touch my toes. I felt alive.

“You are not dead yet, Frank,” he assured me. “You are here to see the future.”

A hole in the cloud developed. I looked down at a lush piece of real estate. The grass was Kelly green peeking through the multitude of old trees that framed the wide walkways of lawn. White dots of sand periodically and strategically placed away from the creeks and ponds flowing throughout the acreage. Bright colored marigolds, petunias, and snap dragons dotted several of the tee boxes.

“Is that...?” I started to ask.

The old man nodded. Geneva-on-the-Lake Municipal Golf Course never looked so plush. If I did not know better, I might think I am looking at Augusta National. Understanding my curiosity, St. Peter explained.

"After you give up and pass on, Blaise will make several changes," he said. "The field will grow to 144 golfers yearly. Many companies will donate prizes for participation gifts. Commissioner Blaise will nail Cadillac as its main sponsor. They committed to give away a flying Escalade to anyone who scores a hole in one on No. 3."

"Who are all those people standing around?" I ask.

"That is a gallery," he answered.

"Oh! Come on Pete," I refused to believe.

"St. Peter," he scoffed. "How dare you doubt me. It is the money from the patrons that financed the improvements on the course."

"What's going on there?" I pointed.

"The golfers no longer bring coolers on the course," St. Peter replied. "The gallery supplies the players food, drink, gummies, whatever and whenever desired. Blaise will create a most wonderful bond among people. Giving and sharing will become a common practice at the Geneva Open, a more pleasant atmosphere than the strife and tension of your days."

"Wait a minute, Pete...uh...St. Peter," I rebutted. "You didn't quite live in the Garden of Eden. According to the Bible you got your head chopped off. The doctors must be pretty good up here. You don't even have a scar."

I was not gaining any points. Like my gambling reputation, my comments were costly. I redirected my attention to Geneva and quickly changed the subject.

"Flying golf carts," I said. "Will those be around before I...you know?"

"No," he shook his head.

"I guess it is a good thing," I commented. "With guys like the Doobie Brothers and Vince Gatto piloting, it would look like a World War II battle."

I gazed at the shelter house.

"Do they still have the Commissioner's Dinner?" I inquired.

"Yes, Saturday night before the final round," St. Peter responded.

“What are all those boxes?” I asked.

“Times are different than back in your day,” he explained. “Immediately after you leave, Blaise abandons the culinary choice of steaks, potatoes, and salads and institutes a much simpler recipe of catered pizza. Eventually, he adds tacos, more preferred with this generation than steak and lobster.”

“You’re kidding,” I remarked digging a deeper hole.

“What’s that sticking up behind the 18th green?” I questioned. “That’s gotta stand over 6’ tall.”

“6 feet, 7 inches to be precise,” St. Peter smirked. “That is the trophy that replaced the Gavin Cup. All the winners are engraved on it from the first champions, Gary Glanzman and Jeff Graessle to the last winner.”

“How in the hell do they get that thing home?” I asked.

“We do not talk that way here,” he scolded.

“I’m sorry,” I apologized.

“The trophy remains where it is,” St. Peter lectured. “It is permanently cast in stone. No longer is it called the Gavin Cup. It will be known by these individuals as The Blaise Plageman Iron Men Trophy. Sr. Gavin is not happy about it.”

“You mean that bitty...excuse me St. Peter. You mean Sr. Gavin is here?” I remarked knowing the answer. “She was mean.”

I turned my attention to the Summertime Inn, all spruced and lit like it belonged in Las Vegas. The veranda was filled with golfers chatting just as we do today. Others took dips in the pool to refresh after a challenging day on the links. I did not recognize any of them.

“Where’s Blaise?” I delved.

“You are looking at the year 2075,” St. Peter explained. “Blaise has not been Commissioner for 25 years. There is a triumphant in charge of the Geneva Open, Crosby, Beck, and Cameron Marshall.”

“Craig’s sons?” I smiled. “I knew those boys would make something of themselves. Are the rest of my buddies inside your gate?”

“No, not yet,” he murmured. “You are still alive. A few are here, Joe Casa, Gary Miller, Mark Spangler, Tom Jech, Steve Hoffman, Welby...”

“Yeah, I saw Welby earlier,” I acknowledged. “I hope I do not look as skinny and frail as he does after I get here. Don’t you feed him?”

“Who says you will enter through those gates?” making more of a statement than a question.

“What have you heard?” I panicked. “Is Kitty talking?”

“Your wife does not need reveal the secrets in your closet,” St. Peter reminded me.

“Look Sainty,” I started to say.

His glance was more devilish than saintly.

“I mean St. Peter,” I corrected myself. “If Steve Hoffman can make it then I should make it.”

He handed me two stoned tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments. He made his point. I was no longer lighter than air. I fell through the clouds. My descent picked up speed with each mile I traveled. The earth looked beautiful from another Galaxy. Within minutes, the landscape became familiar. A blanket of snow-covered Geneva-on-the-Lake Golf Course. Lake Erie roared like an angry lion. The Terminal Tower, lit in red and green lights, sticks upright firm like a teenage boy scoping through the pages of Playboy Magazine. I reach for my rip cord. Panic sets. I do not have a parachute. I am a real UFO.

“Owwwwwwwww!” I yeled.

My legs kicked wildly. I flapped my arms trying to slow my speed and gain control. A condor I was not. I fell more like an unregulated asteroid. I bounced on my bed, up and down for many seconds like my Titleist hopping along the cart path after one of my errant drives.

“Wow! I drank more than I thought,” I said the following morning.

I stopped dead in my tracks after climbing from bed. Sitting on the end table was an empty glass incorporating the cigarette butt. I was still in disbelief. I stumbled to the kitchen to brew coffee and the plate once filled with pizzelles was

devoid of cookies. A tumbler smelling of bourbon stood next to an uncorked bottle missing six fingers worth.

“Holy shit! It was true,” I shrieked.

I hurriedly dressed and scampered to 9:00 AM Christmas Mass. The choir sang “Oh Come All Ye’ Faithful,” and “Silent Night.” Never had they sounded so angelic. Father Joe proclaimed the Gospel then gave an inspiring, 10-minute homily. It was as listening to Christ himself. I knew I was blessed with a gift unmatched except in Charles Dicken’s mind. I returned to my pew after Communion and thanked God. The Holy Spirit was inside me. This renewed confidence and glory lifted me to heights unsoared by eagles. I made up my mind right then to chase my losses. How could I lose? I was going to put a dime on the Philadelphia Eagles, a 9 ½ favorite over the New York Football Giants. God was on my side.

“The Mass has ended. Go in Peace,” Father Joe said.

I sang loud and clear with the choir “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” until the last note was reached. I raced to my car not caring what the parishioners thought of me. I shouted along the way.

Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas, everybody! Merry Christmas!”

2023 HEMLOCK

TEE TIMES

8:40 Blaise Plageman Don Jander Nick Boggess Dagon Abdon	9:12 Jay Green Rick Jonas Richie Heskett Zack Jonas	9:44 Ray Ballard Mark Johnson Alex Ballard Kyle Willis
8:48 Jacob Davis Ben Lloyd Bob Rutherford Don Rutherford	9:20 Ron Szymczak Mike Harper Tim Black Tom Black	9:52 Gary Mazzocco Matt Mazzocco Todd Abdon Paden West
8:56 Pat Dorn Mike Pagnanelli Steve Miller Shawn Dorn	9:28 Dick Barrett Dick Plageman Jack Berger Jerry Graves	10:00 Craig Marshall Jared Boling Greg Gudenkauf Kerry Joyce
9:04 Gary Glanzman Vince Gatto Frank Alexander Fritz Ford	9:36 Bill Boggess Keith Boggess Mark Kovachy Sam Kovachy	10:08 Tony McGuckin Tom Prunte Tim Hughes Jamie Vernon

2023 TEE TIMES
MADISON COUNTRY CLUB
Friday July 28

NOON

Gary Glanzman
Vince Gatto
Jack Berger
Jerry Graves

12:32

Don Jander
Mike Harper
Steve Miller
Ron Szymczak

1:04

Jared Boling
Shawn Dorn
Jamie Vernon
Tony McGuckin

12:08

Blaise Plageman
Ben Lloyd
Pat Dorn
Craig Marshall

12:40

Fritz Ford
Dick Plageman
Todd Abdon
Bob Rutherford

1:12

Jacob Davis
Greg Gudenkauf
Tim Hughes
Tom Prunte

12:16

Jay Green
Bill Boggess
Keith Boggess
Kerry Joyce

12:48

Frank Alexander
Dick Barrett
Mark Kovachy
Sam Kovachy

1:20

Mike Pagnanelli
Rick Jonas
Zack Jonas
Richie Heskett

12:24

Ray Ballard
Mark Johnson
Alex Ballard
Kyle Willis

12:56

Gary Mazzocco
Matt Mazzocco
Tim Black
Tom Black

1:28

Dagon Abdon
Nick Boggess
Paden West
Don Rutherford

2023 SCRAMBLE

TEAM 1 Nick Boggess Tim Black Alex Ballard Bob Rutherford	TEAM 2 Blaise Plageman Richie Heskett Shawn Dorn Craig Marshall	TEAM 3 Dagon Abdon Jamie Vernon Tim Hughes Don Rutherford
TEAM 4 Rick Jonas Bill Boggess Kerry Joyce Jay Green	TEAM 5 Gary Glanzman Sam Kovachy Steve Miller Fritz Ford	TEAM 6 Pat Dorn Mike Harper Keith Boggess Jerry Graves
TEAM 7 Ron Szymczak Matt Mazzocco Zach Jonas Frank Alexander	TEAM 8 Don Jander Tom Prunte Tom Black Tony McGuckin	TEAM 9 Todd Abdon Mark Kovachy Kyle Willis Ray Ballard
TEAM 10 Mike Pagnanelli Greg Gudenkauf Jacob Davis Mark Johnson	TEAM 11 Dick Plageman Jerod Boling Vince Gatto Ben Lloyd	TEAM 12 Jack Berger Dick Barrett Gary Mazzocco Paden West

2023 BEST BALL RESULTS

1st PLACE -10 \$660

Ben Lloyd

Nick Boggess

Matt Mazzocco

Ron Szymczak

2nd PLACE -9 \$220

Dagon Abdon

Paden West

Jacob Davis

Bob Rutherford

Don Rutherford

3rd PLACE -8 \$60

Blaise Plageman

Shawn Dorn

Tony McGuckin

Jamie Vernon

4th PLACE -7

Rick Jonas

Alex Ballard

Craig Marshall

Jay Green

Gary Mazzocco

5th PLACE -6

Dick Plageman

Steve Miller

Tom Prunte

Greg Gudenhauf

6th PLACE -5

Gary Glanzman

Tim Black

Bill Boggess

Mark Johnson

6th PLACE -5

Don Jandor

Vince Gatto

Jerry Graves

Frank Alexander

6th PLACE -5

Jack Berger

Dick Barrett

Tom Black

Fritz Ford

9th PLACE -4

Mike Pagnanelli

Jared Boling

Zack Jonas

Ray Ballard

10th PLACE -3

Pat Dorn

Richie Heskett

Sam Kovachy

Tim Hughes

11th PLACE -1

Todd Abdon

Keith Boggess

Mark Kovachy

Kyle Willis

2023 GAVIN CUP RESULTS

1st PLACE \$250 Pat Dorn -8 Craig Marshall 278	13th PLACE Jarod Boling +17 Jerry Graves 303
2nd PLACE \$100 Rick Jonas -5 Steve Miller 281	13th PLACE Mark Kovachy +17 Tim Hughes 303
3rd PLACE \$40 Dagon Abdon +1 Jacob Davis 287	13th PLACE Don Jandor +17 Tom Prunte 303
4th PLACE \$20 Keith Boggess +4 Mark Johnson 290	16th PLACE Ron Szymczak +19 Tony McGuckin 305
5th PLACE Richie Heskett +5 Shawn Dorn 291	17th PLACE Alex Ballard +23 Fritz Ford 309
6th PLACE Nick Boggess +6 Tom Black 292	18th PLACE Dick Barrett +25 Kyle Willis 311
6th PLACE Dick Plageman +6 Bill Boggess 292	18th PLACE Tim Black +25 Don Rutherford 311
8th PLACE Mike Pagnanelli +8 Gary Mazzocco 294	20th PLACE Matt Mazzocco +28 Paden West 314
9th PLACE Blaise Plageman +12 Jamie Vernon 298	20th PLACE Jack Berger +28 Jay Green 314
10th PLACE Sam Kovachy +13 Ben Lloyd 299	22nd PLACE Todd Abdon +31 Greg Gudenkauf 317
11th PLACE Vince Gatto +15 Bob Rutherford 301	23rd PLACE Zack Jonas +33 Ray Ballard 319
12th PLACE Gary Glanzman +16 Frank Alexander 302	

2023 SCRAMBLE RESULTS

WINNING TEAM -7 \$240

Blaise Plageman – Richie Heskett – Shawn Dorn – Craig Marshall

SCRAMBLE SKINS \$240

Don Jandor – Tom Prunte – Tom Black – Tony McGuckin

Eagle 2 on #6

2023 SKINS RESULTS

FRIDAY SKINS at MADISON \$90

Gary Glanzman	birdie	Hole #3
Nick Boggess	birdie	Hole #7
Pat Dorn	eagle	Hole #8
Tim Black	birdie	Hole #9
Rick Jonas	Birdie	Hole #16

"A" SKINS at GENEVA \$80

Rick Jonas	Birdie	Hole #5
Dagon Abdon	Eagle	Hole #7
Nick Boggess	Birdie	Hole # 10

"B" SKINS at GENEVA \$50

Paden West	Birdie	Hole #4
Shawn Dorn	Par	Hole #8
Ben Lloyd	Birdie	Hole #12
Gary Mazzocco	Birdie	Hole #15
Jamie Vernon	Birdie	Hole #18

SKILL SHOTS at GENEVA \$50

Todd Abdon	Closest to Pin	Hole #3
Ron Szymczak	Closest to Pin	Hole #9
Jerry Graves	Longest 1 st Putt	Hole #9
Dagon Abdon	Long Drive	Hole #11
	Closest to Pin	Hole #14
Gary Mazzocco	Closest 2 nd Shot	Hole #15
Rick Jonas	Closest to Pin	Hole #16