

FROM SEEDS TO STEMS

The title to these formative Geneva years speaks volumes about our life styles during the 1980's. We were more influenced by our rock stars than our pastors. Psychologists claim if we remember the 70's and 80's then we did not live them. I admit, some of my memory is a bit foggy but what can be recalled about Geneva needs be published so history remains truthful. It appears today's generation, and they are the present policy makers, have a tendency to alter history and the beliefs of any era. Respected individuals (George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Christopher Columbus for example) are scrutinized for their way of life which was the way of life of the times. Word of mouth changes events. Each individual rendition becomes different with every recall of the facts and their interpretation. Did Jonah truly live inside a whale for three days? This chapter of Geneva's history is published to preserve many of the early truths.

Years one and two in Geneva withstood uncertainty and an exploratory period as the outing searched for identity. From the first day, we knew golf and alcohol would be essential components of this yearly pilgrimage. Any other activities were an adventure. We tried playing poker one night after golf, but it was just one night as we immediately discovered poker was not in the cards. We learned quickly there was more to Geneva than sitting in a hotel room betting on straights and flushes.

From its origin, Geneva became a must attend hot spot on several linksters docket. The eight Charter Members dropped to a steady six. Bob Berger and Mike Sachs cancelled and scratched Geneva from their repertoire. The fact Mike (Dr. Hate) did not play golf greatly influenced his decision. Bob Berger had issues and has since settled in the Carolina's only to be seen on rare occasions by Brother Jack. The rest of us, Adrian Skunza (founder and first Commissioner), Dick Barrett, Jerry Graves, Gary Glanzman, Jim Nogawick, and Frank Alexander made Geneva an annual stop. We were joined each year by Vince Gatto, John Skunza, the Rutherfords, Jack Berger, and Mike Egger. Sometimes Shannon Boothe, Fritz Ford, Mike Smith, Buck Luzader, and Jim Yurasek participated. It was a steady collection of 12 to 16 goof offs who thought they could tame the Geneva course with the same magic as a John Daley. Unlike today's outings which include a BEST BALL

match, the GAVIN CUP, a nine hole SCRAMBLE, SKIN games, and SKILL SHOTS, these early years were grudge matches against challengers who thought they were just plain better. It only took me ten years and hundreds of dollars to realize I was not as good as Adrian, Vince, Gary, John, Jack, Dick, Jerry, Nogs, and whoever else needed money. Sundays were always reserved for a BEST BALL match. Some years we played two man teams and other years we chose four man teams.

By year three, some traditions were developing. With the addition of Legend Vince Gatto, good eats grew in importance and the Restaurant Lounge became a nightly stop for cocktails and dinner. Every year, Vince and fellow Legend, Gary Glanzman, would sit side by side and share three dinners between them. They ordered langostinos, prime rib, and T-bone steak catching two sides for each entrée. Add an appetizer and wash all this down with several adult beverages from Beefeater martinis to Canadian Club whisky, then beer and sometimes a completely different concoction. This was routine. If Buck was present, they were sure to sit next to him because they knew Buck could never finish his dinner. The Legends were more than happy to finish it for him. Until they closed in 2019, Vince carried on a long standing tradition of finishing his eating frenzy by stumbling to Capo's Pizza for a slice of their pizza pie.

Since we were close friends in our everyday living, Geneva's nightlife was an extension of escapades we habitually exercised in Columbus. Group decisions came easy and without debate. In those days, the Swiss Chalet was not the "In" place. After eating dinner at the Restaurant Lounge, the group would stop at the Hazy Daze Disco. That place was hot. We "Big City Slickers" showed the farmer's daughters of Geneva some glitzy dance steps we practiced regularly at the Castle on The Ohio State Campus. We were something, at least we thought we were. It did not matter the girls all sported tattoos long before tattoos were fashionable. If we found a dance partner with a full set of teeth we believed her a mutant of the area or a vacationer on holiday. One winter, the Hazy Daze Disco burned to the ground and Legend Gary Glanzman was most disheartened. We often drank our nightcaps at the Cove. This club featured loud and wild concerts from fine classic rockers trying to hit the big time. The Go-Kart track was right on the Strip and if we could fool the proprietor into believing we were sober, we would race around the track with skills we thought were much the same as Bobby Unser. We stayed

clear of Jerry Graves. He took pleasure in running his challengers off the asphalt and into the tires bordering the race course.

Jerry's racing was one of many crazy memories. Who can forget the time Legend Vince Gatto, in the hey-day of his game, believed he was good enough to drive a golf ball 250 yards down the center of No.1 fairway teed atop a Michelob bottle? It was not a good idea if he was sober but he was not. Back in those days, drivers were made of wood. Unfortunately for Vince, his aim was a little off. As the Michelob bottle shattered and his Titleist fell straight to the ground, it was laughter not cheers heard across the hallowed grounds of Geneva. His driver head screamed foul as chips of glass embedded deep in its grooves. The only reason Vince attempted such a stunt was to outdo Buck Luzader. Minutes before Vince' failed feat, Buck (just as drunk as Vince) hit a golf ball into his front pocket. The fact he was steady enough to rest a Top Flight on top of another amazed us. Buck took his wedge and swung under the bottom ball. The upper ball popped high in the air. Buck opened his front pocket wide and the golf ball sunk deep inside. Deed done well.

During those days we arrived on Friday and played 18 holes immediately and continued playing until dark. Our thrill with each return visit to Geneva was matched by Chuck Webb, the long-time Geneva golf pro. His face lit with excitement as if coming face to face with an old flame at a high school reunion. We played 36 holes both Saturday and Sunday. Two and a half days full of golf and beer then packed our belongings and headed back home. Touchdown in Columbus on Sunday night was around midnight. How did we do it? We were invincible.

One year as a passenger of Jerry Graves on our way to Geneva, I made a patented bone head move that may have landed us in jail instead of on the links. From Columbus to Medina, we drank beer continuously. Jerry stopped for gas and a pee break. In a moment of absentmindedness, I set my half empty can of Michelob atop Jerry' car. Oops! When we emerged from inside the building, much to our surprise was a Medina County Deputy Sheriff waiting to greet us. My Short Buddy, always the quick thinker, gathered the empty cans strewn throughout the vehicle and tossed them in the waste container.

"We were cleaning out the car", Jerry said.

“Just don’t advertise,” the patrolman ordered.

He permitted us to proceed. The copper followed us until we crossed the Medina County line. Damn! That was a long way to travel without a beer.

Much has changed since those adolescent times. It took us two years to abandon the cozy Howard Johnson Hotel and move to the luxurious Pera’s Motel. It did not matter the Pera’s offered moldy beds, no phone, limited number of towels, air conditioners that refused to work, and limited TV service. The Pera’s Motel provided a shelter to crash after a hard day of golf and imbibing. Back in those days, Geneva was held on the second weekend of June. The weather was often chilly so it mattered little if the air conditioner worked. The pool was never in any condition for use. Despite all those negative factors, the proximity to the Strip and the golf course drew us back every year. This was part of the ambiance of Geneva. It tickled our senses much like spending a night with a Playboy centerfold.