

Eaton Country Club Centennial Celebration

Saturday, July 23, 2022

History and Comments by H. John Kramer

Just shy of 40 years ago, I listened to William H. Hiestand, age 82 give a history of the origin of ECC. We are fortunate that Bill wrote memories down on paper. A few copies of Bills 1983 speech are available, or if you email me I will email you back a digital copy

His words were: "We owe a debt of gratitude to all the founding fathers and the century of members that have both supported this facility with their time, their talents and their treasure. Dedicated by multiple generations and dedicated with the common goal to preserve this Clubhouse, golf course and a true community treasurer."

About 67 years ago, I remember tagging along behind my parents on hole number 3. At that time, ECC was only about 33 years old. I have been fortunate to spend my life here at ECC. Two weeks ago, I took that same walk on hole number 3 with my 2 ½ year old granddaughter

Our course can have many dates for its heritage, but the clubhouse is well established. The original ECC shareholders minutes states the clubhouse and furnishings were to be turned over to the members on January 2nd, 1922; however, a celebration took place on Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24, 1921.

The impact this building, this ballroom and this course has had on the Preble County Community is incredible.

25 Harvey H. Hiestand was the clubhouse Architect and he later was Head of
26 Department of Architecture at Miami University 1929-1938

27 The 1921 Clubhouse project was Total cost about \$12,000

28 The grand opening was an all-day affair, open to the public like today and
29 was very well attended.

30 But it was not easy as in Nov 1922 President Filbert sent out envelopes
31 with blank checks asking for \$5 to make up a \$300 deficit

32 1923 \$100 approved to build hole #9

33 1923 Allowed Cincinnati Reds to use course and clubhouse for exhibition
34 with local Baseball Team

35 This was start of ECC interacting with the community and dozens of
36 organizations and private individuals. ECC is truly a community
37 treasurer

38 Over the next 5 years the course took shape, but don't visualize today's
39 final product, it took time.

40 1924 Hole #2, 4 & 5 were formed & Harold Jordon became pro; no salary,
41 only what he sold and charged for lessons

42 1925 Triple horse mower bought from Wilson Hardware \$340 before that,
43 sheep were used.

44 1926 our flagpole dedicated by June social committee – it still stands today
45 and the base has the date etched in it.

46 1927 Caddie program formed. Caddie shack literally was below #1 tee
47 facing the lake.

48 1928 First Ladies Golf Association Club Championship was held

49 1928 Joey Kirkwood trick shot artist from Australia performed at a cost of
50 \$150, which was quite a sum in those days. He then played exhibition with
51 Nipper Campbell. Each shot 73. This was quite an exhibition as it was in
52 all the local papers. But the minutes show the club lost \$53.85

53 Alex Nipper Campbell is given credit for designing ECC, and rightfully so,
54 as he came over from Dayton and rebuilt our greens to their present
55 elevation and seeded them with bent grass. It was mostly done in 1928
56 Nipper's job was to build up the greens to accept the shot, which is most
57 evident on about every green.

58 We are honored to have Nipper's Grand Son here today, Colin Campbell.
59 You may recognize Colin as a prominent Realtor in Dayton and past
60 president of DABR and member of Moraine CC.

- 61 • Colin will you come up and share some stories with us please?
 - 62 ○ Addition: (Colin presented H. John Kramer with an
 - 63 original hickory shafted 2-Iron golf club owned and used
 - 64 by his grandfather, Alex "Nipper" Campbell, with the
 - 65 inscription of "Accurate" above an arrow over "A.
 - 66 Campbell". I accepted club on behalf of ECC.)

67 July 4, 1929 was the formal opening of ECC as we now know it.

68 Nipper was instrumental in developing the 1913 US Open Champion
69 Francis Ouimet, which is the central theme of The Golf Channel's 2005

70 movie, The Greatest Game Ever Played. Nipper played in all but 4 US
71 Opens from 1900 to 1934 and if not for a golf ball by Goodrich which was
72 filled with compressed air deflating in 1907, when he placed 7th, he
73 probably would have won. Nipper was inducted into the Ohio Golf
74 Association Hall of Fame in 2010.

75 Pro at 1899 Boston CC for 19 years

76 1915 Baltimore CC

77 1919 Cincinnati Losantiville CC

78 1925 Dayton MVGC, Moraine, Meadowbrook, Madden,
79 Community Hills & Dales, Miamisburg, Liberty, Eaton and
80 impacted CC of Brookline in Boston but given little credit
81 as well as MVGC redo of greens

82 Many articles reference when Nipper got to America he went into a bar as
83 asked for two beers ... the bartender said "we do not serve minors" the
84 Nipper responded "Dammit, mon, I'm no coal miner, I'm golf professional!"

85 1929 water lines were installed some of which we are using today

86 1929 Porte co or the front overhang drive thru was donated by AJ, RA &
87 HH Hiestand

88 1930 sold tennis netting for \$17.50 first time tennis mentioned in minutes

89 1931 Island tee in Crystal Lake

90 1931 Motion that manager instruct golf players to wear clothes while
91 playing golf

92 1932 ECC had 125 members; the course record of 32 by John Campbell;
93 Ladies Golf Association had Wednesday Sport's Day

94 But times were not easy, as in 1933 there was an emergency meeting to
95 save club; drastic action was taken as they suspended by laws and gave
96 Board authority to use total judgement on dues, members, bills, etc.

97 1934 let high school to use course with Rex Settlemire overseeing

98 1939 Approved use of dynamite to remove some trees, used Civilian
99 Conservation Corps boys to plant trees

100 1942 Chester Wagner elected president; Mr. Wagner founder of what is
101 now Henny Penny

102 A 1943 November fire ravaged the roof of clubhouse with insurance
103 damages of \$6,092.61; this was one month after historic 7-Mile Tavern
104 burnt to ground

105 1953 Scottish pro Jimmy Thom became our pro and manager. Jimmy
106 started my Dad playing golf. Remember, most managers lived upstairs in
107 those 2 small rooms

108 1953 July 4th golf tourney had 30 pros and 60 amateurs. It later became
109 Ralph Himes Memorial.

110 ECC was moving on ... the greatest generation loving social activities.
111 Social calendars were full and very active

112 1954 ECC purchased 17.98 acres for \$12,000 now known as hole #9 and
113 the practice range. Before this, hole 1 & 9 shared the same fairway.

114 1956 Chuck Wagner hired as new pro, then in 1961 he went to Madden
115 and Tom Blackburn took over at the new Kittyhawk – double duty. Wagner
116 then went to Kittyhawk for several decades

117 1961 Jimmy Gilbert came to ECC as pro, he later went to Dayton County
118 Club for over 30 years;

119 1962 marked Dick Wells starting the Eaton high school golf team

120 In the mid-60s a move to expand to 18 holes by using what is now Whisper
121 Way and the land between the 2 cemeteries. It failed. Then again in 1996
122 plans were drawn to expand encompassing what is now Eaton High
123 School. Some land was obtained and later resold, but again, the
124 membership objected and project failed. So we are now landlocked with
125 our 9 holes.

126 1965 Pro Jack Keith proposed to reduce par to 35, eliminate hole #6, 9
127 green to practice green, redo 1, 4, 8 & 9 completely Went nowhere
128 thankfully;

129 1967 George Smith came as our pro, his sons John and Bobby did work on
130 course and John was on our golf team that went to state;

131 This was the era the Bunker removed across 3 & 4 fairways; the bunker fill
132 was used to level the ravine in front of number 1 tee to form the present 75
133 yard tee.

134 1967 green #4 was enlarged, Jerry Curtis did majority of work; Practice
135 green built by JR Kramer

136 1968 Pro Frank Bonaroti came to ECC from Latrobe PA. Best thing he
137 ever did was bring Rolling Rock Beer, as under his supervision, we lost
138 several greens to over fertilizing; 3, 5 & 6 were totally ruined and temporary
139 greens used all summer

140 That was when the Green Committee started; JR Kramer, sup; Jess Hillard,
141 Byron Stupp, Hazen Hildebolt, Wendell Aker & Pete Watts; they hired Pinky
142 Bennett to take care of course

143 1969 William H. Hiestand financed the cleaning of Crystal Lake; the silt
144 used to re-slope hole #6, a great improvement for maintenance and play

145 1971 new storage barn

146 1971 renovation to basement & Men's locker room

147 1975 a test well drilled as club wanted water for irrigation, the well was dry

148 1977 Wolf Creek installed water irrigation system for \$68K, we currently
149 use with City water as supplier

150 1978 Lee Federico pro manager thru 1984

151 1979 Ladies Twilight league formed with Jan Wells over seeing

152 1985 Nationally known trick shot artist Paul Hahn Jr was brought in to
153 entertain August 18th for \$1,250 with large attendance in shag field; Event
154 was a success and raised \$1,200; Ron Roth chairman;

155 1985 parking lot, cart paths and parking lot extension

156 1985 chain link fence from damn along hole 5 and behind number 6

157 1986 Pinky Bennett retired as greenkeeper, Gordy Silvers took over

158 1990 The 6th annual William H. Hiestand Memorial tournament was held;
159 the golf committee later made it a 2 man tournament and winners were
160 given green jackets, mine is here today ... but it has shrunk

161 Between 1984 and 1991 ECC spent \$200,000 on capital improvements so
162 good times were rolling

163 A1992 cart barn

164 1993 to 1999 Rick Mommsen was our pro and went on to South Carolina to
165 teach

166 1993 founding members John and Libby Parker left ECC \$15,000 which
167 was used to install first floor restroom for handicap

168 1999 ECC had 225 Members; \$250 initiation fee;

169 2000 Scott Azbill became our course superintendent,

170 About 2000 the tree outside the current pro shop was carved into a Scottish
171 Golfer and dedicated to Nipper Campbell.

172 The next 15 or so years showed decline in golf on a national basis, decline
173 in membership and overall harder times for ECC

174 2019 July 7 Jake Tinsley set the nine hole course record of 28 with 5
175 birdies, 2 eagles, 1 par and 1 bogey on hole 7; I was in his foursome

176 This era was when ECC hit all time financial low

177 Members Brad & Mary Neavin operated the restaurant for ECC, but too
178 much commercial competition kept it from succeeding

179 Member Tim Garber stepped forward and took over the course
180 maintenance work, pro shop management and overseeing golf course
181 operations. ALL volunteer. This saved the club upwards to \$20,000 and
182 stopped the negative cash flow it was experiencing.

183 Tim saved the club in my opinion. Soon others joined in helping him and
184 the bandwagon was moving.

185 Then in 2020 Covid hit, but we survived and actually increased play by
186 having an honor system on carts 4 days a week

187 2021 Clubhouse rented to Frosty's catering service, which turned negative
188 cash flow into positive and our future now looks bright again

189 Our course is in great shape and membership is increasing.

190 In January, the board decided to pursue a Centennial celebration with Barb
191 Rohl and Barb Garber stepping up to oversee the festivities

192 The Centennial flags for hole flagsticks were designed and donated by
193 Barb and Jim Rohl Thank you Barb and Jim

194 Today our Clubhouse undergoing major repair of bay window, roofing and
195 repainting thanks to members and friends cash donations

196 The Centennial Stone was laid Wednesday, thank you Alice Ferguson and
197 it was decorated with flowers spelling "100" thank you Debbie Kramer

198 The Nipper Statue is being restored this week, thank you John Aukerman.

199 So what now The catch phrase from Steven Covey's book "7 habits of
200 Highly Effective People" is

201 "To live, to love, to leave a legacy"

202 We cannot expect the youth to be able to step up at this time as they
203 are starting families and getting established in their jobs. My father's
204 generation gave us this legacy, and now it is time for my generation

205 to step up and make sure this facility lives into the next century, and
206 teach the younger generation of the importance of facilities such as
207 this building and golf course

208 In summary, to use ending words of William H. Hiestand from 1983:

209 “I am happy to write these comments because we should not forget the
210 heritage left to us by those early pioneers for the golf club. Hard times,
211 yes; but they had the vision and determination to create a valued asset for
212 our community. Let us then appreciate what they left us and make it a
213 continued and valued part of living in such a fine place as Eaton, Ohio. “

214 On behalf of the Members of ECC & the Centennial Committee,

215 Thank you all for coming

216 We are adjourned till ... the Sesquicentennial